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Warrior Dialogue in Samuel: Honor, Shame, and Divine Proxy

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ABSTRACT

Discourse between warriors plays a role in several battle scenes within the books of Samuel. The repartee is a way for the narrator to add color and depth to the narrative and develop essential themes. Social-scientific criticism has often examined these interactions through the cultural lenses of honor and shame. Peristiany, Bourdieu, and Pitt-Rivers are just some scholars who developed cultural frameworks based upon the importance of honor and shame in the Mediterranean region. Malina, extrapolating from North African cultural studies by Bourdieu, developed a challenge and response model for the acquisition of honor as depicted in the Bible. However, not all warrior engagements align with these Mediterranean honor frameworks. Anthropologists, sociologists, and biblical scholars have noted the deficiencies of these models.

This thesis examines several warrior exchanges in Samuel and seeks to demonstrate that warrior engagements reflect more complex and nuanced views of honor and shame than the Mediterranean models describe. In light of this, more recent sociological models such as Stewart's cross-cultural model and Facework theory are compared against these texts to evaluate their relevance. In certain instances, these more modern theories more aptly reflect the evidence within the biblical text. On another level, there is the action of the divine behind the narratives. The verbal sparring between combatants sometimes reflects the divine intent, what this study calls "divine proxy." It is through this device that the narrator communicates theological truths important to the scene.

Warrior Dialogue in Samuel:

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To my wife, Amy.

Whose love, encouragement, and commitment to this journey

have not only made it possible but enjoyable.

מצא אשׁה מצא טוב ויפק רצון מיהוה

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The choice of warrior dialogue as my thesis topic was somewhat accidental. During the Fall of 2020, while discussing potential paper topics for an Old Testament class with Dr. Mark Hamilton, I expressed the desire to do something that might be relevant to a future thesis. After unsuccessfully pitching several ideas of my own, I asked what topics he felt were interesting and needed more scholarly attention. Among the ideas he presented was what we initially termed "Warrior Banter." After some thought, I decided to take up the topic. From that initial paper came an article in *Restoration Quarterly* and now this thesis. It has proven to be a subject that has given me a greater appreciation for the narrative beauty, sophistication, and character development within the books of Samuel. At the same time, this study has highlighted the value of cross-discipline approaches to biblical interpretation and the inherent difficulties and challenges that come with them. Each question resolved has led to many more to be pursued, which I think is the mark of an exciting subject.

I want to thank Mark Hamilton for his suggestion of a topic, his patience, insights, guidance, and support throughout this endeavor—and my degree as a whole. I have enjoyed our regular discussions on this topic and the many other paths our conversations have taken. I could not ask for a better committee chair, advisor, and mentor.

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Finally, no list of acknowledgments would be complete without expressing my gratitude to my family. My wife, Amy, and our sons, Adam and Nathan, have had to endure more discussions about warrior dialogue and social theories than they cared to hear. Without their love and support, this would have been a much more challenging process.

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical translations are my own, as are any errors, oversights, or omissions herein.

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CHAPTER I

HONOR AMONG WARRIORS

Dialogue between warriors plays a role in several engagements within the books of Samuel. The repartee is a helpful way for the author to add color and depth to the narrative. What do these dialogues reveal? How does the narrator use these exchanges to advance the narrative? What insights do they provide into ancient Israel's cultural and theological frameworks, as reflected through Samuel?

Proponents of social-scientific interpretation use the cultural lens of honor and shame to analyze these interactions. Peristiany, Bourdieu, and Pitt-Rivers are just some scholars who developed cultural frameworks based upon the importance of honor and shame. One of the leading practitioners of social-scientific criticism, Bruce Malina, extended the North African cultural studies by Bourdieu to develop a challenge and response model for the acquisition of honor as depicted in the Bible. The classic example used to validate this challenge and response model is the David and Goliath narrative. However, other warrior narratives in Samuel do not fit this mold quite so easily.

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that: (1) warrior dialogue is an essential component within the literary depiction of military engagements not only in ancient Israel but also in other ancient Near Eastern civilizations; (2) within this literature, honor-shame dynamics influence warrior dialogue and its outcomes; (3) the social-scientific models that describe warrior engagements within the context of honor and shame are insufficient for many of the examples in the books of Samuel; and (4)

YHWH's intentions are communicated through some of the warrior discourse depicted in Samuel, what this study refers to as the divine proxy.

This first chapter's primary goal is to lay the foundation for the evaluation of the warrior dialogues. First, this chapter defines some relevant terms to bound this study and ensures that terminology is consistently applied. Following that is an overview of the Mediterranean cultural studies, which include the formulation of honor models developed by Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and Bourdieu. These models influenced Bruce Malina and his development of a challenge and response model for honor in the world of the Bible. In addition to these views of honor, more modern studies on honor will also be reviewed. Specifically, these are the cross-cultural model developed by Frank Stewart; and Facework theory, which Erving Goffman generalized from its origins in Asia. Chapter 1 concludes with an examination of the merits and challenges of social-scientific interpretation.

Chapter 2 is devoted to Israelite warrior engagements with foreigners. This analysis includes three examples: two with Philistines and one with a non-Philistine. No study of biblical warrior dialogues would be complete without David and Goliath (1 Sam 17). As such, it leads off the discussion. The second Philistine dialogue is Jonathan's fight with the Philistines at Michmash (1 Sam 14). The third event is the siege of Jabesh-gilead by Nahash the Ammonite (1 Sam 11). While there are many other potential dialogues for analysis (see the Appendix), these three are generally representative of the group. The final section of the chapter deals with the practice of single combat (*monomachia*) in the ancient Near East. This section will examine other ancient texts which indicate this practice. Homer's *Iliad* receives significant attention, given the

pervasive warrior honor themes that run throughout the epic. Throughout this chapter, the dialogues are evaluated for their use of divine proxy. Attention is given to how this practice is different in ancient Near Eastern texts.

Chapter 3 examines warrior dialogues between Israelite warriors. These warrior engagements include the two wilderness encounters between David and Saul (1 Sam 24 and 26), as well as Abner's encounters with the sons of Zeruiah: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel (2 Sam 2). This chapter also includes a detailed examination of David, Nabal, and Abigail's narrative (1 Sam 25). This event is remarkable for Abigail's influence in preventing a battle and preserving David's honor. Although Abigail is not of the warrior class, she does verbal battle to preserve her household. Her rhetoric is some of the most masterful in the books of Samuel. As appropriate, various ancient Near Eastern texts are included in these examinations to facilitate a clearer understanding of the biblical narratives. These extra-biblical texts are significant for understanding David's encounter with Abigail and Nabal. As with chapter 2, evaluation of these texts for evidence of divine proxy is also considered.

The final chapter synthesizes these analyses to demonstrate that warrior engagements, as reflected via the discourse, are more complex and nuanced than the traditional Mediterranean honor models would indicate. Warriors demonstrate a concern for their honor, but it does not necessarily come at the expense of the honor of their foe. There are clear examples of warriors engaging in ways that seek to preserve their combatant's honor—even if it might not enhance their personal honor. In short, honor does not appear to be a scarce resource, whereby one acquires honor only through taking

it from another. This finding brings into question assumptions about the biblical world's agonistic nature.

This final chapter also examines the nature of divine proxy as a narrative device in the books of Samuel. Ancient Near Eastern texts are replete with invocations of the deities to judge disputes of all nature. There is clear evidence of this phenomenon in the books of Samuel as well. However, the books of Samuel use some of these dialogues to communicate divine intent. YHWH intervenes directly in the narrative twice. Yet, Israel's warriors and their dialogue communicate divine involvement in the outcomes and judgment between these combatants.

Who Is a Warrior?

More so than any other biblical books, tales of heroic warriors fill the pages of the books of Judges and Samuel. The narrative devotes substantial space to the feats of Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Samson, Saul, Jonathan, and David, to name a few. Still, others are known only for a single heroic feat. Second Samuel 23:8–39 is a hall of fame, as it were, commemorating David's heroic warriors, in Hebrew, הגברים (literally, "the mighty men" or "the mighty ones"). These men are remembered for their incredible battle accomplishments against near-impossible odds. The Tahchemonite, Josheb-basshebeth, slew 800 men with his spear in a single battle (2 Sam 23:8). Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, is remembered for killing a lion in a pit on a snowy day and killing a "handsome" Egyptian man with his own spear after stealing it out of his hand (2 Sam 23:20–21). Likewise, Abishai, the son of David's sister, Zeruiah, fought and killed 300 men with his spear. For his heroics, he was "honored" (נכבד) to the position of chief of "the thirty" (1 Sam 23:18–19). Yet, the memory of heroic warriors extends back in Israel's memory to a distant

mythic period. Genesis 6:4 recalls the Nephilim who were "mighty men" (הגברים) of old, men of renown (literally "the name."). Likewise, the Rephaim (or Rapha, otherwise known as the Anakim) appear as a powerful group of giants.[1] King Og is remembered as the last remnant of the Rephaim, noted for his huge iron bed (Deut 3:11).

Depictions of mighty, heroic warriors are evident in ancient Near Eastern texts as well. The Gilgamesh epic recounts the heroics of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. These warriors show up in other extant texts. The Hittite king, Ḫattušili III, describes his sometimes-heroic military successes with the aid of his patron goddess, Ištar. Of course, Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, tell the stories of the great Greek and Trojan warriors, such as Ajax, Odysseus, Patroclus, Menelaus, Hector, and Achilles.

Perhaps it is not surprising that warriors are an integral part of the stories of nations. National development beyond loose tribal confederations required access to natural resources. What one did not have within their natural borders had to be acquired through treaty or force. The line separating the two was, no doubt, gray. As such, growth—and even survival—required warriors. Skilled, mighty warriors to lead and competent warriors to staff the armies.[2] "Like every other aspect of life in the ancient world, warfare was permeated by religion."[3] Therefore, it is no surprise to find invocations to and credit given to the respective deities throughout these narratives.

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1. See Gen 14:5, 15:20; Deut 2:11, 20; 2 Sam 21:18, 20, 22; 1 Chr 20:4–6. The NRSV translates הרפא (a singular noun with the definite article prefix) as "giants," which obscures the obvious connection with the plural noun Rephaim (רפאים).

2. Philip J. Esler, *Sex, Wives, and Warriors: Reading the Old Testament Narrative with Its Ancient Audience* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 141.

3. Philip King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 223.

Mark Smith notes that "warriors" does not necessarily refer solely to professional soldiers within literary texts but "refer broadly to those males who stand out for their physical capacities for fighting and battle."[4] He summarizes archaeological evidence from the Early Bronze through Iron II periods, which demonstrates the strong association of warrior activity among males.[5] While it may not be possible to prove a "warrior culture" within Israel, Smith states, "their burials honored them and marked the 'remembering' of their association with weaponry."[6]

In the ancient world's literary texts, Smith views warrior practices as guided by a series of values and attitudes. Chief among these is a heightened sense of honor, accompanied by a deep concern for mortality. He notes that human women are generally excluded from consideration as warriors, while divine warriors are often female (outside the Bible). Martial aggression in combat often links physical action with psychological factors (e.g., fierceness, anger, unsatiated blood lust). He observes that these qualities, which are viewed with extreme negativity in most social contexts, are positive qualities on the battlefield. In certain instances, but not universally, gaining fame and glory is expressed in poetry about warriors.[7]

For this study, the definition of warriors is those individuals (most of the time male) who engage in combat. If they are engaged in battle, they are combatants. However, there are also instances where these individuals engage each other without a

4. Mark S. Smith, *Poetic Heroes: Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior Culture in the Early Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 23.

5. Ibid., 24–26.

6. Ibid., 26.

7. Ibid., 20–23.

battle taking place. The selection criteria for dialogues from the Samuel narrative will be discourse between two individuals within the following context: (1) a precursor to a battle; (2) within the course of battle or siege; (3) before a battle in the hopes of avoidance of battle, or (4) between acknowledged members of the warrior class. Within each of these scenarios, it appears that social honor and shame play an essential role in the discourse's engagement and nature.

Honor and Shame in the Mediterranean

To better understand warrior dialogue, a review of honor and shame in the Mediterranean context is necessary. While there has been debate in recent years regarding the over-application of the terms *honor* and *shame* to ancient Near Eastern cultures, there is general agreement that these terms are apt, if perhaps simplified, components of the predominant cultures.[8] It is essential to understand that these terms had much more significant meaning in ancient Near Eastern cultures than they do in our modern, western worldview.

Definitions

Honor

Unni Wikan aptly summarizes the appeal and challenges of the study of honor and its social implications. "Honour is a word with a very special quality. Unlike most of the words used in anthropology, it holds an alluring, even seductive appeal. I think it

8. Esler, *Sex*, 35–76. Esler provides an overview of ancient Israel's cultural context and the debates around the use of the terms "honor" and "shame," and whether it is appropriate to gloss the entire region with these two terms. He cites the arguments of Herzfeld, Bourdieu, Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and others to provide a balanced view of the issue. He concludes that the terms are useful for modern readers to understand the text—even if they may be somewhat generalized.

harks back to more glorious times when men were brave, honest and principled."[9] Honor in the studies discussed below has many synonyms: respect, esteem, character, even face. However, these are English translations of words that may have wide-ranging, even conflicting, meaning in their local languages and cultures. Each study below defines honor in terms of the culture examined.

Honor and shame in the biblical world were not merely terms of recognition; they were matters of life and death. Honor represented the ability of a household to care for its members and covenant partners. Honor impacted household commerce, marriages, and even decisions regarding which warriors could fight for the tribe. A loss of honor resulted when a household could not fulfill these obligations. In extreme cases, the loss of honor could mean the loss of land and children.[10] In the biblical world, the loss of land and family could amount to the loss of eternal life since the memory of the dead at their tombs was the only form of eternal existence ancient Near Easterners usually contemplated.

Honor was a valued asset.[11] In a sense, honor was a commodity that one actively sought to increase—not only to enhance one's standing within the community but also to enhance the standing of one's household.[12] As such, there were various acceptable

9. Unni Wikan, "Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair," *Man* 19/4 (1984): 635.

10. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *The Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 143–4.

11. Geoffrey P. Miller, "Verbal Feud in the Hebrew Bible: Judges 3:12–30 and 19–21," *JNES* 55/2 (1996): 106.

12. Esler, *Sex*, 184.

behaviors and rules for social interactions that had varying degrees of value for enhancing or diminishing honor.[13]

Shame, Dishonor, and Scorn

Contrary to the common understanding of the term, shame is not the opposite of honor. The opposite of honor is scorn or disdain. Scorn, disdain, and dishonor are the reactions of others that challenge or diminish one's honor. They are also the reactions one might have when another seeks to challenge their honor, as discussed below. However, the academic literature on this point is often inconsistent. It is not uncommon for the writer to utilize "shame" when, in fact, they mean dishonor. This study will make a concerted effort to utilize the terms more precisely for the sake of clarity—even when the subject author does not.

Shame, in contrast to dishonor, is a sensitivity to one's reputation. As Lau observes, "in shame, the constitutive element is a negative self-evaluation, the awareness of being seen to fall short of some perceived standard or ideal. The presence of an other may be the catalyst, but the evaluation constitutive of shame still depends on the self."[14] A person unconcerned with their reputation is considered shameless. To engage with a shameless person is often considered foolish since the shameless person knows no social boundaries. Within this context, shame is a positive value and a desirable trait.[15] Shame serves to regulate moral, cultic, and legal relationships in a community. In a culture with

13. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 142.

14. Te-Li Lau. *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 16.

15. Bruce J. Malina. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 49.

strong honor-shame dynamics, penalties associated with wrongdoing are less of a deterrent than the community's social pressures.[16] Wikan goes so far as to claim that, in the Mediterranean, it is shame rather than honor that is the prevailing concern. Shame drives behaviors and actions more than the pursuit of honor. She goes on to observe that shame and honor relate differently to behavior. While honor is a character trait or aspect of the person, shame applies to an act only.[17]

Mediterranean Honor Theory

An essential component of Mediterranean honor and shame theories are modern anthropological studies within the region. Anthropologists of the mid-twentieth century noted similarities in the cultural perspectives of disparate groups across the region. While these societies are by no means uniform in their views of honor, the similarities in these otherwise disconnected groups are curious. From this arose the concept of a Mediterranean view of honor. Others found similarities with honor as expressed in ancient literature and hypothesized that this Mediterranean honor concept has roots in their common ancient ancestors.

All of these Mediterranean honor descriptions fall under the classification of bipartite theories. Honor has two components: internal and external. The internal components are a sense of self-worth, virtue, and integrity. One's reputation and good name are external components.[18] Stated another way, honor is the claim to self-esteem and the validation of that claim by the court of public opinion. Theories may differ in

16. Lau, *Defending Shame*, 71.

17. Wikan, "Shame and Honour," 636.

18. Matthew T. Racine, "Service and Honor in Sixteenth-Century Portuguese North Africa: Yahya-u-Taʿfuft and Portuguese Noble Culture," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 32/1 (2001): 69.

which components they emphasize based upon available data, but all share elements of this dichotomy.

Peristiany's Eastern Mediterranean Studies

In 1954, John G. Peristiany spent six months in the Pitsilia villages on the western slopes of Mount Tröodos in Cyprus. According to Peristiany, "the Pitsilloi take pride in the belief that they are the purest Greek Cypriots—racially and linguistically. The other Cypriots point to them as a repository and the living embodiment of the traditional values of manliness, perseverance, hardihood and generosity."[19] Peristiany spent most of his time in the village of Alona with its 650 inhabitants.

Peristiany identifies several words that define honor and shame among the Pitsilloi. The most fundamental of these terms is *timē*, which he defines as esteem, honor, dignity, social worth, ranking, and value. Someone who considers their good name, social perception, and ranking above short-term profit is considered *megalophrosynē*. A person who lacks *timē* is considered to be *atimos*. If a person does nothing to correct this condition, they are called *adiantropos*—lacking in shame (*ntropē*), or shameless. A person who is *adiantropos* is outside the moral order of village society. The community views their actions as unpredictable and a menace to the community.[20]

The Pitsilloi family were the basic unit within the village. The family unit consisted of parents and unmarried children. As children were married and parents died, the old familial ties diminished, being replaced by their developing family unity. Families

19. J. G. Peristiany, "Honour and Shame in a Cypriot Village" in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), 173–74.

20. Ibid., 178–79.

were mostly economically self-sufficient. There was little in the way of property common to the village. Peristiany notes that the village evaluated and commented upon each individual's actions as a reflection upon their family. This public opinion established the standing of the family within the honor hierarchy of the village.

"The first qualification for a man of honour is to be honoured in his own family."[21] Disrespect towards one's father was considered shameless. However, Peristiany noted that determination of what constituted disrespect changed with age. As the son became older and established a family, and as the father grew older or incapacitated, the relationship could become more egalitarian. Peristiany observed another level of honor where a son continued to act as if he were under his father's authority long after the time when such honor was expected. This was known as *philotimo*. This term was reserved for those who acted according to an ideal rather than normative behavior. It is important to note that Peristiany identified various spheres where the importance of honor may vary. As mentioned earlier, the family is the basic unit. Following the family in importance is the family's village and then their neighboring villages. Beyond this is the city and from there, "the Franks," a term generally used for foreign ruling authorities that dates to the replacement of Byzantine rule by a Frankish kingdom at the end of the twelfth century. The further one's actions move from one's immediate family and village, the less importance they have towards the honor attributed to the family.

For a woman, honor is mostly related to safeguarding herself against any critical allusions to her sexual modesty. "In dress, looks, attitudes, speech, a woman, when men

21. Ibid., 181.

are present, should be virginal as a maiden and matronly as a wife."[22] Several terms describe a woman of questionable virtue: *atheophouē* (not God-fearing), *anomē* (lawless), *skylla* (a bitch), *adiantropē* (shameless), *xetsipotē* (skinless).[23] Immodesty in women is considered a betrayal of her family, the family's honor entrusted to her, her husband, and her divinely prescribed role. It is also considered a betrayal of her community. If a woman is dishonored, it is her family's responsibility to protect or avenge her honor. For an unmarried woman, this responsibility falls on her parents and unmarried brothers. After she is married, it is her husband's responsibility.

Peristiany observed that some aspects of honor are sex-linked. Honor mandates that men and women behave in specific but different ways. For men, honor is enhanced by the evaluation of their actions. For Pitsilloi men, their honor is determined by what they do. Men are motivated to assert or prove their masculinity as a means of establishing honor. For women, it is almost the opposite: family honor is assessed by their passivity. It is through their modesty and inaction that they bring honor to the family.

When villagers interact with unfamiliar persons, stereotypes guide the actions of the parties. These stereotypes often lead to mistrust between the actors. Within these impersonal stereotypes, there is no concern for *philotimo*—going beyond normative honor expectations. Instead, each party seeks maximum immediate personal gain. Peristiany notes that within these impersonal situations, the weaker party may seek to establish a relationship with the other party to engage *philotimo*. This might be through

22. Ibid., 182.

23. According to Peristiany, this refers to a colloquial saying that a woman shows her 'skins' to only two people: her husband and the midwife. A skinless woman has no feeling of shame.

claims of extended familial friendships. He observes that even acknowledging the other person's superior status may be sufficient to establish some level of relationship and obligation to act honorably in their dealings.

From his time in Alona, Peristiany formulated several conclusions which he applied to "societies of this type" concerning male honor. First, he states that it is necessary for each male to regularly assert his superiority or right to equal esteem within society in an agonistic manner or risk losing it. "A true man is one who is prepared to stake everything on one throw of the dice. This Greek is a keen gambler attracted more powerfully by the risk than by the gain, more that is, by the opportunity of proving himself than the prize."[24] Secondly, in the absence of a relational context, the Pitsillos finds it challenging to know how to act. Accordingly, he seeks to convert the impersonal relationship into a personal one. Once the personal relationship is established, the ground rules for asserting his honor become clear. Finally, *philotimo* is achieved more than it is ascribed. *Philotimo* requires skill and courage more than brute strength. Generosity is more highly valued than the selfish use of wealth and possessions.

Pitt-Rivers's Andalusian Studies

Julian Pitt-Rivers examined the history of honor and shame in Western Europe and its evidence within Andalusian society of the 1950s and 60s. In addition to differing expectations between the sexes, he observed that honor codes were not uniform across social levels. The common, or lower-class's expectations and actions were different from those of the middle class (*señoritos*) and the aristocracy. Furthermore, imputations

24. Ibid., 188.

against one's honor were most important within one's social circle and not across social strata. Most of his studies focused on the common people.

Within Western Europe, Pitt-Rivers identified some common general concepts of honor. "Honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his *claim* to pride, but it is also the acknowledgment of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his *right* to pride."[25] In another sense, honor represents society's notions of ideal behavior and the individual's attempt to personify them. "Honour felt becomes honour claimed and honour claimed becomes honour paid."[26] Pitt-Rivers refers to the bestowal of honor as the "fount of honour." This spring, from which an individual desires to drink, is sourced from the court of public opinion, the monarchy, and judicial combat. As such, challenges and claims to honor (or removal thereof) must occur in front of witnesses.

Pitt-Rivers notes that honor and shame are synonymous when referring to an individual's reputation. Shame is the concern for one's reputation and the public recognition of that sentiment. However, shame becomes the equivalent of dishonor in certain gender-based circumstances. For a woman, shame (i.e., concern for reputation) is mostly concerned with sexual purity. In this light, it is proper for her to act with shyness, bashfulness, or timidity. These are all viewed positively. However, these same traits in a man are considered dishonorable.

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25. Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. by J. G. Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965): 21.

26. Ibid., 22.

Similarly, a man's concern for his reputation (i.e., shame) means that he must defend it, including engagement in physical violence or even sexual promiscuity. These actions would have the exact opposite effect for a woman. A shameless person engages in dishonorable conduct (e.g., theft, begging, sexual promiscuity for women). Their shameless reputation has been firmly established in the court of public opinion. In Andalusia, these individuals are often called by their nicknames, rather than their Christian names, and live beyond society's moral norms. These persons acceptance of such treatment from society is confirmation of their shameless status. Pitt-Rivers concludes that honor originates with the individual and is validated in the court of public opinion. On the other hand, shame often originates in the court of public opinion and, if not challenged or reversed, settles upon the individual. Figure 1.1 summarizes the relationship between honor, shame, and dishonor by gender as defined by Pitt-Rivers.

<table>
<tr><td>HONOR
Ethically Neutral</td><td colspan="3">HONOR = SHAME
Ethically Valued</td><td>SHAME
Ethically Neutral</td><td>SHAME = DISHONOR
Ethically Negative</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Masculinity
(Desire for Precedence)
Willingness to Defend Reputation
Refusal to Submit to Humiliation</td><td>Authority over Family

Manliness</td><td>Honesty
Loyalty
Concern for Reputation</td><td>Sexual Purity

Discretion</td><td>Shyness
Retraint

Timidity</td><td>

Acceptance of Humiliation

Failure to Defend Reputation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Deriving from Natural Qualities</td><td>Deriving from Education</td><td>Deriving from Natural Qualities</td><td>Deriving from Absence of Natural Qualitiies</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Behavior Appropriate to Males</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="2">Inappropriate to Both Sexes</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Behavior Appropriate to Females</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1.1. Honor-shame gender dynamics.[27]

Honor is not only related to the individual but the social group to which that person belongs. Dishonorable conduct by any individual reflects upon the honor of all. As Peristiany observed in the Cypriot highlands, the family is the basic social unit. However, honor groups may also go as far as the country and its monarch. These are

27. Ibid., 44.

groups to which a person is born, not chosen by free will. “In both the family and the monarchy, a single person symbolizes the group whose collective honour is vested in his person. The members owe obedience and respect without redress.”[28] Pitt-Rivers notes that for these reasons, patricide and regicide are considered sacrilegious, while homicide is not.

“Honour is at the apex of the pyramid of temporal social values and it conditions the hierarchical order. Cutting across all other social classifications it divides social beings into two fundamental categories, those endowed with honour and those deprived of it.”[29] Within this societal context, honor needs to be asserted and validated. However, the power to slight another man’s honor depends upon the relative status of the contestants. A person of inferior status does not have sufficient honor to denigrate a superior. Only social equals are answerable to challenges of honor. A man of higher status might choose to punish an inferior’s insolence, but there is no enhancement to his honor in doing so. In light of this, the monarch’s honor is subject only to God because the monarch has no earthly equals within their dominion. Since a challenge to honor can only come from an apparent equal, the force of a challenge to honor comes from the fact that it attempts to establish equality or superiority over the affronted person. A person in authority does not reproach the honor of subordinates by exercising that authority. There is no dishonor in obedience to a person in authority.

28. Ibid., 36.

29. J. G. Peristiany, “Introduction,” in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), 10.

When other means of redress fail, the ultimate vindication of honor is physical violence—a sort of trial by ordeal. In Western Europe, this ultimately took the form of duels. The objective of the duel was not necessarily victory but "satisfaction." The offended party issued a challenge to the person whom he perceived had impugned his honor. This challenge invoked the honor of his offender and demanded satisfaction. The offender either had to accept the challenge or retract whatever had offended the challenger and offer apologies. Duels share similarities with judicial combat, which was used to validate oaths but was different from feuds. God would not protect the person who lied or used God's name in vain. As such, there was an air of divine sanction to the preservation of one's honor. Pitt-Rivers notes that duels are different from the medieval practice of jousting. The latter promoted competition for honor, while the former were a means of settling disputes of honor.[30]

Intention plays a significant role in honor dynamics. A person engages their honor only through their sincere intentions. If actual intent was not behind a promise, then a person's honor is not damaged when they fail to fulfill that promise. At the heart of the matter is the social relationship between the parties. The right to the truth exists only where honor or respect is due. In this light, it is not necessarily dishonorable for a person to lie or break their word if no such social commitment exists. For example, a parent can lie to a child, but it is dishonorable for a child to lie to their parent. A lie with the intention to deceive could be seen as honorable, but to publicly call someone a liar is a serious affront to their honor. In light of this, the oath—to invoke that which is sacred—

30. Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," 29.

takes on significance for honor.[31] The freely-given oath activates a curse against the person making that oath in the eventuality that he fails to stand by his word. If he fails, he is dishonored.

Pitt-Rivers noted seeming paradoxes between the notions of honor and social strata. In particular, he noted that members of the aristocracy, who claim honor based upon their lineage, seem to have little concern for acting honorably—specifically concerning sexual purity. Pitt-Rivers concludes that this is due to the higher degree of honor and status of the aristocracy received by birth, which is not readily forfeited. As such, the aristocracy (especially women) are not bound by societal norms. With the common people, honor is not by birthright, but from their family's reputation and actions as judged by the fount of honor—their community.

Bourdieu North African Studies

Pierre Bourdieu's work in the Kabylia region of Northern Algeria seems to have significantly influenced biblical scholars' (primarily Bruce Malina's) understanding of warrior engagements in the Bible. Bourdieu researched several different tribes and villages of varying sizes between 1957 and 1961. Kabyle society has a refined honor vocabulary. The primary term referenced by Bourdieu is *nif*. He claims that *nif* is the "cardinal virtue" upon which the Kabyle patrilineal system is based. In essence, it is esteem and respect for one's lineage and the desire to live up to that ideal. Bourdieu refers to *nif* as a "point of honour," something to which there can be a reply. In contrast to

31. Pitt-Rivers uses "sacred" in an inclusive sense to include God, sacred relics, loyalty to a sovereign, the health of his mother, etc. These are those things that anchor him and his position within society.

Pitt-Rivers's observations in Andalusia, birth does not confer nobility. A man may become noble through honorable actions.

H'urma refers to honor that is sacred or taboo (*h'aram*). Violation of *h'urma* constitutes sin or sacrilege. A violation of *nif* may provoke outrage at the offense, but a violation of *h'urma* mandates vengeance. *Nif*, honor attached to a person and their family, requires a response to an attack on *h'urma*. That responsibility extends beyond the individual to other family members, should the need arise, in order of their close relationship. A failure to respond is considered cowardice. The resulting total loss of *nif* has one outcome: exile. As such, the integrity of *h'urma* depends upon the integrity of *nif*. A person's esteem is called *esser*. *Esser* refers to the prestige, presence, or "glory" of an individual. In a sense, *esser* protects *nif* in that it impedes challenges from others. Bourdieu admits that *esser* is challenging to define. However, it is also fragile and relatively easy to lose.

The idea of *h'aram* in Kabyle society is tied to space. The Kabyle identify the sacred that honor must protect as "one's home, one's wife, one's rifles."[32] *H'aram* is most closely tied to the feminine world—the world of home—which is secret, in contrast to the masculine world—the public square. A man that spends too much of the day in his house is considered suspect. A man must be seen in the public arena to be respected. *H'urma* is linked to the feminine, while *nif* is a masculine virtue. The rifle is the embodiment of *nif*, and the secrecy of the home is the embodiment of *h'urma*. This link between the sacred, *h'urma*, and *nif* explains how a father may put aside personal feelings

32. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Sentiment of Honour in Kabyle Society," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), 219.

of love for a daughter and kill her for a violation of *h'urma*. *Nif* necessitates the protection of *h'urma* at all costs.

Bourdieu identifies the "challenge and riposte" exchanges common to interpersonal, family, clan, and village encounters. He likens this to the rules of a game by which everyone is expected to play. A person who does not understand the rules or fails to play by them is considered *amahbul* (shameless).[33] This definition of a shameless person is more comprehensive than what was observed in Andalusia by Pitt-Rivers. For the people of the *Puebla*, the equivalent term for a shameless person refers to those of limited mental capacity or those with no concern for social norms whatsoever. In Kabyle society, this term also includes outsiders unfamiliar with the rules of engagement.

The challenge and response dynamics are integral to developing, validating, and preserving honor among the Kabyle. According to Bourdieu, they spring from the mutual recognition of the equality of honor amongst the men:

> 'The man without enemies is a donkey,' say the Kabyles, meaning not so much that he is stupid as that he is over-passive. 'The accomplished man (*argaz elkamel*),' said an old Kabyle, 'must always be on the alert, ready to take up the slightest challenge. He is the guardian of honour (*amh'ajer*), watching over his own honour and over that of his group. There is nothing worse than to pass unnoticed, like a shadow. Thus, not to greet someone, is to treat him like an object, like an animal or a woman. The challenge, on the contrary, is a highlight in the life of the one who receives it.'

To participate in the social game of challenge and riposte is how men demonstrate their manliness. The court of public opinion determines the outcome. As such, the challenge/offense and the subsequent response(s) require witnesses. The engagement is initiated when a man challenges another's honor, or his honor is offended by another's

33. Ibid.,193.

actions. The challenged man must then evaluate how he responds. He can riposte, and in doing so, the exchange—the game—continues. A lack of response may be viewed positively or negatively. The absence of response is dishonorable, while a refusal to riposte can be a positive, honorable response. The rules which dictate the proper riposte are discussed below. Figure 1.2 summarizes challenge and riposte exchanges.

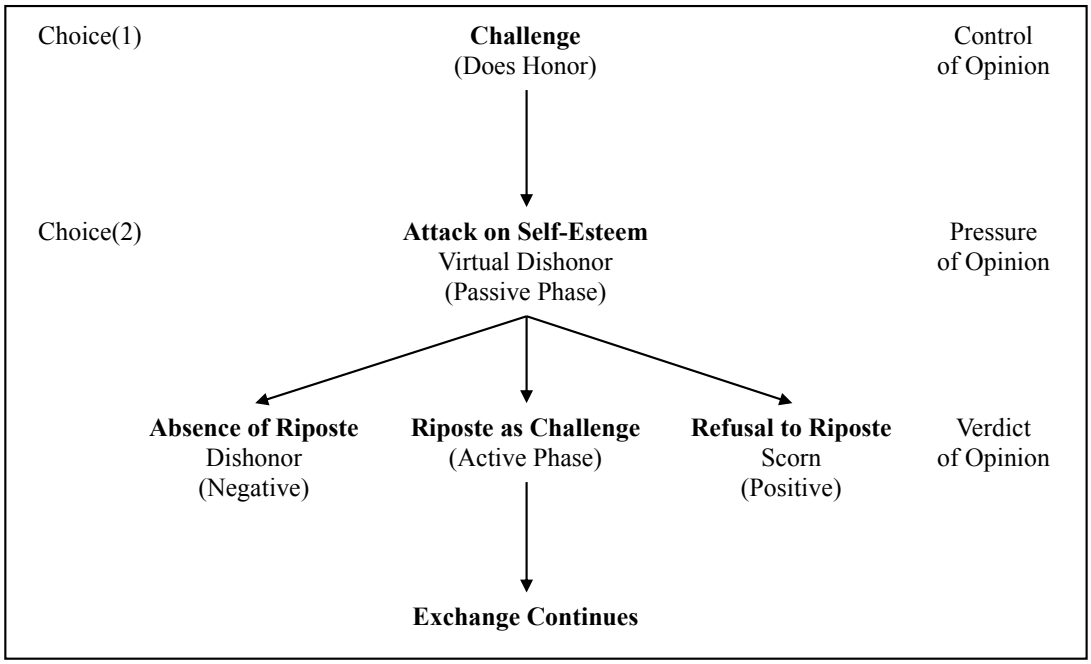

Figure 1.2. Bourdieu's challenge and riposte model.[34]

Bourdieu notes that this basic dynamic applies to personal matters, gift-giving, inter-family disputes, and even tribal warfare. In the latter case, hostilities were often pursued in the form of a strictly regulated game or competition. First, insults were exchanged, then physical fighting, encouraged by the women shouting and singing. The hostilities would end with the arrival of mediators. The objective was not to destroy one's opponent but to gain the upper hand. Bourdieu notes that these competitions safeguarded

34. Ibid., 215.

the social order, where points of honor could be expressed via institutionalized forms. Within this framework, war and fighting take on a different meaning than in Western culture:

> The fighting was a game whose stake is life and whose rules must be obeyed scrupulously if dishonor is to be avoided; rather than being a struggle to the death, it is a competition of merit played out before the tribunal of public opinion, an institutionalized competition in the course of which are affirmed the values that stand at the very basis of the existence of the group and which assure its preservation.[35]

For the Kabyle, the rituals of challenge and riposte are a symbolic expression of the values and beliefs they hold most dear. To act dishonorably can result in a punishment that is most feared: banishment. Those under a ban are excluded from the distribution of food and all community activities. It is a symbolic death.[36]

Fundamental to the challenge and riposte described by Bourdieu is the inherent equality of honor. More specifically, when a man issues a challenge, he inherently assumes that the person challenged is worthy of honor. The challenged person must be in a position to provide a riposte. Bourdieu defines three corollaries that follow from this principle. First, a challenge involves the recognition of honor. It is through the challenge that a man can demonstrate his manliness to others and himself. The second corollary is that to challenge a man who is incapable of riposte dishonors the challenger. It is dishonorable to take unfair advantage or to crush one's opponent. A man who does this exposes himself to humiliation. In such a case, the dishonor is irreparable. The person in a stronger position should not push their advantage too far and should act in moderation.

35. Ibid., 202.

36. Ibid., 230.

It is worth noting that the challenged person may sometimes tactically seek to portray themselves as unable to riposte in an effort to sway public opinion to their side. Bourdieu's third corollary is that a man should only respond to a challenge (or offense) made by one's equal. If the challenger is deemed unworthy of making the challenge, then a response is improper—even dishonorable. In essence, it is the nature of the response that gives the challenge its meaning.[37]

Based upon these corollaries, perceived social status plays a large role in how one responds to a challenge and the resulting impact on honor. If the parties are of equal status, then a response is expected. If none is given, the challenged person is considered to be *amahbul* (shameless). They are viewed as weak. Their own actions bring about their dishonorable state, which is permanent. If the challenger is superior, then the challenged person must play the game. Their decision to riposte gives them a victory, regardless of the outcome. The only losing outcome for the challenged is not to respond. In such a situation, the superior challenger receives a double dishonor. He has abused his superior status by challenging an inferior opponent, and he has defeated an unworthy opponent.

On the other hand, if the challenger is of inferior status, the challenged man must be careful in his response. He runs the risk of dishonoring himself by responding to an inferior challenge. The wiser course of action is to abstain from a response and act as though he disdains the offender. In this case, failure to riposte does not equal cowardice or dishonor. While these examples seem clear cut, Bourdieu acknowledges that real-life situations can be more ambiguous. Ultimately, the court of public opinion judges whether

37. Ibid., 199–200.

a non-reply is out of fear or out of scorn. In such uncertainty, the honorable default tends towards riposte.

Malina's Challenge and Response Model

Bruce Malina builds upon the Mediterranean honor theories discussed above. He combines these with evidence from Greek and Roman writers to describe honor values for the first-century Mediterranean world. Malina defines honor as socially expected attitudes and behaviors where authority, gender status, and respect intersect. Authority is the ability to control the behavior of others, not through physical force. Gender status reflects the expectations placed on a person based on biological gender. Respect refers to the expectations of a person related to those who hold control over their existence. Malina notes that biblical texts refer to this as "piety" or "fear."

Consistent with the studies conducted by Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and Bourdieu, Malina identifies honor values for the first-century Mediterranean world as follows. "Honor is the value of a person in his/her own eyes—their claim to worth. It is also the person's value in the estimation of their social group."[38] So, honor is a claim to worth and the social acknowledgment of it by their group. Honor requires actions and judgment that takes place with the presence of witnesses. Others must validate a claim to honor before it can become honor bestowed.

In many ways, Malina likens honor to wealth. One can be born into an honorable family. Malina notes that biblical genealogies function to establish the social status and honor of individuals based on lineage.[39] Honor can be given by an authority such as God,

38. Malina, *New Testament World*, 30.

39. Ibid., 32.

the king, or a member of the elite class. Acquired honor is received when one excels over others in social interactions. The means by which one acquires honor is via "challenge and response." Regardless of how one receives honor, it can be lost.

Malina builds on Bourdieu's challenge and riposte framework. Malina's model includes four aspects to the challenge and response. The process is initiated with a challenge to enter the social space of another by word or action. This challenge can be positive but is more often negative. The challenger should be of roughly equivalent social status to the person challenged. Second, the person challenged must evaluate his perception of the challenge. In other words, does the challenge engage their honor, or does the community perceive this to be a challenge to honor? Thirdly, the receiver must determine how to respond. If the challenger is perceived to be of lower social standing, the recipient may positively reject the challenge by showing disdain or scorn. The receiver may accept the challenge and offer a counter-challenge. When the counter-challenge is issued, the cycle continues. If the recipient offers no response to the challenge, they dishonor themselves. The final aspect is the public verdict—a determination of the winner of the exchange, who gains honor, and the loser, who receives dishonor.[40] Figure 1.3 summarizes Malina's challenge and response model.

40. Ibid., 33–36.

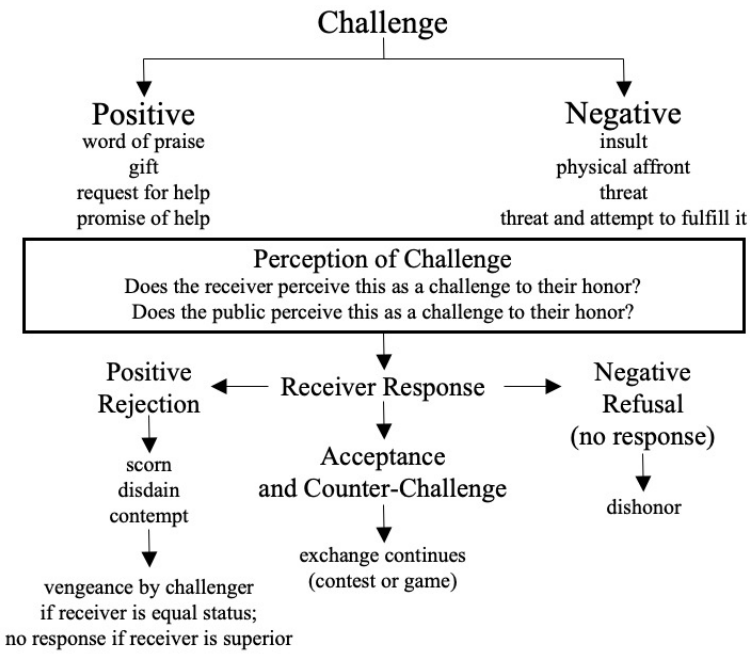

Figure 1.3. Malina's challenge and response framework.[41]

Malina claims that every social interaction with a social equal outside one's family or group of trusted friends was perceived as a challenge to honor in the first-century Mediterranean world. These interactions included dinner invitations, gift-giving, marriage arrangements, business ventures and transactions, and debates over matters of law. Consistent with Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and Bourdieu, Malina labels this culture as agonistic due to the constant competition for honor.

An important observation articulated by Malina is the concept of limited good. The resources necessary for life, land, water, food, wealth, etc., were finite. This finite view of the world extended to honor, respect, power, influence, security, and safety. As such, every challenge and response engagement must result in a win, tie, or loss. Acquired honor must result in the loss of honor for someone else. The natural result of

41. Ibid., 34.

this view is a desire to maintain harmony and stability to preserve one's honor and that of the family group. This preservation was accomplished through defensive strategies and dyadic alliances (patron-client relationships).[42] While the finite view of honor seems to apply to inherited honor, Malina is less clear on whether it applies to bestowed honor. It seems improbable that for a god or king to bestow honor required the diminishment of their honor or that of someone else.[43]

As will be discussed in later chapters, the dialogues analyzed from the books of Samuel portray aspects of this challenge and response dynamic. However, not all follow the pattern outlined by Malina. As will also be shown, this cultural interaction is only one layer of the dialogue.

Stewart's Cross-Cultural Model

The models discussed so far are all based upon the bipartite theory: honor has an inward and outward component. Inward honor is the value of a person in their own eyes, their claim to honor or honorableness. In contrast, outward honor is the societal evaluation of a person's honor—one's reputation. Under the bipartite theory, there must be witnesses to a challenge to honor for the challenge to be real. Therefore, a disparagement made in private is no challenge to honor since there can be no ruling in the court of public opinion.

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42. Ibid., 89–90.

43. There are scenarios whereby a god or king might judge persons' actions, rewarding (honoring) those who act correctly and punishing (dishonoring) those who do wrong. This sort of retributive justice could be evidence of the finite nature of honor. However, to consider that this is the only means by which gods or kings bestow honor would be too great a generalization. Malina seems to leave the question unanswered.

Stewart identifies problems with the bipartite theory, chief of which is that it does not account for insults. "Calling me a swine cannot, as has been noted, affect my inner honor, my honorableness; and it may equally well not affect my outer honor, my reputation (especially, but not exclusively, if there are no witnesses). Yet to say this to me is—for a European—a perfect example of an offense against my honor."[44] Stewart's example may take the insult too literally. Is calling someone a "swine" intended to call them a pig, or does it refer to boorish, dishonorable qualities and behaviors? However, the general critique of the bipartite theory is valid. A ridiculous or unbelievable claim is not a challenge to one's honor. Furthermore, if said in private, the court of public opinion has no sway.

Stewart questions whether honor is equivalent to the possession of a genuine personal quality. Instead, he argues that it is more dependent upon external circumstances. For example, Samson lost his strength when his hair was cut (Judg 16:19), reflecting a change to Samson's nature or disposition. However, a person may lose honor without any such change. A person might make a dishonorable decision without becoming a different person. "To have honor seems, then, to be like being American (in the sense of possessing U.S. citizenship) or being poor—a quality relating to external circumstances of the individual, which, while it *may* change him when acquired or shed, does not *necessarily* do so. Like poverty, it may be closely related to certain true personal qualities without itself being one."[45]

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44. Frank H. Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 19.

45. Ibid., 20.

Stewart proposes that honor is "the right to be treated as having a certain worth" or a right to respect. Stewart claims that internal and external honor are two sides of the same coin—the right to honor. He refers to this as a claim-right. A person has the right to claim honor, and society has an obligation to treat the person with respect. However, he is quick to note that the specific nature of that right is variable and often difficult to pin down. "Honor is a right rather than it is a right to a particular thing."[46] The nature of the honor claim-right is specific to each culture. How honor is allocated is known as the code of honor. These rules govern the gain and loss of honor. Everyone within the culture must abide by that culture's rules.[47] These codes define a sense of honor, which consists of a shared understanding of what constitutes honorable behavior and a desire to adhere to these behaviors.[48]

Stewart characterizes honor in two dimensions: horizontal and vertical—a concept that he takes from Correa.[49] Vertical honor, or positive honor, is "the right to special respect enjoyed by those who are in some way superior. Correa states, "vertical honor is, therefore, *immanent honor*, which exists by virtue of birth or extraordinary or unusual merits in the person, and that occasionally can be derived from official and state positions. . . .Vertical honor acted as a *differentiating* factor in the upward sense of *status*, as horizontal honor worked with a sense of *equalization* as a symbol of social

46. Ibid., 21.

47. Racine, "Service and Honor," 70.

48. Stewart, *Honor*, 47–48.

49. Ibid., 59; Gustavo Correa, "El Doble Aspecto De La Honra En El Teatro Del Siglio XVII," *Hispanic Review* 26/2 (1958): 99–107.

cohesiveness."[50] This definition of vertical honor is much broader than the honor from social status defined by Pitt-Rivers and Bourdieu. Vertical honor also includes what Stewart calls "competitive honor," which is given to those who prove themselves to be exceptional individuals. He likens this to the classical Greek concept of *timē*. He notes Aristotle's writings on honor (*timē*) as evidence:

> Honour is the token of a man's being famous for doing good. It is chiefly and most properly paid to those who have already done good; but also to the man who can do good in future. Doing good refers either to the preservation of life and the means of life, or to wealth, or to some other of the good things which it is hard to get either always or at that particular place or time—for many gain honour for things which seem small, but the place and the occasion account for it. The constituents of honour are: sacrifices; commemoration, in verse or prose; privileges; grants of land; front seats at civic celebrations; state burial; statues; public maintenance; among foreigners, obeisances and giving place; and such presents as are among various bodies of men regarded as marks of honour. For a present is not only the bestowal of a piece of property, but also a token of honour; which explains why honour-loving as well as money-loving persons desire it. The present brings to both what they want; it is a piece of property, which is what the lovers of money desire; and it brings honour, which is what the lovers of honour desire.[51]

As Finley notes, "it is in the nature of honor that it must be exclusive, or at least hierarchic. When everyone attains equal honor, then there is no honor for anyone. Of necessity, therefore, the world of Odysseus was fiercely competitive, as each hero strove to outdo the others."[52]

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50. Correa, "La Honra," 100-101. English translation my own: "La honra vertical es, pues, honra inmanente, la cual existe en virtud de nacimiento o de méritos extraordinarios o fuera de lo común en la persona, y que ocasionalmente puede derivarse de posiciones oficiales y estatales . . . La honra vertical actuaba como factor diferenciador en el sentido ascendente de status, al paso que la honra horizontal obraba con un sentido de igualamiento en calidad de símbolo de cohesión social."

51. Aristotle, *Rhet.* I.v.9.

52. Moses I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, rev. ed. (New York: Viking, 1965), 126.

Horizontal, or negative, honor is the right to respect. It is something that a person seeks to preserve and defend. For Correa, horizontal honor refers to "the complex relationships between community members in the horizontal sense of the group. Such a concept of honor can be defined as *fame* or *reputation* and rested entirely on the opinion that the other had of the person."[53] Horizontal honor can be lost but never increased (hence, negative honor). Stewart's logic is that if one had the right to more honor than others, then the respect is no longer the respect due among equals. Stewart finds similarities between horizontal honor and the Roman term *existimatio*. He cites Callistratus, who claimed that *existimatio* could be preserved, diminished, lost, or restored, but not something that could be increased or built up. He suggests that the English term "good name" may be roughly equivalent.[54]

Stewart notes that horizontal honor tends to be reflexive. In other words, a slight to one's personal (horizontal) honor requires a response, or it diminishes one's honor. Much like the challenge and response concepts of Bourdieu and Malina, how one chooses to respond is a matter of perceived equality with the challenger. The proper response is highly subjective, in line with cultural codes of honor. Strangely, Stewart finds no evidence of reflexive honor in Greek or Roman writings. While Romans were sensitive about their honor, there is little proof that every insult was a slight to one's honor:

> The Romans were sensitive about their honor, and various kinds of *iniuria* are explicitly described as pertaining to *dignitas*, or to *existimatio*, or to *ignominia*.

53. Correa, "La Honra," 101. English translation my own: "La honra horizontal, en cambio, se refiere a las complejas relaciones entre los miembros de la comunidad en el sentido horizontal de grupo. Tal concepto de honra puede ser definido como fama o reputación y descansaba por entero en la opinión que los demás tuvieran de la persona."

54. Stewart, *Honor*, 57.

> Nevertheless, there is nothing to suggest that this honor was reflexive: in the long and varied list that can be drawn up from the legal sources of things that made a person infamous, we nowhere find it written that a man brings infamy upon himself if he fails to prosecute (or otherwise retaliate against) another who slapped him in the face, or who write epigrams against him, or who seduced his wife. Nor is it likely that society had hard-and-fast rules about the matter.[55]

Stewart's observations regarding challenges to honor in the Greco-Roman world seem at odds, to a degree, with Malina, who makes no real distinction concerning the nature of honor challenge. The real issue seems to be, is the behavior considered a challenge to honor, or not? In this regard, it is possible to reconcile their positions. If there is an apparent slight to honor, then a response is required.

Stewart's honor research developed from his study of the Bedouin in the Sinai Peninsula. His approach is more lexical than the descriptive approach of anthropologists such as Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and Bourdieu. His focus is on the use of words and language, specifically as represented in Bedouin law. According to Stewart, the Bedouin are known for their legalistic mentality. Their system of customary laws is sophisticated and figures prominently within their culture. He notes that honor (*ʿird*) figures prominently in Bedouin law and that there are virtually no rights or duties connected with *ʿird* that function outside the law.[56]

ʿIrd is not the only word used by the Bedouin in the context of honor. The more common word used is *wajh*, which translates to "face." Anything involving "face" also involves *ʿird*, but the converse is not always the case. Stewart observes that "face" is something that cannot be taken away from a man but can become worthless. Sexual

55. Ibid., 67–68.

56. Ibid., 81.

violations of honor (against a woman) impugn the *ʿird* of the woman's guarantor/protector. However, it does not impact his "face." Virtually all other issues of honor impact both *ʿird* and *wajh*. In some cases, Stewart notes, *ʿird* appears to be a substitute for "face."[57]

Stewart also notes that there are "affronts to dignity" which do not involve *ʿird*. These include matters involving insults and the unreasonable refusal of offered hospitality. Affronts to dignity are not reflexive, so a man has significant leeway in how he chooses to respond. In order to compare the Bedouin view of personal honor with that of Europeans, Stewart provides a helpful analogy:

> If we imagine horizontal honor among the Bedouin as being a pie, we can say that personal honor is a slice of that pie—a slice that, in contrast to the rest of the pie, has a special name, *ʿird*. Among the Bedouin, personal honor is a relatively small part of the pie; in Europe it is larger, and it may be in some instances (e.g., in medieval Iceland) it is the whole pie, that is *any* failure by an equal to show proper respect is an offense against personal honor.[58]

The Bedouin consider *ʿird* as something a man possesses, much like a mouth or nose. At times, they speak of it like possessions or goods. It is not used in a way that would lead one to consider it to be a virtue. Therefore, *ʿird* is an internal claim-right within Bedouin society. However, Stewart also notes that the ancient Bedouin (pre-Islamic period) probably used *ʿird* in a much broader sense. The ancient usage probably included affronts to dignity. In this way, the ancient notion of *ʿird* was probably closer to the European view of honor.[59]

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57. Ibid., 99. Stewart gives the example of the expressions used by the Bedouin when giving a guarantee. The man may state, "this is in my *ʿird*" or "this is in my face." Both have the same meaning. However, other expressions only involve the word *wajh* (face)—even though *ʿird* is clearly at stake.

58. Ibid., 101.

59. Ibid., 103.

In Stewart's analysis, honor is binary. A person has it, or they do not. There are no instances where a person loses (or retains) a portion of his *ʿird*. The question, then, is, if a person loses their honor (is dishonored) can they recover it? Unlike Pitt-Rivers, Stewart maintains that it is possible to restore honor. However, he admits that this may be culturally specific.[60]

There are two ways that one may slight a man's honor (*ʿird*). The first, Stewart calls a "primary impugnment." The main characteristic of a primary impugnment is that the victim has been treated with disrespect, thereby besmirching his *ʿird*, regardless of intent. The second means is by "blackening." Blackening is a form of accusation that the man impugned has already done something that dishonors him. In other words, his right to respect is being denied. The most important reason for "blackening" is the failure to fulfill one's obligations as a guarantor. The accusation of blackening may involve the placement of a black stone or flag in a place where the public may see it. The offender is liable for restitution (*manshad*), which may include money and some form of symbolic restitution. Bedouin *ʿird* is reflexive. A failure to appropriately respond results in a loss of *ʿird*.[61]

Stewart's characterizes the Bedouin philosophy governing honor and the appropriate responses as rooted in obligation and offense. It involves three parties: the offender, the offended, and the guarantor. In this structure, the offended person is under the protection of the guarantor. When an offender commits some violation against a

60. Ibid., 125.

61. Ibid., 82–83.

person, there are two levels of offense, primary (against the offendee) and secondary (against the guarantor). The guarantor has an obligation to their protectee to address the offense since their *ʿird* has also been impugned. Figure 1.4 summarizes this relationship.

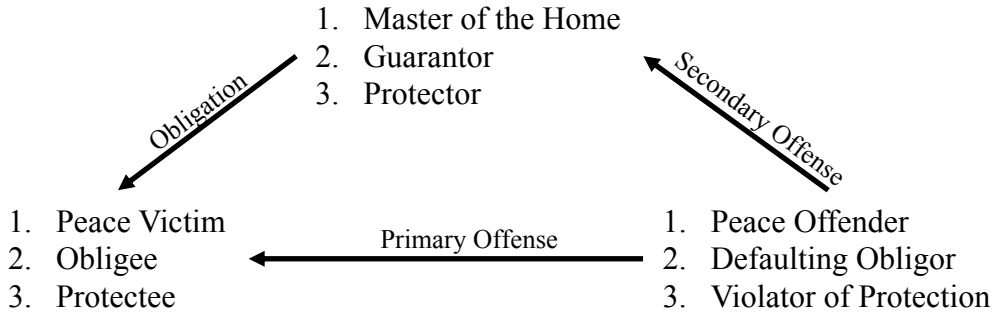

Figure 1.4. Bedouin honor and response.[62]

Once an individual is under protection, any offense against them is also an offense against their protector's honor. The protector has failed in their obligations to their protectee. If the protector fails (or delays) in their duty, they could be blackened. The offender may then owe restitution to both the offended person and the protector. A simple example of this would be a man who touches an unmarried woman inappropriately against her will. While the man has offended the woman, he has also offended her father—the protector. The father is obliged to seek justice for the offense for himself and his daughter. For the Bedouin, this model covers not only individuals but also property. If a man fears that his livestock or truck might be at risk from another, he can place it under the protection of another person. This relationship serves as an extra layer of deterrence from harm.

62. Ibid., 98.

This relationship model is evident within the biblical text. The book of Exodus picks up the story of Jacob's descendants living in the land of Egypt:

> After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them. (Exod 2:23–25, NRSV)

Following Stewart's model, YHWH is the protector, Israel is the protectee, and the new Pharaoh is the offender. By oppressing the Israelites, Pharaoh's offense is two-fold. He has offended not only the Israelites but also YHWH. If YHWH fails to act, YHWH's honor (or name) is subject to dishonor. The basis of this protection goes back to the covenant with Abraham. A failure on YHWH's part to respond to their cries would, in the Bedouin terminology, "blacken his face."

Further evidence of this relationship is the dialogue between YHWH and Moses during the golden calf incident at Mount Sinai (Exod 32). YHWH says to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation" (Exod 32:9–10). Moses uses honor language throughout his reply:

> Why should the Egyptians say, "It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth"? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, "I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever" (Exod 32:12–13, NRSV).

Moses appeals to YHWH's reputation among the nations—the court of public opinion. He also appeals to the covenant YHWH established with Abraham. In other words, YHWH is honor-bound to protect the children of Israel.

In summary, Stewart's view is that honor is a right—a right to respect as an equal. Honor can be lost. In order to keep honor, a person must follow the cultural code of honor. People who follow this same code of honor make up an honor group. Within its language, the honor group has at least one word or phrase frequently used when referring to this claim-right. In the case of the Bedouin, that word is *ʿird*. The Bedouin notion of *wajh* (face) has a broader range of uses, some of which include a right to respect. Whether honor is reflexive is culturally dependent. A man of honor must understand and abide by the code of honor. In Stewart's view, this view of honor is sufficiently generic to apply across cultures.

Facework Theory

Alongside the development of the bipartite models of Mediterranean honor, other sociologists were looking to the East for social theories. The basis for their theories is the Chinese concept of "face." There are two words in Chinese for "face": *lien* and *mien-tzu*. The reputation one achieves through living a successful life is *mien-tzu*. *Lien*, on the other hand, is the group respect a man receives based upon his moral reputation. *Lien* is the respect given to a man who can be counted on to act like a decent human being, regardless of the hardships involved. The earliest Chinese literary references to *mien-tzu* date to the fourth century BCE. *Lien* is a relatively recent term, first appearing in the K'ang-hsi dictionary from the Yuan Dynasty (1277–1367 CE).[63]

63. Hsien Chin Hu, "The Chinese Concepts of 'Face'," *American Anthropologist* 46/1 (1944): 45.

Erving Goffman was the first to take the Chinese concept of face and apply it to Western interpersonal behavior.[64] Goffman defined face "as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact."[65] Building on the work of Goffman and Brown & Levinson, Stephen Darwall uses different terminology to describe the same social traits. For Darwall, there is "recognition respect" and "appraisal respect." Recognition respect is the right of an individual to be taken seriously. Appraisal respect is the positive appraisal received from others.[66] Building on Darwall's analysis, Shuffleton links recognition respect to the person who meets specific behavior standards and expectations. Appraisal respect is more akin to esteem—recognition of demonstrated excellence or success.[67] These definitions tie closely to the Chinese terms *lien* and *mien-tzu*. Stella Ting-Toomey develops a more modern definition based upon her theory of face-negotiation:

> The concept of *face* is about identity respect and other-identity consideration issues within and beyond the actual encounter episode. Face is tied to the emotional significance and estimated calculations that we attach to our own social self-worth and the social self-worth of others. It is therefore a precious identity resource in communication because it can be threatened, enhanced, undermined, and bargained over—on both an emotional reactive level and a cognitive appraisal level. On the emotional level, a face-threatening act in a conflict situation can arouse a mixed package of identity-linked vulnerable emotions. On the cognitive appraisal level, the degree of face threat or face disrespect is experienced when

64. Winnie Cheng, "Speech Acts, Facework and Politeness: Relationship-building Across Cultures," in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, ed. Jane Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2014), 149.

65. Erving Goffman, "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction," *Reflections* 4/3 (2003): 7.

66. Stephen L. Darwall, "Two Kinds of Respect," *Ethics* 88/1 (1977): 38–39.

67. Amy Shuffleton, "Consider Your Man Card Reissued: Masculine Honor and Gun Violence," *Educational Theory* 65/4 (2015): 391.

> how we think we should be treated does not match with the reality of how the other person is actually treating us.[68]

These definitions share significant similarities with Pitt-Rivers's definition of honor, discussed earlier: "Honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his *claim* to pride, but it is also the acknowledgment of that claim, his excellence recognized by society, his *right* to pride."[69] Also common to the perspectives examined so far is the belief that a person has a right to respect. Whatever respect a person has claimed for themselves, others expect them to live up to that standard.

Goffman defines the term "face-work" as "the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face-work serves to counter-act "incidents"—that is events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face."[70] In this regard, Facework shares many things in common with earlier perspectives on challenge and response as a means to preserve, enhance, and defend honor. These definitions are so similar that it is clear that "face" and "honor" effectively describe the same characteristic or trait and how individuals go about preserving it. Goffman considered face and face-work to be components of universal human nature and societies everywhere.[71]

While "face" and "honor" may represent the same societal ideas, there are significant differences in the Eastern view of face preservation and the Mediterranean

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68. Stella Ting-Toomey, "The Matrix of Face: An Updated Face-Negotiation Theory," in *Theorizing About Intercultural Communication*, ed. William B. Gudykunst (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 73.

69. Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," 21.

70. Goffman, "Face-work," 8.

71. Ibid., 13.

perspectives discussed previously. Inherent within Goffman's face-work theory is the "rule of considerateness." In essence, a person will generally conduct themselves during an encounter in a manner that maintains his own face and the face of the other participants. There is a mutual interest in preserving face among the participants. For Goffman, this mutual interest is a condition of the engagement, not its ultimate goal. Regardless of whether the individual is attempting to enhance their face, express their true beliefs, reveal devaluing information about another, solve problems, or perform tasks, the interaction is governed by the rule of considerateness.[72] Since each participant is concerned with saving their own face and preserving the face of others, the natural response is cooperation—whether explicit or tacit. Each group may have different objectives but seeks to achieve those objectives while maintaining the face of others. Oetzel et al. refer to this mutual concern as the "locus of face," which is "the starting point for understanding face and facework as it determines an individual's interest and the direction of subsequent messages."[73]

The desire for the mutual preservation of face does not require that exchanges be polite. Valentina Pagliai, in her study of *Contrasto* (Tuscan improvised poetic verbal duels), argues that there is not necessarily a connection between face-work and politeness. She argues that insults are contextual. They may be part of the ritual and are not necessarily violent or face-threatening. "Face depends upon both the context and the audience, and that conceptualizations of face, (im)politeness, cooperation, and conflict

72. Ibid., 7–8.

73. John G. Oetzel et al., "A Typology of Facework Behaviors in Conflicts with Best Friends and Relative Strangers," *Communication Quarterly* 48/4 (2000): 399.

are at least partially ideological."[74] She notes that conflict is fundamental to the construction of social relations and social reality. Dawn Archer argues that insults, slurs, and backhanded compliments can act as strategic Facework moves designed to be either face-threatening or face-enhancing. She notes that their impact may be influenced by whether the other participant is a member of the in-group or out-group.[75]

On the basis that all cultures share aspects of face, Oetzel et al. sought to describe the impact of cultural differences on face-work/face-negotiation theory. Their study looked beyond the mere preservation of face among participants to examine how they sought to achieve the conflict's substantive goals in light of their cultural perspectives of face. They applied the concept of conflict styles combined with the two dimensions of concern within Facework theory: concern for self and concern for others. They categorize this concern into three groups: self-face (concern for one's own self-image), other-face (concern for another's image), and mutual-face (concern for both parties' images or the "image" of the relationship). By combining conflict styles with these conceptual concerns, they developed five styles for handling interpersonal conflict. These five styles are integrating (high self and other), compromising (middle on both dimensions), dominating (high self, low other), obliging (low self, high other), and avoiding (low on both dimensions).[76] Figure 1.5 depicts these styles and their relationship to cultural concepts of face.

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74. Valentina Pagliai, "Conflict, Cooperation, and Facework in Contrasto Verbal Duels," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20/1 (2010): 87.

75. Dawn Archer, "Slurs, Insults, (Backhanded) Compliments and other Strategic Facework Moves," *Language Sciences* 52 (2015): 83.

76. Oetzel et al., "Facework Behaviors," 400.

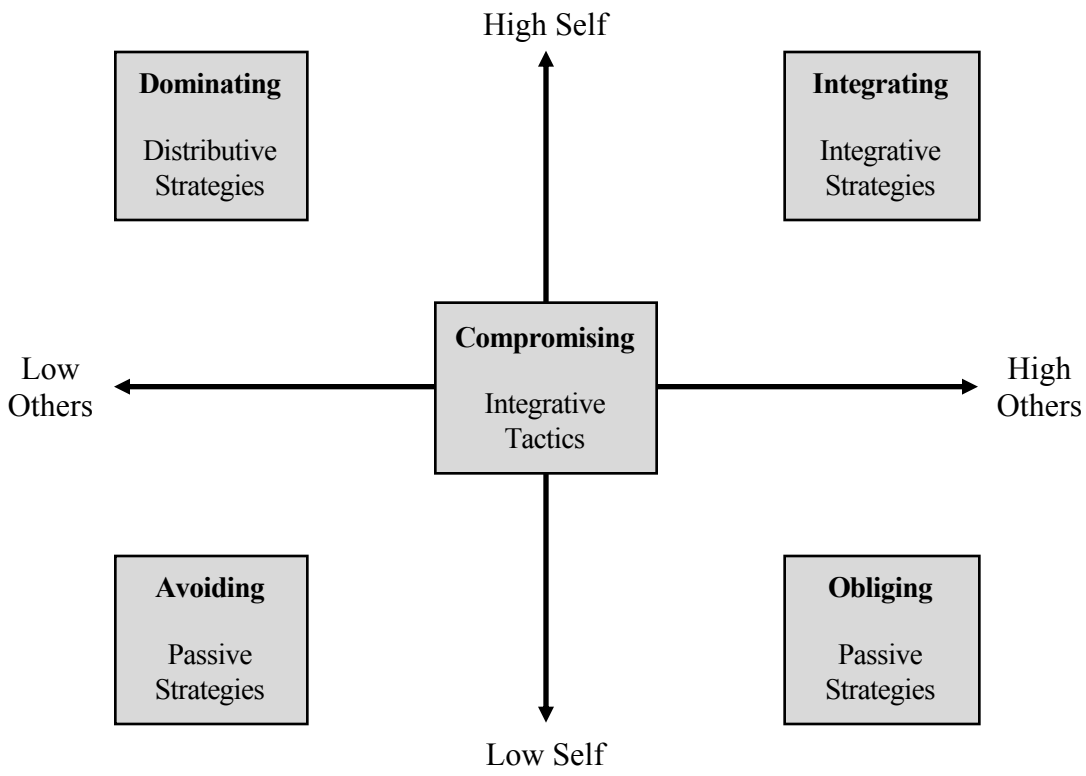

Figure 1.5. Cultural conflict styles.

Citing others' research on conflict strategies, they relate how conflict strategies are applied within these five conflict styles. Alan Sillars identified three conflict strategies. Passive/indirect strategies involve no direct discussion of the problem. These strategies may include avoidance, hinting, yielding, or merely letting the problem take care of itself. Distributive strategies seek explicit acknowledgment and discussion of the problem and seek concessions from the other party. In contrast, integrative strategies involve explicit acknowledgment and discussion but sustain a neutral evaluation of the other party. Integrative strategies do not seek concessions but desire win-win or mutually acceptable solutions.[77] Oetzel et al. note that integrative tactics are consistent with the integrating

77. Alan L. Sillars, "Attributions and Communication in Roommate Conflicts." *Communication Monographs* 47 (1980): 188.

and compromising conflict styles. Distributive tactics align with the dominating style, and passive/indirect tactics are consistent with the avoiding and obliging styles.[78]

How do cultural variability and in-group/out-group status influence conflict behaviors? First, it must be acknowledged that "culture" and "cultural groups" may be challenging to define. Culture may better be described by differences rather than as a "thing."[79] Nevertheless, for Oetzel et al., the cultural dimension is rooted in whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic. Individualistic cultures tend to place a higher valuation on self over others, while collectivist cultures place a higher valuation on others than the self. Individualistic cultures tend towards direct strategies, like integrating and dominating, while collectivist cultures rely more on avoiding and obliging strategies.[80] When dealing with members of an out-group, all cultures place greater emphasis on self-face than other-face or mutual-face. Similarly, when dealing with in-group members, self-face importance diminishes out of greater concern for other-face or mutual face. The degree of intimacy between individuals is strongly correlated with the concern for other-face.[81] Table 1.1 summarizes the generalized attribute tendencies of each culture type.[82]

78. Oetzel et al., "Facework Behaviors," 400.

79. Kathy Domenici and Stephen W. Littlejohn, *Facework: Bridging Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 149. Domenici and Littlejohn cite various scholars who describe culture as "a complex system of three large sectors—a system of abstractions, a system of artifacts, and a system of language and communication." They claim it might be challenging to force-fit any individual into a singular definition of culture.

80. Oetzel et al., "Facework Behaviors," 402.

81. Ibid., 403–4.

82. Ting-Toomey, "Matrix of Face," 84–85.

Table 1.1. Individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures – generalized attributes

	Individualistic	Collectivistic
Concern	Self-Face	Other-face Mutual-face
Conflict Strategy	Dominating	Avoidance Integrative
Conflict Style	Dominating/Competing Assertive/Aggressive	Avoidance Obliging Compromising to Integrative

Another cultural factor beyond individualist/collectivist is power distance. Power distance is a measure of how cultures view status differentials. People in small power distance cultures place little emphasis on status distinctions. They prefer equitable distributions of rewards and costs based upon individual achievement. People in large power distance cultures are more accepting of unequal power structures. They are more accepting of the distribution of privileges, rewards, and sanctions based on social status, age, or gender identity.[83] Societies that rate high in individualism tend to be low in power distance, and those that rate high in collectivism tend to rate higher in power distance.[84]

Many face-work scholars identify conditions that impact one's response to a face-threatening process (FTP). These conditions may result in behaviors and responses that appear different from a culture's expected conflict strategy. These conditions are as follows:[85]

1. The more critical the rule that is violated is to the culture, the more severe the perceived FTP.
2. The larger the cultural distance between the parties, the more mistrust or misunderstanding develops in the FTP.

83. Ibid., 75.

84. Ibid., 76

85. Ibid., 77.

3. The more important the conflict issue (e.g., topic or imposition) as interpreted from the distinctive cultural angles, the greater the perceived FTP.

4. The more power the initiator has over the recipient, the more severe the recipient perceives the FTP.

5. The more harm the FTP produces, the more time and effort is required to repair the relationship.

6. The more the actor is perceived to be directly responsible for initiating the conflict, the more they are held accountable for the FTP.

7. The more the actor is viewed as an out-group member, the more severe the perceived FTP.

The greater the number of these conditions present, the more face-threatening the engagement is considered to be.

Let us consider the terms "honor" and "face" to be generally interchangeable, as the definitions would lead us to conclude. If so, there are challenges reconciling the Mediterranean model with facework theory. In particular, there seems to be a disconnect between the claimed collectivistic nature of Mediterranean culture(s) with its challenge and response framework and the conflict strategies of facework theory. According to Facework theory, collectivistic cultures place a higher value on others' honor/face than on self. This view is quite the opposite of what was observed by Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and Bourdieu in their studies. Based on their studies, one would logically conclude that Mediterranean society was highly individualistic. The challenge and response approach to honor, with its assumption that honor is a finite resource, fits more with a dominating conflict style than should be evident in a largely collectivistic society.

Perhaps one means of reconciling these theories is via the conditions outlined above, which alter one's response to a face-threatening process. For example, it might be possible that challenge and response engagements are only an issue for important rule

violations (per number 1). Minor infractions may be ignored or go unchallenged without impugning anyone's honor. Outgroup status also plays an essential role in challenge and response engagements (per number 7). The definition of in-group and out-group may also be variable based upon the situation. The father's household is the smallest in-group unit but may increase to extended family, clan, tribe, or even nation, depending upon the threat's nature. However, not all of these conditions seem to align with the Mediterranean theories. For example, number 4 enhances the perceived severity of the threat if the initiator (challenger) is more powerful than the recipient. In the Mediterranean models, it is not appropriate—even dishonorable—for a person of higher social standing or power to challenge a lesser/weaker individual. In some models, a superior's reprimand of someone under their authority is part of their job and is outside the challenge and response framework.

There are some warrior dialogues and related encounters in the books of Samuel where the traditional challenge and response model does not withstand the weight of scrutiny. In some of these instances, Facework theory may provide additional insights into the text's cultural dynamics. These are examined in chapter 3.

Challenges with Social-Scientific Interpretation

At its foundation, social-scientific interpretation (sometimes known as biblical sociology or social-scientific criticism) is closely linked with historical criticism's aims but seeks to go beyond it. Malina suggests that "the historical-critical method is not historical or critical enough because it does not take the social sciences seriously

enough."[86] Mark Sneed claims that "biblical sociology is the heir of historical criticism."[87] John Elliott takes a broader view of the social scientific approach:

> social-scientific criticism is a *sub-discipline of exegesis* and is inseparably related to the other operations of the exegetical enterprise: textual criticism, literary criticism, narrative criticism, historical criticism, tradition criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and theological criticism. Social-scientific criticism complements these other modes of critical analysis, all of which are designed to analyze specific features of the biblical texts.[88]

This approach aims to use the tools and resources of the social sciences to provide a more complete understanding of the biblical text and the historical, social, and cultural settings of the biblical communities. It seeks to understand the implicit and explicit meanings within the biblical text as they were influenced by the authors' social and cultural settings and intended audiences. Horrell contends that the social-scientific approach to biblical interpretation was born from the same social context of creative experimentation that gave rise to feminist and political/liberationist hermeneutics in the 1960s and 70s.[89] Proponents of the social-scientific approach claim that these tools, when properly applied, help remove implicit ethnocentric and anachronistic assumptions when interpreting biblical texts.[90] According to Cook and Simkins,

> Social-scientific criticism recognizes that the biblical texts have a social context in addition to a historical context—that the biblical authors and contemporary readers are social beings, subject to social forces, and that the biblical texts embed

86. Bruce Malina, "Why Interpret the Bible with the Social Sciences," *ABQ* 2/2 (1983): 120.

87. Mark Sneed, "Social Scientific Approach to the Hebrew Bible," *RC* 2/3 (2008): 288.

88. John H. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 7.

89. David G. Horrell, Introduction to *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, ed. David G. Horrell (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 3, 7.

90. Malina, *New Testament World*, 10–11.

> a social system. Social-scientific approaches thus provide the context for insights gleaned through historical and literary criticism.[91]

When appropriately applied, these approaches can elaborate and sometimes challenge the interpretations developed from other critical methods of inquiry.

The social-scientific approaches are diverse in their methods and applications. However, the methodologies are generally comparative. Some approaches seek to compare Western society (sociology) with ancient Israel. Others seek to compare ancient Israel with similar non-industrial contemporary societies (anthropology). Because the approaches involve the merger of social sciences with biblical studies, there are two ends of the spectrum from which one can approach the field. Using their expertise, a social scientist consults biblical studies to develop new insights into the biblical text or a biblical scholar consults social science studies to develop new insights into the biblical text. Both approaches share a common goal, but each approach is limited because the scholar is generally an expert in only one field. It is rare to find a scholar with Ph.D.'s in both fields of study, Jacques Berlinerblau being the primary exception.[92]

One of the primary tools used by practitioners of the social scientific approach is models. The term "model" has many synonyms: metaphor, analogy, pattern, parallel, type, symbol, or paradigm, to name a few. As Elliott notes, "Common to these terms, very broadly speaking, is their use in denoting similarities among properties for the purpose of clarification through comparison; that is, presenting the less well known in

91. Stephen L. Cook and Ronald A. Simkins, "Introduction: Case Studies from the Second Wave of Research in the Social World of the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 87 (1999): 4.

92. Sneed, "Social Scientific Approach," 288–89, 292.

terms of the more well known."[93] A model may serve as a connection between theories and observations. Elliott goes on to note that "the difference between a model and an analogy or metaphor lies in the fact that the model is *consciously structured* and *systematically arranged* in order to serve as a *speculative instrument* for the purpose of organizing, profiling, and interpreting a complex welter of detail."[94] When developed and appropriately applied, a social-scientific model should include a well-formulated idea or theory regarding the social group to which it applies, the aspects or properties of behavior examined, and how these aspects or behaviors fit together and affect each other.[95] A proper model must also specify, define, and control the inherent assumptions, both implicit and explicit.[96] It is essential to recognize that, whether conscious or not, models are an integral part of the human process of understanding and perception. Models are how we view and interpret the world.

The use of social-scientific theories and models for biblical interpretation is not without its critics. The fundamental criticism is that very few scholars are experts in both the social sciences and biblical studies, leading to a lack of credibility when a scholar from one field seeks to apply techniques from the other. Charles Carter notes the challenges facing biblical scholars:

> For scholars not trained in either sociology or anthropology, gaining even a cursory understanding of the historical context of these disciplines (that is,

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93. John H. Elliott, "Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: More on Methods and Models," *Semeia* 35 (1986): 3.

94. Ibid., 5.

95. Ibid., 6.

96. Cook and Simkins, "Introduction," 6.

> reading the classic works of Weber, Durkheim, and Marx) and of current theory is time-consuming and challenging. . . . The effect has been that many studies purporting to use social science methods are somewhat "eclectic."[97]

Related to this problem is biblical scholars' challenge to remain current with the studies, methodologies, and approaches used in the social sciences. Social theories used by biblical scholars to develop their models of biblical cultures may have been modified, disproven, or abandoned by sociologists. However, there may be little awareness of these advances and their implications for the validity of biblical interpretation.

Both sociologists and biblical scholars face challenges of objectivity in the data. For sociologists/anthropologists, cultural studies often rely on the responses provided by those within the culture. Do these data genuinely reflect the way things are, or merely the way the respondent wishes or expects it to be? Do the data represent the culture's value statements or actual behavior?[98] Another challenge is that most research adopts the male perspective, not considering how women might provide a different perspective.[99] The Bible is not immune to this either. For the biblical scholar, there is the recognition that the Bible is biased. Biblical texts presume far more than they explicitly state concerning the social world in which they were produced.[100] Furthermore, they do not necessarily reflect the only perspective or social norms of their society. Since the upper classes were responsible for the bulk of literary evidence, it is not a given that their perspectives or

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97. Charles E. Carter, "A Discipline in Transition: The Contributions of the Social Sciences to the Study of the Hebrew Bible," in *Community, Identity, and Ideology: Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Charles E. Carter and Carol L. Meyers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 24.

98. John K. Chance, "The Anthropology of Honor and Shame: Culture, Values, and Practice," *Semeia* 68 (1996): 145.

99. Ibid., 141.

100. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism*, 92.

actions reflect those of the ordinary people. Berlinerblau emphasizes that the biblical texts are saturated ideologically and cannot be trusted for objective material.[101] This bias is further complicated by the variety of sources, levels of redaction, and the author or compiler's distance from the events. For example, the Deuteronomist writes from the perspective of exile to interpret Israel's history, while the Chronicler writes from the perspective of return and restoration. Neither necessarily, reflects an unbiased perspective on the events described. Each shapes them for their own purposes. Common to both social science and biblical studies is the challenge to not read our modern culture into interpretations. Robert Carroll summarizes this challenge for the social-scientific approaches to biblical interpretation. "The reading of biblical texts from a sociological vantage point is not as simple or as straightforward as is often imagined to be the case. The Bible is like a dark glass in which we see our own reflections more often than the social reality which produced the text."[102]

A challenge of the anthropological studies is whether it is proper to extend local observations to more global principles. The ethnographic studies of Peristiany, Pitt-Rivers, and Bourdieu all focused on individuals, families, and small communities in specific locales with unique language and culture. Some have taken their work and sought to apply it across broader populations—even nations. Still, others seek to develop generalizations across vast regions, languages, and even historical periods. Herzfeld is particularly critical of how these ethnographic studies regarding honor and shame have

101. Jacques Berlinerblau, "The Present Crisis and Uneven Triumphs of Biblical Sociology: Responses to N. K. Gottwald, S. Mandell, P. Davies, M. Sneed, R. Simpkins, N. Lemche," in *Concepts of Class in Ancient Israel*, ed. Mark Sneed (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 104–6.

102. Robert P. Carroll, "Prophecy and Society," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives*, ed. R. E. Clements (New York: Cambridge, 1989), 220.

been generalized to the point of being "counter-productive."[103] The homogenization of these studies into a single view of Mediterranean honor and shame fails to recognize distinctive differences among social classes, gender, and free-will of individual actors. Wikan agrees that there are challenges with such generalizations: "'the value of a person in her or his own eyes but also in the eyes of her or his society' is a matter of greater complexity than has been acknowledged in the literature on honour and shame, and its elucidation requires a broader range of data than has commonly been marshalled."[104] It is important to note that Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers disavowed any interest in establishing a Mediterranean culture area. They were interested in the differences among these cultures as much as they were in the similarities.[105]

Critics of the social-scientific methodologies are quick to point out the problems that models introduce to biblical interpretation, specifically the improper use of social models for biblical interpretation. Horrell notes that a model-based approach can lead to historically or culturally variable evidence being interpreted through a generalized social behavior lens. In his view, what is "typical" might be no real explanation at all.[106] Specifics of behaviors in particular incidents become blurred with higher degrees of generalization and abstraction. Elliott likens the problem with models to the procrustean bed. In the story from Greek mythology, Procrustes would overpower strangers, forcing

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103. Michael Herzfeld, "Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems," *Man* 15/2 (1980): 349.

104. Wikan, "Shame and Honour," 649.

105. J. G. Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Introduction," in *Honor and Grace in Anthropology*, ed. J. G. Peristiany and Julian Pitt-Rivers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

106. David G. Horrell, "Models and Methods in Social-Scientific Interpretation: A Response to Philip Esler," *JSNT* 78 (2000), 84.

them to lie on one of his two beds. If they were too short for the bed, he would hammer and stretch them until they were the right size for the bed. If they were too long, he cut off whatever hung over the edges. As Elliott notes, fitting the bed took precedence over accommodating the guest.[107] In other words, the desire to make the model fit must not take precedence over the evidence within the text.

Given the challenges of evidence and methodology, how does one properly apply these methodologies to interpreting the biblical text? Horrell claims that the analysis must start with the evidence from the text rather than from any model. Rather than using models to interpret the text, the text should be used in comparison with the model to develop new questions and challenge ethnocentric and anachronistic assumptions.[108] Cook and Simkins offer a method for comparative analysis that will be the basis of this thesis:

> Many modernist critics have judged the use of cross-cultural comparisons in biblical exegesis to be particularly suspect. Again, the proper approach for the research is to avoid using comparative materials to construct a single model to which a given biblical structure or pattern must conform. Instead, the comparative materials are most useful in suggesting the complexity and range of possibilities at stake in various biblical structures and patterns. Comparative materials merely suggest new questions and new options in the interpretation of biblical texts. Exegesis of the biblical text is always the test of whether we have learned anything new about the Hebrew Bible based on comparative study.[109]

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107. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism*, 94.

108. Horrell, "Models and Methods," 91–92. Horrell uses an example from Esler's 1998 book *Galatians* to show how he improperly uses Malina's view of a Mediterranean man and his challenge and response model to interpret Paul's account of his visit to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10). Using Malina's models, Esler claims that Mediterranean culture was highly agonistic. He argues that Titus not being compelled to be circumcised was Paul's gloating over his success getting an uncircumcised Gentile with him to Jerusalem, rather than an acceptance of Paul's circumcision-free gospel. Horrell claims that Esler used the depiction of a Mediterranean man to explain Paul's method and motives (neither of which is evident in the text). Esler's interpretation of the text is based on "what a Mediterranean man would clearly do."

109. Cook and Simkins, "Introduction," 6.

For this study, the first level of evaluation will be the text and the evidence contained therein. The models discussed will be used as comparative materials to offer new questions and options for interpretation. This study will try to point out where specific models do not fit or fail to describe the textual evidence fully. Throughout this exercise, it will be important to remember the advice of the renowned statistician George Box: "All models are wrong, but some are useful."[110]

110. G. E. P. Box, "Robustness in the Strategy of Scientific Model Building," in *Robustness in Statistics,* ed. Robert. L. Launer and Graham N. Wilkinson (New York: Academic, 1979), 202.

CHAPTER II

ISRAELITE WARRIOR DIALOGUES WITH FOREIGNERS

This chapter will examine several warrior encounters between Israelites and foreigners. Two of these encounters involve Philistines: David and Goliath, and Jonathan and his armor-bearer against the Philistines at Michmash. The third example is the people of Jabesh-gilead versus Nahash the Ammonite. These narratives and their dialogue will be compared against the honor models described in chapter 1. As will be shown, not all of these warrior exchanges fit the classic Mediterranean challenge and response frameworks. Curiously, the Philistine engagements show more similarities to the challenge and response models than the Jabesh-gilead dialogue with Nahash the Ammonite.

In addition to these texts, this chapter also examines the practice of *monomachia* (single combat) in the Mediterranean and ancient Near East. Several examples of single combat are within Homer's *Iliad*. The similarities between these narratives and the Samuel warrior engagements are readily evident. However, Greek and Trojan warrior dialogues are often lengthy and poetic, going beyond the rhetoric in most biblical dialogues. The Hittite text, *The Apology of Ḫattušili*, will also be examined as evidence of this practice in the broader region.

Each of these texts shares a concern for the divine. These warriors seek their gods' support and intervention in various fashions to judge in their favor against their foes. In the *Iliad*, the gods often act directly in the course of human events. In the other

texts, the divine will is expressed through the outcome of the human struggle. In the case of some of these biblical texts, the narrator seems to express the divine verdict through the combatants' dialogue, which we shall call the divine proxy.

David and Goliath

Probably the best example of warrior discourse in Samuel is the confrontation between David and Goliath. It is the classic story of the underdog prevailing over a superior foe. While this motif is undoubtedly part of the narrative, there is much more to this encounter. The dialogue between these combatants is ripe with cultural and theological overtones. Of all the warrior dialogues in the books of Samuel, David and Goliath seems to fit very well with Malina's challenge and response model, much like Cinderella's foot into her glass slipper.

There are two components to this warrior discourse. The first is Goliath's challenge to the Israelite army (1 Sam 17:8–10). The Philistine champion calls for Israel to send forth their best to meet him in one-on-one combat. The second is the dialogue between the warriors: David and Goliath (1 Sam 17:43–47). This exchange is rich with information in a single challenge and response.

Goliath's challenge to the Israelite army starts in a way that appears to be a reasonable request. He asks, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle?" In other words, why have you risked all these people? There is a better way to settle this dispute: send out one of your own. In verses 9 and 23, he is called אישׁ הבנים. While many commentators translate this as "champion," de Vaux claims the literal meaning is more

appropriate: "man-in-between-two"—the one that stands between the battle lines.[1] De Vaux's view fits with the setting of the story and Goliath's challenge. Goliath's concluding statement significantly escalates the rhetoric in verse 10: "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." What is even more telling is that he receives no response from Israel.

A key verb in the narrative is חרף. Within this chapter, this verb is always in the *piel* form. The NRSV translates this as "defy." In other places, חרף in the *piel* is translated as "scorn" (Judg 5:18), "taunt" (Ps 89:51), or "mock" (2 Kgs 19:22). From the semantic range of this verb, one can conclude that Goliath's challenge goes beyond mere resistance or opposition.[2] Alter observes that the verb חרף is "transparently linked" with the noun חרפה, which means insult, disgrace, or shame.[3] The narrator makes Goliath's intentions clear. He mocks the Israelite army and their inability to put forward a worthy opponent to settle the matter. David interprets Goliath's behavior as defying/taunting/mocking (חרף) YHWH.

The exchange between David and Goliath is more layered in content than the unrequited challenge of Goliath's initial monologue. In verses 43–47, both warriors call and respond with a symmetry that both denigrates their opponent and escalates the impending battle's stakes. The dialogue is mostly in the first person, "I will do . . ." Table 2.1 compares the dialogue in a way that shows its symmetry.

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1. Roland de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. Damian McHugh (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), 124.

2. Esler, *Sex,* 189.

3. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, 3 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 2:244.

Table 2.1. Symmetry in David & Goliath dialogue

Goliath	David
Am I a dog?	Certainly not! But worse than a dog![4]
You come to me with sticks?	You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin But I come to you in the name of YHWH . . .
Cursed David by his gods	You have defied (חרף) [YHWH]
Come to me	I will strike you down and cut off your head
I will give your flesh	I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine Army
to the birds of the air	to the birds of the air
wild animals (בהמת) of the field	wild animals (חית) of the earth

David's response mirrors Goliath, but with an escalation. Goliath derides David's shepherd staff as a stick. David seems to mock Goliath's sword, spear, and javelin as "sticks" compared to his real weapon: "the name of YHWH of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel." David ups the ante on Goliath's taunt to feed him to the wild animals by responding that he will ensure that the animals feast on the entire Philistine army. The symmetry and escalation are an elegantly crafted verbal dance as these two warriors set the stage for battle.

All aspects of Malina's challenge and response protocol are evident in the 1 Sam 17 warrior dialogue. The David and Goliath encounter may be the prototype by which Malina and others validate their model. As such, the analysis may be circular. Several honor/scorn interplays are at work within the text. The honor/scorn dynamics escalate the tension between the combatants.

Goliath's initial challenge to the Israelite army matches Malina's engagement initiation stage: a challenge to enter the social space of another by word or action. Saul

4. This response is only included in the Septuagint: Οὐχί ἀλλ᾽ ἢ χείρω κυνός. There is an additional word-play within the text as the Greek word for dog (κυνός) is also a metaphor for a male prostitute.

and the Israelite army should then determine whether there was a real challenge to their honor. Verse 11 clearly shows that they viewed this as a challenge to their honor: "they were dismayed and greatly afraid." The next step is an evaluation of how they should respond. The usual protocol would involve an immediate response from a person of equal status. Instead, Israel's response was 40 days of silence to the twice-daily taunts from the Philistine champion. The use of the number 40 in the text is a folkloric representation of the fullness of time and may even be somewhat comic. The narrator leaves no doubt that Saul and Israel had completely dishonored themselves before Goliath and the Philistine army.[5]

It is interesting to speculate why the Philistines let this go on for so long. Given Israel's state of extreme fear and dismay, why did they not seize the opportunity to engage the Philistines in battle? One possible reason is the defensive placement of Israel's army. Beck observes that "the amount of geographical detail we find in the first four verses of this story far exceeds what would be necessary to establish the setting of the story."[6] The location of Israel's army in the eastern end of the Elah valley places them on the defensible high ground as the wide valley abuts the Judean hills, protecting the Husan ridge route leading to Bethlehem. Israel's superior defensive position possibly cast doubt on the certainty of Philistine victory.

5. Verses 12–31 do not occur in the Septuagint. As such, this 40-day silence on the part of Saul and the Israelite army is only in the MT.

6. John A. Beck, "David and Goliath, A Story of Place: the Narrative-Geographical Shaping of 1 Samuel 17," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 326.

Another possibility is that the longer this challenge went unanswered, the more it demoralized the Israelites. While it was not unusual for armies to avoid conflict in hopes of wearing each other down, the extended dishonoring would weaken Israel and their king more than defeat in a single battle. In one sense, the Philistines saw the efficacy of psychological warfare over armed conflict. While the Philistines might have initially wanted a quick one-on-one fight to settle the matter, what they received was of far higher value—the shaming and demoralization of the Israelite nation.

The discourse escalates when Israel's "champion," David, responds to Goliath's challenge. According to Malina's challenge and response model, Israel should send a person of equal status against Goliath. Instead, Israel sent a young man (נער) who could not even grow a beard.[7] According to Hamilton, "the beard was an important index of heroism as well as an icon of manhood."[8] From a cultural perspective, David does not measure up to Goliath either in terms of heroism or manhood. Goliath was incensed. "Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks?" There was no honor in killing an unequal opponent. Goliath cursed David and promised him a dishonorable death that a more worthy opponent would not have received.[9] As shown earlier, David's riposte mirrored that of Goliath but escalated the rhetoric to dishonor Goliath and the entire Philistine army. With that final escalation, the talking was over, and the battle began.

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7. Certain rabbinic traditions consider shepherds to be near the bottom of social classes. It is uncertain whether that social denigration extends back to the Iron Age. The evident difference in experience, age, and appearance was sufficient for Goliath to take offense at David's selection.

8. Mark W. Hamilton, *The Body Royal: The Social Poetics of Kingship in Ancient Israel*, BibInt 78 (Boston: Brill, 2005), 193.

9. Esler, *Sex,* 207.

The dialogue between David and Goliath reveals that there was more at stake than just the honor of the combatants. Divine honor was also on the line. Goliath's speech included unstated curses in the names of Philistine gods (v. 43). David's riposte established that YHWH was the real fighter in the battle. Israel's God was stronger than the gods of the Philistines. In a sense, David attempted to deflect the dishonor Goliath intended for Israel when he claimed that Goliath had defied (חרף) YHWH.

Is divine involvement simply a given in these encounters, or is there something more significant in the text? Mobley states that "attributions of success to divine support in any endeavor are universal and, by themselves, unremarkable."[10] He likens "heroic inspiration" to the spirit (or breath) of YHWH coming upon the likes of Samson (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14), Othniel (Judg 3:10), Jephthah (Judg 11:29), and others.[11] In his view, this heroic inspiration is a divinely inspired frenzy that empowers these figures to superhuman feats while instilling panic in their enemies.[12] However, there is no indication that David's ability to slay Goliath was due to a sudden indwelling of the spirit of YHWH; instead, it was his experience as a shepherd and skill with a sling. As such, it would appear that something else is happening in this text.

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10. Gregory Mobley, *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel*. (New York: Doubleday, 2005): 59–60.

11. Mobley does not address the fact that each time the spirit rushed upon Samson, he violated his Nazirite vow. It is problematic to conclude that this divine heroic inspiration would cause Samson to violate the Torah. A potential alternate interpretation is that the spirit came upon Samson to warn him that he was about to violate the vow. His response was to reject the spirit in favor of doing what was right in his own eyes. This interpretation certainly is in line with Samson's overall behavior. However, it does leave open the question of whether a person can resist the spirit of YHWH when it comes upon them.

12. Mobley, *Empty Men*, 60–61.

An alternative to Mobley's suggestion of a superhuman, heroic inspiration is that the narrator consciously intends for this combat to act as a proxy for the divine involvement. As Alter observes, "God is out of the picture, except for the invocation of David's words."[13] David's invocation of YHWH and his statements of divine proxy resemble Stewart's model. YHWH is Israel's protector. By marching to war against Israel, the Philistines have not only challenged Israel, but they have also impugned YHWH's honor. What is at stake in this battle is YHWH's chosen people, Israel. Whom will they serve? In another sense, this battle is between YHWH and the Philistine gods. David and Goliath act as the physical representations of this divine struggle. Divine honor is at stake for both David and Goliath. As a result, their exchange takes on theological significance beyond being the testosterone-filled boasts of two warriors. The narrator intends David's riposte to Goliath to put the Philistines and Israel on notice "and all the land will know that there is a God for Israel, and all this assembly will know that YHWH does not save by sword and spear. For the battle is YHWH's and he will give you into our hand" (vv. 46–47). Following the Mediterranean models, the Israelite and Philistine armies—and all that read of this account—represent the public who render the verdict on which god(s) are worthy of honor. David's response almost has the tenor of prophetic speech. It carries the sense of "this will be a sign to you . . .". Israel and the Philistines will acknowledge and honor YHWH's power because of the improbable and miraculous outcome of this engagement.

13. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:243.

The Battle of Michmash Pass

First Samuel 14 includes another account of a battle between Israelite warriors and Philistines. Much like the David and Goliath narrative, this account is over-packed with geographic detail (1 Sam 14:4–5). The specificity of detail sets the scene for the warrior encounter and places this encounter in a particular locale of strategic importance for the security and control of east-west commerce across the central Benjamin plateau.[14] The narrative leading up to this event demonstrates that Israel's situation is bleak in the face of superior Philistine forces throughout the region. Saul's actions as king have left him estranged from YHWH and uncertain how to proceed. With this as a backdrop, Jonathan and his armor-bearer execute an unauthorized sneak attack against the Philistine fortress near Michmash:

> Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Let us go and cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. Perhaps YHWH will do for us because nothing is a hindrance for YHWH to save by many or by few." His armor-bearer replied to him, "Do whatever your heart inclines you [to do]. I am with you."[15] Jonathan said, "Look, we will go over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. If they say to us, 'Wait until we come[16] to you!' then we will stand and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us!' then we will go up because YHWH has given them into our hands. This will be a sign for us."
>
> The two of them revealed themselves to the Philistine garrison. The Philistines said, "Look! The Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they hid themselves." The men of the garrison said to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "Come up to us, and we will show you something!" Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up behind me because YHWH has given them to the hand of Israel."

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14. Paul H. Wright, *Holman Illustrated Guide to Biblical Geography: Reading the Land* (Nashville: B&H, 2020), 128–29.

15. Literally, "behold, I am with you as your heart." In Hebrew, "heart" (לב) generally refers to the mind or the seat of moral decision making.

16. הגיעו has the sense of to cause to touch or to strike. HALOT, 668–69. The purpose of their coming down is clearly to do harm.

> Jonathan went up hand over foot and his armor-bearer after him. And they [the Philistines] fell before Jonathan and his armor-bearer killing behind him. In the first strike, Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed about twenty men within a half-acre field. And there was panic in the camp, in the field, and with all the people in the garrison and even the raiders trembled. And the ground shook. This panic was from God. (1 Sam 14:6–15).

It is noteworthy that the majority of the dialogue is between Jonathan and his armor-bearer. The Philistines issue a challenge call the two Israelites, but they do not offer a verbal reply.

Does this encounter align with Malina's challenge and response framework? In order to evaluate this, the first issue to resolve is who the challenger is. By coming out of their hiding place, did the Israelites enter the perceived social space of the Philistines, or is the challenge from the Philistines to come up to their camp the initial challenge? The dialogue between Jonathan and his armor-bearer indicates their intention to cross over (עבר) into the Philistines' social space (v 6). In that same verse, Jonathan refers to them with a "soldier's coarse scorn" by referring to them as "uncircumcised" (הערלים).[17] As such, the initial challenge is by Jonathan. The Philistine response seems to affirm this view: "Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves. . . . Come up to us, and we will show you something" (vv. 11–12). Whether the Philistine riposte is a positive rejection (e.g., scorn, disdain, contempt) given to someone of lesser social status or the acceptance and counter-challenge provided to equals depends upon how one interprets the Philistine response. Alter considers the response to be contemptuous as though these Hebrews were "vermin" running out of every nook and

17. A. Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, OLT (Louisville: WJK, 2011), 148.

cranny.[18] Driver notes that Hitzig observed that the word for "Hebrew" (עברים) is very close to the Hebrew word for mice (עכברים). Hitzig proposed that this could be evidence of a possible connection in the Philistine speech. This may be what is behind Alter's view as well. Driver is skeptical of Hitzig's interpretation.[19] Budde, noting Hitzig's mice reference, considers the phrase mocking in nature or possibly a joke.[20] As Figure 2.1 shows, the question of whether the Philistine response is that of positive rejection of a perceived lesser foe or acceptance of the challenge by a relative equal is difficult to determine from the text and is of little consequence to the narrative. The outcome is the same: battle ensues.

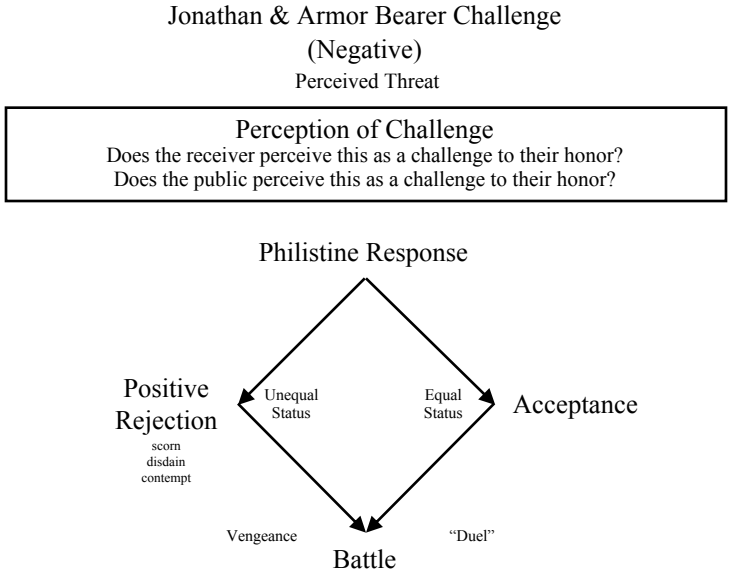

Figure 2.1. Malina challenge and response model: Jonathan and Philistines.

18. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:228.

19. Samuel R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 108.

20. Karl Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, KHC 8 (Tübingen and Leipzig: Mohr [Siebeck], 1902), 92.

Alter does note that the path by which Jonathan and his armor-bearer make their way to the Philistine garrison appears to be hidden. Rather than walking straight up the slope, they take a path which offers the element of surprise when they initiate their attack.[21] If Alter is correct and the Philistines were not expecting an attack, perhaps thinking the Israelites had crawled back into their holes, Jonathan's actions take the tenor of vengeance in response to the scorn of a positive rejection from the Philistines. However, this skates well over the line of reading too much into the text to force-fit a model.

The narrator does seem to use Jonathan's statement to establish divine involvement in their guerrilla expedition. "Let us go and cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. Perhaps YHWH will do for us because nothing is a hindrance for YHWH to save by many or by few" (1 Sam 14:6). There are, however, differences between Jonathan's statement and David's pronouncement in 1 Sam 17. First, Jonathan's statement is not a proclamation made to the Philistines. It is said to his Israelite armor-bearer. So, it does not contain the bravado or boasting that we see in David's riposte to Goliath. Secondly, Jonathan seems slightly unsure of YHWH's involvement in their venture. After proposing that they should go over to the garrison, he says "perhaps" (אולי). He then looks for a sign in the Philistine response to divine whether YHWH will act on their behalf. Given Jonathan's apparent equivocation, it is difficult to classify the first part of his statement as divine proxy, as evidenced in David and Goliath.

However, the final phrase in Jonathan's statement expresses a more theological message, which seems to rise closer to the level of divine proxy: "because nothing is a

21. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:228. "And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armor bearer behind him." (1 Sam 14:13a, Alter's translation).

hindrance for YHWH to save by many or by few." David's proclamation to Goliath has echoes of Jonathan's claim. "YHWH does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is YHWH's and he will give you into our hand" (1 Sam 17:47). In both instances, YHWH does not act through the regular army of the Israelites. Instead, YHWH fulfills YHWH's purpose through the spontaneous actions of a charismatic individual.[22] As with Gideon (Judg 6–8), YHWH's power is most profoundly demonstrated when fewer individuals are involved. In these two instances in Samuel, the narrator uses these warriors' claims to communicate a theological truth about Israel's God.

Features of Philistine Engagements

These two Israelite warrior engagements with Philistines share some common features. Each example aligns with Malina's challenge and response framework. There are either verbal or physical challenges and responses in advance of the combat. In both instances, the first verbal exchange comes from a Philistine and seems to be intended to incite combat. In the case of Goliath, the intent is explicit. The challenge from the Philistines at Michmash is more like a dare. "Come up to us (if you dare), and we will show you something!" The narrator makes it clear that there is no love lost between Israelites and Philistines.

From engagements like these, one might be tempted to think that any encounter between Israelites and Philistines would lead to combat. However, the relationship is more of an occupying force with the local populace.[23] Before the battle at Michmash (1

22. Gwilym H. Jones, "The Concept of Holy War," in *The World of Ancient Israel*, ed. R. E. Clements (New York: Cambridge, 1989), 315.

23. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB 8 (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 238.

Sam 13:19–21), the narrative describes economic activity between these two groups—albeit exploitative. “There were no smiths (חרשׁ) to be found in the whole land of Israel.” The only way that Israelites could sharpen their farm implements was to go to Philistine metalworkers. The text goes so far as to detail the prices for their services. It is assumed that the narrator chooses to provide such seemingly mundane details because the prices were outrageous. The natural reaction is for resentment to simmer and tensions to build until a catalyst is introduced, starting a chain reaction of resistance. As the dominant military power, the Philistines seem to have a natural swagger, which is evident in their scornful dialogues with the locals.

The Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead

Saul’s first test as king comes from an Ammonite siege of Jabesh-gilead, among the Transjordan tribes. The dialogue is not between two warriors, but between Nahash, king of the Ammonites, and the town’s elders. It has been included in this analysis because it is dialogue preceding a battle.

> Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.[24]
>
> Nahash the Ammonite went up and laid siege to Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you.” But

24. 1 Sam 10:27b is the NRSV translation of the introductory material from 4QSam[a] (v 27b). It is also evident in the source material utilized by Josephus (*Ant. 6.68-71*). There is debate about whether the introductory material is original or secondary. McCarter considers it to be primary, having been excluded from the MT by scribal error. (McCarter, *I Samuel*, 199). Tsumura notes textual difficulties that would favor the material to be secondary. In particular, he notes that Nahash is referred to as מלך בני עמון, while 11:1 refers to him simply as העמון. Tsumura considers it unlikely that Nahash would be identified in two unique ways in such a short span of text (David T. Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007]: 303–4.) It is included here for context. It has no real bearing on the analysis of the dialogue, per se.

> Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "I will make [a covenant] with you by gouging out all of your right eyes so that it will be a disgrace upon all Israel." Then the elders of Jabesh said, "Leave us alone for seven days, and we will send out messengers through all the territory of Israel. If no one delivers us, we will go out to you."

Josephus adds an explanation for the gouging of the right eyes. Since shields were held in the left hand, the left eye would be covered, leaving only the right eye exposed. A man without a right eye was virtually blind (or severely disadvantaged) on the battlefield (*Ant. 6.70*). By removing the right eyes, Nahash was effectively neutralizing any Israelite warriors. Matthews and Benjamin state that Nahash's motive were economic. He sought to control the trade along the Royal Highway that ran along the Transjordan plateau. So long as Israel had warriors east of the Jordan, they could threaten his control of commerce.[25] Tracy Lemos views the gouging out of the right eyes as a shameful mutilation, designed to enforce a social power structure in the region—a form of domination.[26] Lemos posits that the mutilation would constitute a lack of wholeness that would preclude participation in certain cultic activities.[27]

Malina's challenge and response model does not easily fit this encounter. There is little doubt from the text that Nahash is the challenger. He and his army have besieged Jabesh-gilead. It is also evident that this is a negative challenge—a threat against the town. But how to evaluate the town's response? In Campbell's view, the elders of Jabesh-

25. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 104.

26. T. M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125/2 (2006), 230. Lemos's use of "shame" is more aligned with the definition of dishonor used within this study. The agreement to such a mutilation would likely be considered a shameless action (lack of concern for honor) on the part of the Jabesh-gileadites.

27. Ibid., 231.

gilead are seeking "an honorable peace."[28] However, Malina's model does not seem to consider the notion of an honorable solution for all concerned. In Malina's view, honor is a scarce resource. As such, any victory by Nahash would mean dishonor for the people of Jabesh-gilead. In Malina's model, the challenge and response exchange continues until one party has gained a decisive victory over the other. It is also apparent in the text that Nahash does not intend for any peace to be honorable. His plan to gouge out everyone's right eye is explicitly intended to be a "disgrace (חרפה) upon all Israel," (1 Sam 11:2) a token of humiliation.[29] As noted earlier, חרפה is consonantally rooted in the verb to scorn or disdain used in the David and Goliath narrative. Nahash has no intention of "an honorable peace." However, none of the dialogue resembles the scornful banter of David and Goliath or the Philistines at Michmash. There is no challenge to produce a champion to settle the affair via *monomachia*. There are no insults against the individuals or their respective deities. The dialogue has the tenor of negotiation more than the prelude to battle.

What is even more curious in this text is that Nahash agrees to a seven-day cease-fire to allow messengers to leave Jabesh-gilead in search of "one to save us" (hiphil participle of ישׁע). What possible motivation could there be for inviting other war parties to this conflict? Campbell views this as an expression of Ammonite contempt for the people of Jabesh-gilead and Israel's military capabilities, possibly taking his cue from Josephus's description of this encounter (*Ant. 6.73*). He notes that this is perhaps related to the later notice of Israelite dependence upon Philistine metallurgical skills (1 Sam

28. Antony F. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, FOTL 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003): 116.

29. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 203.

13:19–22).[30] Tsumura considers this to be a calculated move on the part of Nahash to draw the entire Israelite army into battle, defeating the fledgling monarchy.[31] In short, there is very little in this encounter that seems to fit with Malina's challenge and response model.

On the other hand, Stewart's framework aligns well with the narrative—especially when one considers the rest of the story. Under Stewart's model, the people of Jabesh-gilead are in a protected relationship with Saul and the tribes of Israel. By besieging Jabesh-gilead, Nahash has committed offenses against Jabesh-gilead (primary) and Saul with all of Israel (secondary). The people of Israel, led by Saul, have an obligation to rescue Jabesh-gilead as their protector. In Stewart's terms, the honor of Israel and Saul are just as much at stake as the honor of the people of Jabesh-gilead. The text seems to indicate that Nahash is aware of this. If the people of Jabesh-gilead submit to his terms, then the disgrace (חרפה) falls upon all of Israel and their new king, who have failed to fulfill their obligation as the protector. In this context, it may not be that Nahash is using this siege to draw Israel's armies out for a decisive battle. It could be that he does not believe them capable of mustering an army at all. Their inability to defend or rescue the people of Jabesh-gilead would be a significant blow to the honor of Saul's monarchy and Israel's honor and credibility with their regional neighbors.

Further support for this is in the previous events at the end of chapter 10 in the MT. After Samuel presents Saul as the chosen king, he encounters resistance from some

30. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 116. A view that is generally shared by Alter (Alter, *Hebrew Bible,* 2:216).

31. Tsumura, "First Book of Samuel," 305–6.

"worthless fellows" (בני בליעל). "But some worthless fellows said, 'How can this one deliver us?' And they despised him and did not bring him a gift. But Saul said nothing" (1 Sam 10:27). Several aspects of this event are of particular note. First, these worthless fellows are in direct contrast to the men who rally around Saul. They are warriors or men of valor, most probably described initially as בני חיל.[32] Second, these men have an expectation of the king's qualifications: he is to save them (ישע). The elders of Jabesh-gilead use this same verb in their request of Nahash for a seven-day reprieve. For whatever reason (possibly because he had been hiding in the baggage while Samuel was conducting the big reveal), these individuals do not consider Saul to be up to the task. The third is their reaction to Saul. They "despised" (בזה) him, which was emphasized by their actions—they brought him no gift. The LXX translates this verb as ἀτιμάζω, or dishonor. It seems that the translators of the LXX understood בזה as a matter of social scorn rather than a mere internal opinion of Saul. Interestingly, ἀτιμάζω is the same word (in adjective form) that Peristiany notes described a person in the Cypriot highlands who lacked honor.[33] Like these "worthless fellows," Nahash seems to have come to the same conclusion based upon his terms for peace.

When Saul hears the messengers' report, the spirit of God rushes upon him, inspiring action. Saul's call to arms is reminiscent of the Levite's plea for justice in Judges 19:29. Rather than dismembering his concubine, Saul cuts up and sends pieces of

32. Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text*, 85. This is reflected in the LXX as υἱοὶ δυνάμεων. Driver believes that the בני was accidentally dropped from the MT. He notes that these were not just men of valor, but men who were morally brave, loyal, and honest. In other words, honorable men. In contrast, these worthless men are the shameless ones.

33. Peristiany, "Honour and Shame," 178–79.

his oxen team throughout the Israelite territories, vowing similar treatment of any who do not follow him into battle, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and Samuel, thus shall it be done to his oxen!" (1 Sam 11:7).[34] Matthews and Benjamin consider the oxen's slaughter a form of covenant cutting between Gibeah and Jabesh-gilead. They think the covenant and oxen sacrifice were particularly noteworthy due to the high value and general rarity of the beasts within villages.[35] However, is this a covenant between Saul and Jabesh-gilead or between Saul and the rest of Israel? If the covenant is with Jabesh-gilead, then Stewart's model is less applicable. However, if the covenant is with the rest of Israel, it strengthens the case for Stewart's model.

One clue may be in where the animal pieces were sent. They were sent to the tribes of Israel, not back to Jabesh-gilead. If a covenant is the intended symbol, then this act indicates that the covenant is between Saul and the Israelite tribes to deliver their Transjordan kin. Another option may be that this act was a reaffirmation of the covenant between Israel and Jabesh-gilead. As a brief aside, it is generally held that this story is a type found in Judges. However, McCarter notes two important exceptions. Even though the Ammonite threat is localized, all of Israel responds. In the book of Judges, the

34. There are numerous literary links between the events of Judges 19–21 and the rescue of Jabesh-gilead. The events that took place in Gibeah (Saul's hometown) in Judges 19 are arguably one of the worst in the Hebrew Bible. The people of Jabesh-gilead were the only ones who did not join in the war against the tribe of Benjamin. According to Judges 21:10–14, their failure to join the battle led to their destruction—save 400 virgins who were given to the men of Benjamin as wives. Assuming some degree of veracity within the story in Judges, there would be a kinship between the Benjamites and Jabesh-gilead. One cannot help but wonder if somewhere in Saul's family tree was one of the women from Jabesh-gilead. The men of Jabesh-gilead will later take significant risks to recover the bodies of Saul and Jonathan following their deaths at the hands of the Philistines, lending further credence to the relationship between Gibeah and Jabesh-gilead.

35. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 105–6.

military response to a localized oppression was limited to a subset of the tribes of Israel.[36] In this case, every tribe is called to deal with the threat. Secondly, while Saul does appear as a judge-like, charismatic leader chosen by YHWH to deliver Israel from the Ammonite oppression, he is not a temporary chieftain like the judges. Saul is the king.[37]

Saul's proclamations bear some of the signs of divine proxy. The rushing of God's spirit upon Saul, which inspires the cutting of the oxen, gives Saul's oath the air of divine proclamation. Not only does the spirit of YHWH come upon Saul, but dread or fear of YHWH (פחד יהוה) falls upon the people. Saul's next words are to the people of Jabesh-gilead: "Tomorrow you will have deliverance, by the time the sun is hot" (1 Sam 11:9). Saul pronounces a divine judgment on the outcome and timing of their deliverance.

Saul's final words come after the conclusion of the battle. Some in his army want to exact vengeance against the "worthless fellows" who had dishonored Saul. In kingly fashion, Saul provides amnesty to these men. "No one will be put to death this day, because today YHWH has given deliverance to Israel" (1 Sam 11:13). While Saul plays the role of a magnanimous, honorable monarch, his words attribute the judgment of honor to YHWH. In other words, YHWH delivered the victory and, at the same time, has validated that Saul is the chosen king of Israel.[38] Along those same lines, YHWH shows mercy to those "worthless fellows" who doubted that YHWH was still responsible for saving Israel—regardless of who sits on the earthly throne.

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36. As examples, Ehud sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim (Judg 3:27), Deborah and Barak summon troops from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun (Judg 4:6), and Gideon called to the tribes of Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali to supply men for battle (Judg 6:34–35).

37. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 205–6.

38. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 108.

Monomachia

The single combat challenge (*monomachia*) issued by Goliath has been the subject of much scholarly analysis. Was this a unique request or normative battle etiquette? Roland de Vaux speculates that this may have been a western custom imported by the Philistines since several similar encounters in the Old Testament involve Philistines.[39] Hoffner proposes that such a practice was the wise use of resources to avoid unnecessary bloodshed in settling disputes.[40] Matthews and Benjamin state that this type of battle was common because rulers often had difficulty fielding a full-scale army.[41]

The similarities between the *mano a mano* conflict between David and Goliath and the Homeric epics are hard to ignore. Within the *Iliad*, warriors face off in similar battles, jousting verbally before engaging in battle. Paris offers a challenge to the Achaean armies to settle their differences in a battle of champions (*Il.* 3). A challenge which King Menelaus readily accepts. Paris's brother, Hector, offers a similar challenge which Ajax ultimately accepts (*Il.* 7). In addition, warriors spur one another on with long speeches designed to engage their honor to pursue higher heroic levels. While the similarities are striking, there are also differences worth considering.

Paris's challenge to the Achaean army is an excellent example of *monomachia* in the *Iliad*. As the battle lines between the Trojan and Greek armies form against each other, Paris bedecked in his battle attire, strides between the lines challenging the best

39. de Vaux, *The Bible*, 126–28. The other examples are the battle at the pool of Gibeon (2 Sam 2:12f), Sibbecai with Saph, Elhanan with Goliath, and Jonathan with an un-named individual (2 Sam 21:18-22).

40. Harry A. Hoffner, "A Hittite Analogue to the David and Goliath Contest of Champions," *CBQ* 30 (1968), 220.

41. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 99.

Greeks to fight him face-to-face in mortal combat. His bravery is on full display until he sees Menelaus leap from his chariot to take up the challenge. At which point, Paris shrinks back into the ranks of Trojans (*Il*. 3.15-41). The reaction from Hector makes it clear that Paris's behavior, retreating from the challenge, is dishonorable—even shameful. Paris, despite his cowardice, demonstrates that he does have shame—that is, concern for his honor—by proposing a *monomachia* fight to decide the overall outcome of the war. However, it is Hector that delivers the challenge to the Achaeans rather than Paris:

> Hear me—Trojans, Achaeans geared for combat!
> Hear the challenge of Paris,
> the man who caused our long hard campaign.
> He urges all the Trojans, all the Argives too,
> to lay their fine armor down on the fertile earth
> while Paris himself and the warrior Menelaus
> take the field between you and fight it out
> for Helen and all her wealth in single combat.
> And the one who proves the better man and wins,
> he'll take those treasures fairly, lead the woman home.
> The rest will seal in blood their binding pacts of friendship.
>
> He stopped. A hushed silence held the ranks.
> And Menelaus whose cry could marshal armies
> urged both sides, "Now hear me out as well!
> Such limited vengeance hurts me most of all—
> but I intend that we will part in peace, at last,
> Trojans and Achaeans. Look what heavy casualties
> you have suffered just for me, my violent quarrel,
> and Paris who brought it on you all. Now we'll fight—
> and death to the one marked out for doom and death!
> But the rest will part in peace, and soon, soon." (*Il*. 3.104–134)

Like Goliath's challenge to Saul and his army, Paris (through Hector) offers to settle the battle through single combat. This battle is between the two individuals responsible for the war: Paris and Menelaus, and their desire for Helen. Unlike the Israelites, Menelaus responds to the challenge immediately. What is also very different between these

challenges are the stakes. Here, the winner takes the girl and her wealth, while the loser will die. Everyone else will "seal in blood their binding pacts of friendship"—a seemingly honorable end to a war that has gone on much too long. In Goliath's challenge, one nation will serve the other. There is no honor for the losing side.

Because of the mistrust the Greeks have for the Trojan princes, Menelaus demands a sacrifice and oath ceremony before Zeus in the presence of both armies to seal the terms of the *monomachia*. It is to be a binding covenant in the presence of the gods, sealed with the sacrifice of two lambs.

> You could hear some Trojan or Achaean calling, "Zeus—
> god of greatness, god of glory, all you immortals!
> Whichever contenders trample on this treaty first,
> spill their brains on the ground as this wine spills—
> theirs, their children's too—their enemies rape their wives!" (*Il*. 3.352–356)

For both sides, the witness and judgment of the divine on the battle are evident throughout the narrative. The outcome was in the hands of the gods.

Within the *Iliad*, there seems to be a ritual progression to the single combat. The battle took place within a defined space with a determination by lots of who cast their spear first.

> But Priam's son Prince Hector and royal Odysseus
> measured off the ground for single combat first,
> then dropped two stones in a helmet, lots for casting—
> who would be first to hurl his bronze-tipped spear? (*Il*. 3.370–373)
>
> So they prayed
> as tall Hector, eyes averted under his flashing helmet,
> shook the two lots hard and Paris' lot leapt out (*Il*. 3.379–381).

The first combatant would throw their spear at their opponent. Following that, the other combatant had their turn. Following the spear-throwing round, the combatants could engage with swords or another weapon of their choosing in more direct close-in combat.

As scholars have noted, warrior armor in the *Iliad* bears similarities to Goliath's armor in 1 Sam 17.

Table 2.2. Comparison of Goliath's and Paris's armor

Paris's Armor (*Il.* 3.385-395)	**Goliath (1 Sam 17:5-7)**
First he wrapped his legs with well-made greaves, fastened behind the heels with silver ankle-clasps, next he strapped a breastplate round his chest, his brother Lycaon's that fitted him so well. Then over his shoulder Paris slung his sword, the fine bronze blade with its silver-studded hilt, and then the shield-strap and his sturdy, massive shield and over his powerful head he set a well-forged helmet, the horsehair crest atop it tossing, bristling terror, and last he grasped a spear that matched his grip.	He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him (NRSV).

Stephen Caesar points to some interesting features in the description of Goliath's armor. He notes that Goliath's helmet is called a כובע, which is not a Hebrew word. Citing Sapir, "the cultural evidence points to the [Philistine] helmet, in various forms, as originally more properly at home in Asia Minor than in Palestine."[42] He goes on to note the peculiar description of Goliath's spear in 1 Sam 17:7, "like a weaver's beam." He notes that the description expresses the exotic nature of the weapon itself. He notes that Aegean javelins had a loop and a cord wound around the shaft resulting in spin, which enabled the spear to fly longer and straighter. He sees evidence of this foreign weapon in the narrator's description of the weapon.[43] Others, however, are skeptical of the Aegean origin of Goliath's weaponry in total. Azzan Yadin observes that Goliath's chain mail is "Mesopotamian-Syrian." He also claims that "the great shield, requiring a shield bearer,

42. Stephen W. Caesar, "Literary Parallels Between Homer's Epics and the Biblical Philistines," *JBQ* 44/2 (2016), 150.

43. Ibid., 150–51.

is unlike the small round shields of the Philistines portrayed in Egyptian reliefs."[44] Certainly, Goliath's shield does not match descriptions in the *Iliad* either. Paris and Hector are both described as having round shields, which they seem to carry themselves (*Il*. 3.405, 414).

Absent from the Paris-Menelaus engagement is the pre-battle, scorn-filled exchange evident in the David and Goliath narrative. However, that is not to say that such dishonoring dialogue is not evident in the *Iliad's* examples of *monomachia*. The battle between Hector and Ajax includes discourse before the fighting.

> Telamonian Ajax marched right up to Hector,
> threatening with his deep resounding voice,
> "Hector, now you'll learn, once and for all,
> in combat man-to-man, what kind of champions
> range the Argive ranks, even besides Achilles,
> that lionheart who mauls battalions wholesale.
> Off in his beaked seagoing ships Achilles lies,
> raging away at Agamemnon, marshal of armies—
> but here we are, strong enough to engage you,
> and plenty of us too. Come—
> lead off, if you can, with all your fighting power!"
>
> A flash of his helmet as rangy Hector shook his head:
> "Ajax, royal son of Telamon, captain of armies,
> don't toy with me like a puny, weak-kneed boy
> or a woman never trained in works of war!
> War—I know it well, and the butchery of men.
> Well I know, shift to the left, shift to the right
> my tough tanned shield. That's what the real drill,
> defensive fighting means to me. I know it all,
> how to charge in the rush of plunging horses—
> I know how to stand and fight to the finish,
> Twist and lunge in the War-god's deadly dance.
> On Guard!
> Big and bluff as you are, I've no desire to hit you
> sniping in on the sly—
> I'd strike you out in the open, strike you now!" (*Il.* 7.260–285)

44. Azzan Yadin, "Goliath's Armor and Israelite Collective Memory," *VT* 54/3 (2004), 376.

While this exchange includes challenges, taunts, and verbal jabs designed to incite the opponent, it does not appear to have the same scornful reproach of the David and Goliath banter. Nor is there any evident cursing of the gods.

Several dialogues do contain scornful discourse between warriors. However, it consistently seems to be after the mortal blow has been dealt. After Hector delivers the fatal blow to Patroclus, he "glories over him."

> . . . Hector the son of Priam
> tore the life from Patroclus who had killed so many men in war,
> and gloried over him, wild winging words: "Patroclus—
> surely you must have thought you'd storm my city down,
> you'd wrest from the wives of Troy their day of freedom,
> drag them off in ships to your own dear fatherland—
> you fool! Rearing in the their defense my war-team,
> Hector's horses were charting out to battle,
> galloping, full stretch. And I with my spear,
> Hector, shining among my combat-loving comrades,
> I fight away from them the fatal day—but you,
> the vultures will eat your body raw! (*Il*. 16.964–976)

Hector and Patroclus do not fight each other in single combat, as do Paris and Menelaus. Their fight is in the midst of a larger battle, in which Euphorbus wounds Patroclus. Hector delivers the final blow to a much-weakened Patroclus. As Patroclus makes apparent in his response, Hector's claims of personal glory and honor would not be possible had it not been for others' efforts before him.

> "Hector! Now is your time to glory to the skies . . .
> now the victory is yours.
> A gift of the son of Cronus, Zeus—Apollo too—
> they brought me down with all their deathless ease,
> they are the ones who tore the armor off my back.
> Even if twenty Hectors had charged against me—
> they'd all have died here, laid low by my spear.
> No, deadly fate in league with Apollo killed me.
> From the ranks of men, Euphorbus. You came third,
> and all you could do was finish off my life . . .
> One more thing—take it to heart, I urge you—

> you too, you won't live long yourself, I swear.
> Already I see them looming up beside you—death
> and the strong force of fate, to bring you down
> at the hands of Aeacus' great royal son . . .
> Achilles!" (*Il*. 16.986–1000)

Patroclus uses his dying breath to deliver a prophetic word regarding Hector's impending death at the hands of Achilles. When Achilles and Hector finally meet in battle, a similar post-battle scornful exchange occurs between the warriors (*Il*. 22.389–424).

Beyond the Homeric epic poems, there is ancient Near Eastern evidence of similar practices. There are hints of this practice in the Sumerian account of the conflict between the Mesopotamian cities of Kish and Uruk. Akka was the king of Kish. His vassal, Gilgamesh, revolts and becomes the king of Uruk. The Kishite army laid siege to Uruk. Twice, the city of Uruk sends out mighty warriors alone through the city gate to face the Kishites. First is Gilgamesh's royal bodyguard, Binhurture. He is captured immediately and beaten. It appears that his capture was on purpose to confuse and impair the judgment of King Akka. Second, Enkidu, Gilgamesh's mighty warrior companion, faces the Kishite army alone. Enkidu's challenge to the Kishites, coupled with Gilgamesh's appearance on the city walls seems to strike fear into the hearts of Akka's army leading to a route, which ends with Akka's capture and surrender.[45] While there is no evidence in this text of *monomachia* between the sides, it is curious that the warriors leave alone to face the army of Kish. Did they intend to fight the entire army on their own, or was there another purpose?

45. Dina Katz, "Gilgamesh and Akka (1.171)," in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Halo, 4 vols. (New York: Brill, 1997), 1:550–51.

The Apology of Ḫattušili III (ca 1267-1240 BCE) is a Hittite text that seeks to legitimize his usurpation of the throne from his brother.[46] Part of this text describes a battle scene that might reference a *monomachia*-style engagement:

> It so happened, however, that the Pišḫurean enemy invaded (the country), and Karaḫna (and) Mariša [were] within the enemy country. On one side the country of Takkašta was its border, on the other the city of Talmaliya was its border. Eight hundred teams of horses were (there) whereas the troops were innumerable. My brother Muwatalli sent me and he gave me one hundred and twenty teams of horses, but not even a single military man was with me. There too Ištar, My Lady, marched ahead of me, and there too, I personally conquered the enemy. When I killed the man who was in command, the enemy fled. The cities of Ḫatti Land which had been cut off, they each fought and began to defeat the enemy. A monument(?) in the city of Wištawanda I erected. There, too, the recognition of Ištar was mine. The weapon that I held there, I had it inlaid and deposited it in front of the goddess, My Lady (2:31-47).[47]

Hoffner notes that the term "man who was in command" (*piran ḫuyanza*) contains the preverb *piran*, which means "in front." He considers it possible that this term could describe a champion who fights in front of the battle lines similar to David and Goliath and the *Iliad* examples.[48]

A curiosity with these examples of *monomachia* is that, contrary to the views of some, they do not seem to curtail the bloodshed. After David kills Goliath, the Philistines do not abide by the terms of Goliath's challenge. Instead, they flee, and the Israelite army routes them back to Gath and Ekron (1 Sam 17:51–53). The goddess Aphrodite intervenes to rescue Paris from Menelaus's grasp, spiriting him away to the Trojan palace. Nevertheless, everyone agrees that Menelaus won the battle (*Il*. 3.428–540).

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46. Th. P. J. van den Hout, "Apology of Ḫattušili III (1.77)," in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Halo, 4 vols. (New York: Brill, 1997), 1:199.

47. Ibid., 201.

48. Hoffner, "Hittite Analogue," 224.

However, despite Menelaus's raging, no one honors the agreement, and the war continues for another twenty-one books. Something similar is evident in the Ḫattušili text. After defeating the enemy combatant, the cities rise up against the fleeing enemy. It appears that the motivation to avoid bloodshed is not so apparent in these examples.

What is evident, however, is the sense of divine involvement in the outcome of the battle. David and Goliath invoke their respective deities via curses and proclamations. Menelaus sets forth the terms of *monomachia* with sacrifices, prayers, and oaths before the gods. Throughout the *Iliad*, the narrator tells of the direct involvement of the gods pushing their favored humans to act and intervening where necessary. Ḫattušili credits his successes to his goddess, Ištar. Cyrus Gordon notes a lawsuit recorded in a Nuzu tablet where a man (Gurpazaḫ) accuses his brother (Mattešub) of assault and battery against his wife, which the brother denies. The judges order a belt-wrestling competition to reveal the divine verdict in the case:

> And the judges said to
> Gurpazaḫ: «Go! To
> Mattešub carry the gods!
> When Gurpazaḫ
> will go to the gods, then
> Mattešub will seize
> Gurpazaḫ and his belt
> in his belt, he will (try to) wrest
> away.» And in the litigation
> Gurpazaḫ prevailed.
> And the judges sentenced Mattešub
> to (pay) one ox to Gurpazaḫ
> for his belt (lines 9–21).[49]

Divine determination in disputes large and small seems prevalent throughout the region and in a wide range of situations.

49. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Belt Wrestling in the Bible World," *HUCA* 23/1 (1951), 134–36.

In recognition of the divine involvement, it seems more probable that *monomachia* was a means of trial-by-combat, whereby the divine court rendered judgment between the warring parties, rather than a mere avoidance of mass casualties.[50] Perhaps the fleeing armies and resulting bloodshed is the execution of the divine verdict on the losing side. In essence, both armies witness the divine verdict of the *monomachia* and respond accordingly, emboldened (or panicked) by the sentence from the gods.

Summary

From these examples, it is clear that the Mediterranean challenge and response models are not universally applicable to warrior engagements. The Philistine engagements with Israelites align more closely than does the engagement with Nahash the Ammonite. It is worth noting that the narrator does not indicate that either the people of Jabesh-gilead or Nahash the Ammonite seem inclined to settle their differences with single warrior combat. It is doubtful that their request for a 7-day reprieve to find someone to deliver them is a search for a warrior champion to battle Nahash, like David and Goliath. Furthermore, not all aspects of the challenge and response framework align with the *monomachia* examples from the *Iliad* either. Unlike the Philistines, the Greeks and Trojans in Homer's epic save their sharpest scorn until the outcome has been determined.

Recognition of divine involvement in the fate of warriors and their nations is ubiquitous. So much so that one can agree with Mobley's assessment that such attributions to success are, by themselves, unremarkable.[51] Ḫattušili credits every aspect

50. Mobley, *Empty Men*, 101.

51. Ibid., 59–60.

of his life to his goddess, Ištar. However, it does appear that the books of Samuel use the speech of warriors as a narrative device to communicate divine intent or truths. David can proclaim that when YHWH gives him victory, "all the world will know there is a God for Israel, and this whole assembly may know that YHWH does not deliver by sword and spear because the battle is the YHWH's and he will give you all into our hands" (1 Sam 17:46b–47).

There is a curious distinction between the Samuel narratives and the *Iliad* regarding divine involvement. In Homer's epics, the veil between divine manipulation and human free will is relatively thin. The gods frequently plot against each other and intervene in the affairs of men to suit their own ends. Just before the *monomachia* between Paris and Menelaus, King Priam, father to Paris and Hector, says to Helen, "I don't blame you. I hold the gods to blame. They are the ones who brought this war upon me, devastating war against the Achaeans" (*Il*. 3:198–200). This sort of fatalism is not evident in the warrior dialogues in the books of Samuel. YHWH's direct intervention in the narrative is exceedingly rare. One of the more overt examples will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

WARRIOR DIALOGUES BETWEEN ISRAELITES

This chapter examines dialogues between Israelite warriors and how they exhibit honor and divine proxy. Four narrative engagements are evaluated: the two wilderness encounters between Saul and David; the dialogues between David, Nabal, and Abigail; and Abner's dialogues with the sons of Zeruiah, David's sister. As with the warrior dialogues in chapter 2, many of these discourses do not consistently exhibit the features of Mediterranean challenge and response models. What is evident in these dialogues is a much more complex view of honor in conflict engagements, some of which are in contradiction to the Mediterranean frameworks.

Some of these dialogues exhibit the divine proxy narrative device to express a theological message. However, this is not as readily evident in every dialogue. As will be discussed, a few invoke the divine to rule in their favor against their foe as is evidenced in other ancient Near Eastern texts. In one unique example, YHWH acts directly within the narrative to enable David's heroic feat.

David and Saul: The Wilderness Encounters

First Samuel 24 and 26 contain two encounters between David and Saul in the southern wilderness. A side-by-side reading of these texts reveals quite a few similarities, as many scholars have noted—a literary doublet. Saul continues to pursue David into the wilderness of Judah and beyond with 3,000 hand-picked warriors. In contrast, David and his forces are a meager 600 strong. In each account, certain members of the Ziphite clan

provide David's location to Saul—evidence that not all of Judah was supportive of David.[1] The common central theme is that David spares Saul's life. The hunter and prey roles are reversed, but David refuses to act against YHWH's anointed. Nevertheless, in both instances, David removes a sign of kingship from Saul to be used later to prove David's innocence and loyalty to Saul. In the end, each party goes their separate ways.

The similarities naturally give rise to questions of the relationship between these two accounts. Older source critics argued that one account derived from the other, normally chapter 24 from 26. More recent form-critical scholars see a common source to both accounts, which developed differently in various locations. Based primarily on the greater detail provided in 1 Sam 24, these scholars generally consider it to be older.[2] Regardless of the interdependencies, Campbell rightly observes an important truth: "The narrative here challenges us to find meaning in the composition that has been forged from these traditions."[3] One question common in both narratives and the intervening account of David, Nabal, and Abigail is whether David will incur blood-guilt on his path to the throne.[4] In these two encounters, David firmly refuses. As will be discussed later, his actions against Nabal nearly take a different turn.

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1. This assumes that 1 Sam 23:23–29 belongs with the account in chapter 24. Given the links to chapter 26, this is a reasonable assumption.

2. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 386n1. Wellhausen considers chapter 26 to be the basis for chapter 24 due to the fact that it is "the shorter and more pointed version" (Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* [Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1965], 264–65). Henry Smith leans in the same direction. "The slight preponderance of probability seems to me to be on the side of the latter representation (chapter 26) as more original" (Henry P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, ICC [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899], 216).

3. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 244.

4. Robert P. Gordon, "David's Rise and Saul's Demise: Narrative Analogy in 1 Samuel 24–26," *TynBul* 31 (1980): 43.

The En-Gedi Cave Encounter

David and his men encamped close to one of the few prodigious springs in the Judean wilderness, En Gedi, "the spring of the wild goat kid." Situated along the Dead Sea's western shore (approximately 18 miles East-Southeast of Hebron and 20 miles Southeast of Bethlehem), En Gedi is an oasis of life amid an otherwise parched landscape. David's decision to stay close to such an abundant freshwater source makes strategic, geographical, and narrative sense. The region is also replete with limestone caves, suitable for hiding, but a very poor choice if the hiding place were discovered. These geographic factors have a role in the narrative.

> When Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, they told him, "Look, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi." Saul took 3,000 chosen men from all Israel and went in search of David and his men towards the rocks of the mountain goats. And he came to the sheepfolds by the road, and there was a cave. Saul went in to relieve himself. But David and his men were staying in the innermost parts of the cave. David's men said to him, "See today is the day which YHWH said to you, 'Behold I will give your enemy into your hand and you may do to him whatever is good in your eyes.'" David got up and quietly cut off the hem of Saul's robe. Afterward, David was guilt-stricken that he had cut off the hem of Saul's [robe].
>
> Then David said to his men, "God forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, YHWH's anointed—to send out my hand against him because he is YHWH's anointed." And David scolded his men with words and would not allow them to rise up against Saul. Then Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. (1 Sam 24:2–8, ET 24:1–7).

This narrative is not without its difficulties. How were David and all of his men hiding within a cave? David's men refer to a saying of YHWH not evident thus far in the narrative (24:5, ET 24:4).[5] In that context, does David consider Saul to be his enemy? How are David and his men able to conduct such a conversation within a cave without

5. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 383.

Saul having some indication that an army is hidden deeper within the cave?[6] Finally, how was David able to cut off the corner of Saul's robe without being noticed?

Consistent throughout the Samuel narrative is David's concern for YHWH's anointed. As was discussed in chapter one, within Mediterranean social groups, the heads of households and monarchs are esteemed with special honor. "A single person symbolizes the group whose collective honour is vested in his person. The members owe obedience and respect without redress."[7] Pitt-Rivers notes that for this reason, patricide and regicide were more than mere homicide; they were sacrilegious. In Israel, anointing was a royal rite. According to McCarter, the ceremony was believed to impart a portion of the divine spirit upon the king.[8] The anointed was under YHWH's protection, and anyone who killed YHWH's anointed was subject to YHWH's wrath.[9] Yet, it must be noted that within the narrative, both Saul and David are YHWH's anointed. While David rejects the opportunity to kill Saul, Saul seems to have no such reservation. While one could question whether Saul knew of David's prior anointing, this incident leaves little doubt that he recognizes it going forward.

Even though David refuses to take advantage of the situation to kill Saul, he uses it to his advantage in his struggle against the king. David cuts off the hem (כנף) of Saul's robe. Although David will use this fabric to prove his innocence and continued loyalty to

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6. Hamilton, *Body Royal*, 201. Hamilton notes the verb וישׁסע reflects David "tearing up" his men while noting that others (e.g., McCarter, *I Samuel*, 381) consider this to be too strong. Driver, *Notes*, 193 contra McCarter, Driver translates: "and David *tare* his men with words."

7. Pitt-Rivers, "Honour," 36.

8. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 384.

9. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 145–46.

Saul, its removal is not without significance. The reader is immediately reminded of 1 Sam 15:27–28: "As Samuel turned to go, he [Saul] seized the hem (כנף) of Samuel's robe and it tore. Samuel said to him, 'Today YHWH has torn the kingship of Israel from you and will give it to your neighbor who is better than you.'" Hamilton suggests one possibility regarding David's intent might have been to use the material in a ritual cursing.[10] Regardless of its intended use, the hem of his garment is a symbol used in Samuel for the Israelite monarchy. David's action is a reminder of Samuel's pronouncement regarding the removal of Saul's kingship and house.[11]

It is within the dialogue between David and Saul where evidence of the honor dynamics between these two warriors is most interesting. Their rhetoric is in stark contrast. David's call to Saul is a rhetorical masterpiece full of honor language, while Saul's is degrading:[12]

> Afterward, David got up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, "My Lord, the king!" Saul looked behind him. David bowed his face to the ground and made obeisance to him. David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say 'David is seeking to harm you?' Look! This day your eyes see that YHWH gave you today into my hand in the cave. Some said I should kill you, but I had pity on you and said, 'I will not send out my hand against my Lord, because he is YHWH's anointed.' Look, my father and see the hem of your robe in my hand! Because I cut off the hem of your robe, but did not kill you. Know and see there is no evil in my hand or rebellion. I have not sinned against you. But you hunt [me] to take my life. May YHWH judge between me and you. And may YHWH avenge me over you, but my hand will not be against you. As the ancient proverb says, 'From the wicked goes out wickedness.' But my hand will not be against you. Who does the King of Israel go out after? Who are you chasing after? A dead dog? After a single flea? May YHWH be the judge and arbiter between me and you. May he see and plead my case and deliver my judgment from your hand" (1 Sam 24:9–16, ET 24:8–15).

10. Hamilton, *Body Royal*, 201–2.

11. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:276.

12. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 386.

David's posture and rhetoric are that of a liege to his lord. He bows to the ground and does obeisance (וישׁתחו) to Saul. David refers to Saul as "my father." As the sworn servant of the king, David should be under Saul's protection. In line with Stewart's model, Saul is the protector, and David is the protectee. David's speech attempts to lay some of the blame on others who have dishonored David with their false claims against him. According to Stewart's model, David would have the reasonable expectation that Saul would either come to David's aid or seek to resolve the matter with these accusers. Instead, Saul has believed the accusations against David. Of course, the reader knows that these accusations have come from none other than Saul himself. It appears as if David uses this language in an attempt to maintain Saul's honor (face) while seeking to maintain his own. His speech, as such, displays elements of Facework theory. David's rhetoric seeks a win-win solution for each person's honor.

On another level, David recognizes that the true suzerain of both men is YHWH. As such, David's rhetoric shifts to an appeal to YHWH as his covenant protector. David's call for YHWH to judge between them is reminiscent of Jephthah's statement before his battle with the Ammonites, "*I* have not sinned against you, but you do wrong by attacking me. May the judge YHWH judge today between the Israelites and the Ammonites." (Judg 11:27).[13] Mobley notes similarities between Israel and other cultures where the divine court judges between the combatants. They award victory to the righteous and deliver defeat against the guilty.[14] Mesopotamian kings considered war as a

13. Emphasis added to reflect the personal pronoun אנכי in combination with the Qal Perfect 1CS of חטא.

14. Mobley, *Empty Men*, 101.

lawsuit, subject to the judgment of the gods.[15] Similarly, David's dialogue with Saul bears striking similarities to a line from the autobiography of Ḫattušili III, a 13th-century BCE Hittite king. He asks his patron goddess, Ištar, as well as the Storm god, to judge their conflicts: "So Come! Ištar of Šamuha and the Storm-god of Nerik will judge us."[16] The warrior who brings the lawsuit to the divine court is then justified in initiating hostilities against their foe. In this case, however, David does not need to act because he knows that YHWH will ultimately bring about the appropriate victory.

There is another element at play within this discourse: shame. David calls on Saul's concern for his honor (i.e., his shame) to end the hunt. Only a shameless man would seek to kill an innocent man, let alone one whose relative social standing is like that of a flea on the back of a dead dog compared to the king. Within Saul's response, there is evidence that, despite his many faults, Saul is not shameless. He is concerned with his honor:

> When David finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is that the voice of my son, David?" And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. He said to David, "You are more righteous than me because you repaid me with good, but I repaid you with evil. Today you have told how you have done good to me and how YHWH put me into your hand, but you did not kill me. If a man finds his enemy does he send him on his way with good [things]? So may YHWH reward you with good for what you have done to me this day" (1 Sam 24:17–20, ET 24:16–19).

In contrast to David's rhetorical skill, Saul responds to David "with four choked Hebrew words."[17] In referring to David as "my son," Saul admits the covenant relationship between them. He goes on to acknowledge this more when he refers to David's action as

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15. Sa-Moon Kang, *Divine War in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989), 14.

16. Ibid., 50, 194. Translation from Van den Hout, *Ḫattušili III*, 1:203.

17. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:278.

"good" (הטובה) and his own as "evil" (הרעה). David has acted per the covenant between these two men.[18] Fokkelman considers the correct translation to be "you are in the right and I am not."[19] Saul's words demonstrate remorse for his actions and the dishonor they naturally incur. At the same time, he appeals to the heavenly court to reward David for his restraint. Perhaps his repentance would mitigate any potential sentence due from the heavenly court.

There is also a curious contradiction in Saul's discourse. Saul identifies David as "my son" and his enemy. He is both within a covenantal relationship and without. Saul's contradictory words further condemn his actions in the narrative. This contradiction sums up the bipolar nature of Saul's character and relationship with David.

In the final portion of Saul's speech, he seeks an apparent reversal of the covenant relationship. He recognizes the impending divine judgment and asks David for mercy regarding his house.

> "Now I know that you will surely be king and kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. Now swear to me by YHWH that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." David swore to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold. (1 Sam 24:21–23, ET 24:20–22)

This speech is Saul's first admission that David will be king.[20] As Stansell notes, "name" (שׁם) is often synonymous with honor or reputation, as well as inheritance.[21] The Apology

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18. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 322, 385. McCarter notes the covenantal nature of these words as attested through ancient Near Eastern texts.

19. J. P. Fokkelman, *The Crossing Fates*, vol 2 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Dover, NH: Van Gorcum, 1986), 469.

20. While it is widely held that this admission (and much of the incident) is of a later formulation, our concern is with the narrative as it functions within the text's final form.

21. Thomas Thompson and Dorothy Thompson, "Some Legal Problems in the Book of Ruth," *VT* 18/1 (1968): 85, citing Neufeld, note that שׁם is often equivalent to inheritance. Gary Stansell, "Honor and

of Ḫattušili III includes a similar usage when describing the initial military exploits of Ḫattušili III: "What (population of the city of) Ḫattuša he held, that I took away and resettled it all. The (enemy) commanders, however, I seized and handed them over to my brother. This, now, was my first manly deed (and) Ištar, My Lady, for the first time proclaimed my name on this campaign."[22] Ištar's proclamation of the name of Ḫattušili affirmed his reputation and honor as a great warrior.

In this instance, however, there is parallelism at work within Saul's request. The cutting off of Saul's descendants is the equivalent of wiping out Saul's name from his father's house. Saul's request that David "not wipe out my name from my father's house," is tied to the survival of his descendants and inheritance. The translation above refers to destroying the name. The NRSV uses "wipe out," which appears similar to the purpose for levirate marriage in Deut 25:5–10. However, there is a verbal difference. In Deut 25:6, the verb is מחה in the *niphal*, which has the sense of to be wiped out, removed, or annihilated.[23] In 1 Sam 24:22 (ET 24:21), the verb is שׁמד in the *hiphil*, which carries the sense of to destroy or exterminate with deliberate purpose or action.[24] Based upon this verbal distinction, Saul asks David not to deliberately exterminate Saul's descendants—something one would expect a rival king to do to secure the throne. This request mirrors Jonathan's request of David in 1 Sam 20:14–17. Fokkelman considers the mirroring of

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Shame in the David Narratives." in *Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible*, Semeia 68 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 59. Stansell notes it is synonymous with honor and reputation.

22. Edgar Sturtevant and George Bechtel, *A Hittite Chrestomathy* (Philadelphia: Linguistic Society of America, 1935), 71. Translation from Van den Hout, *Ḫattušili III*, 1:201.

23. HALOT, 567–68.

24. HALOT, 1553.

Jonathan's request to be remarkable.[25] Nevertheless, at face value, this does seem like an audacious request. One wonders if this is a proper request for a warrior-king to make. David's acceptance of the request is remarkably gracious and sets the stage for future narrative actions.

The divine proxy in this dialogue is less evident than in other texts. Indeed, David's stern rejection of his men's encouragement to kill Saul is evidence of respect for YHWH's anointed, which might be seen as divine proxy. However, David's proclamation of his innocence does not invoke the divine commentary displayed in other dialogues. He pleads his case as if before the heavenly court. If there is any evidence of such, it may be in Saul's response. Saul's acknowledgment of David's certain kingship and dynasty affirms YHWH's earlier proclamation through Samuel. Perhaps Saul's plea for his offspring could be viewed as YHWH's intent regarding Israel's succession practices. However, future events will prove that this intent, if it is such, was not followed—even by David.

Confrontation at Hachilah Hill

While there are similarities between 1 Sam 24 and 26, as discussed above, there are essential differences worth mentioning. The En Gedi encounter occurs in the daylight, while the events at Hachilah hill are at night. In 1 Sam 24, Saul enters the social space of David and his men in the cave, whereas, in chapter 26, David enters the social space of Saul's camp. The En Gedi encounter is one of chance. In the Hachilah hill encounter, David takes the initiative to enter Saul's camp of his own accord. Within 1 Sam 26, the warrior discourse is different as well. While David uses the event to, once again,

25. Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 472.

demonstrate his innocence to Saul, his rhetoric is more directed to Abner and the warriors with Saul than Saul himself.

> David got up and went to the place where Saul had camped. David saw the place where Saul lay down with Abner son of Ner, commander of his Army. Saul was lying down in the encampment and the people were camping around him.
>
> David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and Abishai, son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down with me to Saul's camp?" Abishai said, "I will go down with you." So David and Abishai went to the people [i.e., the army] at night. And behold! Saul was lying asleep in the camp with his spear stuck in the ground at his head. Abner and the people were lying around him.
>
> Abner said to David, "Today God has given your enemy into your hand. Now please let me pin him to the ground with one thrust. I will not need a second try." But David said to Abishai, "You shall not destroy him because who may send out his hand against YHWH's anointed and go unpunished?" And David said, "As YHWH lives, YHWH will strike him, or the day of his death will come, or he will go down in battle and perish. But God forbid that my hand might go out against YHWH's anointed. But now take the spear from by his head and the water jar and let us go."
>
> So David took the spear and the water jar from beside Saul's head and left with them. And no one saw, and no one knew, nor awoke from sleeping because a deep sleep from YHWH had fallen upon them (1 Sam 26:5–12).

David and Abishai enter the social space of Saul and his men. In fact, they must navigate their way through the sleeping army surrounding Saul. However, the challenge goes unnoticed because of their deep sleep (and apparent lack of guards). Abishai's dialogue with David is reminiscent of Saul's early attempts on David's life to "pin David to the wall" (1 Sam 18:11, 19:10). There is a subtle rebuke in that, unlike Saul, Abishai will not need more than one attempt to get the job done. An interesting distinction between En Gedi and this encounter is that David's men encourage him to take the initiative in the cave. Here, Abishai is content to do the deed on David's behalf.[26] David tells Abishai "do

26. Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 534–35.

not destroy him" (אל תשחיתהו). McCarter notes that the verb שׁחת in the *hiphil* often carries the connotation of spoliation or mutilation. YHWH's anointed is not to be defiled.[27] David's response to Abishai lists three acceptable ways for YHWH's anointed to die: (1) YHWH's direct action, (2) natural causes, or (3) death in battle. In light of the earlier discussion that success or failure in battle represented a divine verdict, all three methods are within divine control. From a warrior's perspective, killing an opponent while sleeping (or relieving themselves) appears to be a form of mutilation and is, therefore, dishonorable.[28]

Much like the En Gedi encounter, David removes two symbols of the warrior-king: his spear and water jug. Fokkelman considers the spear to be a symbol of death (for its use in battle).[29] The water jug is a symbol of life and sustenance in the desert landscape.[30] What is unique to this encounter is that David is not guilt-ridden after taking these items. He does not seem to consider taking the spear and water jug to be as dishonorable as cutting off the hem of Saul's robe. This may be due in part to what he views as the dishonorable—even shameless—behavior of Abner and Saul's select forces:

> Then David crossed over to the other side and stood upon the top of the hill far away with a great space between them. Then David called out to the people and to Abner, son of Ner, "Abner! will you not answer?" Abner replied, "Who are you who calls out to the king?" David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? Who is like you in all Israel? Then why did you not watch over your lord, the king? Because

27. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 407.

28. Interestingly, when Saul and his sons die in battle, the Philistines mutilate Saul's body by cutting off his head. They strip the bodies and hang them on the city wall of Beth-shan. They carry the good news to the houses of their idols as well as to the people. The beheading and hanging naked on the city walls is a complete dishonoring of YHWH's anointed and a sign to the Philistines that their gods have prevailed against YHWH (1 Sam 31:8–10).

29. While the spear is certainly an instrument of death, it is also a symbol of power for Saul.

30. Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 537.

> one of the people came to destroy the king, your lord. This thing you have done is not good. As YHWH lives, you all deserve to die because none of you kept watch over your lord, over YHWH's anointed! Now see, where are the king's spear and water jar that were beside his head?" (1 Sam 26:13–16)

David's formal challenge does not go against Saul but Abner, the head of his army. This speech bears the classic features of a challenge and response engagement. However, David's challenge goes beyond just Abner. While not readily apparent in English, David's accusations shift from Abner to the entire army. In verses 14–16a, all of the verbs are second person masculine singular, as is each instance of "you." However, in verse 16b, the verbs, second person pronouns, and pronominal suffixes become plural: "As YHWH lives, you all deserve to die, because none of you have kept watch over your lord, YHWH's anointed." The challenge and reproach to honor is collective.

There is little doubt that David's speech to Abner is a challenge to his honor. He claims that Abner, the mighty warrior, has failed in his duty to protect his king. According to Malina's challenge and response framework, Abner has three options: (1) positive rejection via scorn or disdain, (2) acceptance and counter-challenge, or (3) negative refusal via no response. Abner's only response is to ask, "who are you that calls to the king?" His answer is a non-response. To this point, David has not called out to Saul. Abner's lack of a counter-challenge demonstrates the dishonor that falls upon him and his men due to their actions.

As with their previous encounter at En Gedi, the dialogue between Saul and David bears the marks of covenant relationship:

> Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is that the voice of my son, David?" David replied, "It is my voice, my lord, the king. Why does my lord chase after his servant? For what have I done? What evil is in my hand? Now may lord, the king, hear the words of his servant. If YHWH has incited you against me, may he accept an offering. But if it is a person, may they be cursed before YHWH.

> Because they have driven me from my share in YHWH's possession, saying 'Go serve other gods.' Now let not my blood spill on the ground away from the presence of YHWH because the king of Israel has come out in search of a single flea, like one hunts a partridge in the mountains."
>
> Then Saul said to David, "I have sinned. Return my son, David, for I will not do evil to you any longer because my life was precious in your eyes this day. See, I have been a fool and have made a huge mistake." David answered, "Here is the king's spear. Send over one of the young men to take it. YHWH rewards each man for his righteousness and faithfulness. For YHWH put you in my hand today, but I was not willing to send out my hand against YHWH's anointed. As your life was precious in my eyes this day, so may my life be precious in YHWH's eyes and may he deliver me from all distress." Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you my son, David! Surely you will do many things and succeed in them." Then David went on his way and Saul returned to his place (1 Sam 26:17–25).

Much like the En Gedi encounter, Saul calls David "my son," while for David, Saul is "my lord." David identifies himself as "a servant" and in diminutive terms like "a flea" or "a partridge." Under the Mediterranean challenge and response models, it is difficult to consider David's dialogue with Saul a challenge—even a positive one. Challenges to honor require that each person is of equal social status. The language used by Saul and David indicates that they do not view themselves as social equals—regardless of what the reader might believe from their actions. Rather, on some level, David seems to attempt to preserve Saul's honor by seeking to blame either YHWH or other men for inciting this behavior against David.[31]

David's dialogue with Saul resembles an honor ritual that Stewart observed among the Sinai Bedouin. Blackening is a form of accusation that holds that the man impugned has already done something that dishonors him. The most important reason for "blackening" is the failure to fulfill one's obligations as a guarantor. The protected individual may seek to blacken his guarantor if he has failed to fulfill obligations or

31. Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 308.

restore the protected individual's honor in a timely manner.[32] As at En Gedi, David's rhetoric seems designed to call into question Saul's honor (blackening) because Saul has wrongfully sought to kill David—whom he is obliged to protect. Saul admits his mistake, vowing never to attempt to kill David again. It is telling, however, that rather than leaving together, each goes their separate ways.

As with the dialogue at En Gedi, there is little in the way of divine proxy within this discourse. David's rhetoric is direct and mostly personal. David does not plead for YHWH's judicial intervention as he did earlier.[33] The only statement that rises to the theological level is David's remark regarding YHWH's rewards in v. 23, "YHWH rewards each man for his righteousness and faithfulness." It is challenging to place this statement on the same level of divine proxy as David's statements before the battle with Goliath. It seems like little more than a platitude. Saul, for his part, does not mention God at all.[34]

While the dialogue may not reflect divine proxy, the narrative includes more direct divine involvement. Campbell notes, "Heroes perform deeds of individual bravery and daring."[35] Here David's actions are more like the storied heroic deeds of Ehud, Gideon, or Jael. In Samuel, David's battle with Goliath has a heroic tenor. Jonathan and his armor-bearer against the Philistines at Michmash are similarly heroic. In 1 Sam 23, David's mighty men are honored for their heroic feats. However, Campbell observes that

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32. Stewart, *Honor*, 82–83.

33.Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 545.

34. Ibid., 551.

35. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 268.

no other Israelite king is portrayed performing such deeds before or after David.[36] Yet, this heroic performance is aided and abetted by YHWH. This encounter is somewhat unique within Samuel in that YHWH is credited with direct action within the narrative. This is not divine proxy delivered through discourse; this is direct divine intervention.[37] YHWH causes the deep sleep to fall upon Saul's camp so that David and Abishai can perform this heroic feat. David recognizes that it was YHWH who delivered Saul into his hand (v. 23). However, this heroic feat is more remarkable because, despite direct divine involvement, David refuses to kill Saul. His heroics are intended to prove his honor as Saul's liege once again by capturing Saul's spear and water jug. There is no honor in killing a foe while they are incapacitated by divine sleep.

David, Nabal, and Abigail

Sandwiched between Saul and David's wilderness encounters is the story of David, Nabal, and Abigail (1 Sam 25:2–42). It is a literary unit of exceptional quality and artistry. There is dramatic tension as well as characters who demonstrate exceptional rhetorical skill.[38] This episode stands in contrast to the bookend encounters. Here, David is portrayed in a less-than-favorable light in his engagement with Nabal than he is in either encounter with Saul. It is also unique because the central figure and hero (or rather heroine) is a woman. Abigail stands in stark contrast to both David and Nabal for her wits, wisdom, and rhetoric, which she uses to avoid bloodshed between David and the

36. Ibid., 268.

37. It is interesting that each of these heroic deeds in the books of Samuel—Jonathan at Michmash and David at Hachilah hill—involves direct divine intervention. In 1 Sam 14, YHWH causes an earthquake and great panic among the Philistines.

38. Among the scholars who describe the exceptional literary quality of this text is Jon D. Levenson, "1 Samuel 25 as Literature and as History," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 11–28.

house of Nabal. According to Adele Berlin, Abigail is the leading lady, while David is a supporting actor. She notes that "most of the action takes place at Abigail's home, in the absence of David. The scene shifts to David's location only when Abigail is there."[39]

While much could be written about this episode's literary elegance, this analysis will focus on the honor dynamics evident within the text. In this regard, there is no lack of scholarly attention given to this passage. Many focus on how the Mediterranean honor-shame models are evident within the text. However, much of the work appears to ignore textual details as well as critical assumptions of these models to make them fit. The result is something akin to Cinderella's step-sisters attempting to cram their over-sized feet into her petite glass slipper. This encounter—particularly between David and Abigail—exhibits elements of Facework theory, which runs counter to many of the Mediterranean honor theories.

The opening scene of the narrative introduces the reader to an exceptionally wealthy man—a shepherd. As Garsiel notes, "by not naming the person till v. 3 the narrator applies a dynamic device which leaves the reader in suspense, curious to know who this rich person is."[40] The man is then named, along with his wife: Nabal and Abigail—who are a study in contrasts. With subtle foreshadowing, the narrator gives Abigail's qualities first.[41] She is "clever and beautiful." Driver notes that שׂכל is usually a

39. Adele Berlin, "Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David's Wives," *JSOT* 23 (1982): 79.

40. Moshe Garsiel, "Wit, Words, and a Woman: 1 Samuel 25," in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 93, ed. Yehuda T. Radday and Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 161.

41. Ibid., 162. Garsiel observes that this reversal of order would not go unnoticed in a patriarchal society and indicates that she will get the upper hand over him in this story.

term reserved for poetic texts (Prov 16:22) and has the sense of insight or shrewdness.[42] By contrast, Nabal—most certainly not his real name—in spite of his abundant wealth is a "fool."[43] However, Driver also notes that "fool" (נבל) is not adequate in its description. "The word in Hebrew suggested one who was insensible to the claims of either God or man and who was consequently at one irreligious and churlish."[44] He goes on to cite Isa 32:5–6, which bears striking similarities to the qualities of Nabal in 1 Sam 25:

> A fool will no longer be called noble,
> nor a villain said to be honorable.
> For fools speak folly,
> and their minds plot iniquity:
> to practice ungodliness,
> to utter error concerning YHWH,
> to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied,
> and to deprive the thirsty of drink.[45]

In essence, Nabal is the proverbial fool, while Abigail is the epitome of the "woman of noble character" (אשת־חיל) in Prov 31.

Upon hearing that Nabal is shearing his sheep, David sends ten of his young men[46] to him with a carefully worded message and request:

> Peace to you, peace to your house and peace to all that is yours! Now I heard that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us and we did not harm them and nothing went missing from them the whole time they were with us in Carmel. Ask your young men and they will tell you. Now let the young men find

42. Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text*, 196.

43. Levenson, "1 Samuel 25," 14. Levenson argues that the historical figure's real name has been suppressed in order to give him a nickname concurrent with his character. This is somewhat reminiscent of Pitt-Rivers's observation regarding shameless persons in Andalusia who were publicly called by their nicknames rather than their given names (Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," 44).

44. Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text*, 200.

45. NRSV translation.

46. נערים might be better understood as young warriors or military cadets per Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, trans. John McHugh, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 1:220.

> favor in your eyes, for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you may have at hand to your servants and to your son, David (1 Sam 25:6–8)

From a social-scientific perspective, the question is what sort of statement is David making? Some scholars have concluded that David is running a protection racket in the wilderness and is making a not-so-subtle attempt to shake down Nabal.[47] As such, some, like Stansell, read this incident in the context of a Mediterranean challenge and riposte. David's message is a challenge to which Nabal must respond in order to maintain honor.

Stansell's argument is grounded in the view that ancient Israelite society is agonistic. He translates David's statement in verse 7b in that light. "Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did not *shame* them (לא הכלמנום), and they missed nothing during the time they were in Carmel."[48] Esler notes that the Hebrew verb כלם has the sense of dishonor more than harm. As such, David indicates that, while they could have dishonored them, they did not.[49] Stansell interprets David's message as one seeking compensation from Nabal for David's "good deeds." He notes that paying for protection would bring honor to David and "shame" to Nabal in an agonistic society. This is primarily due to the reversal of the patron-client or protector-protectee relationship. The

47. Scholars that favor this interpretation include: Altar, *Hebrew Bible*, 280; Joel Baden, *The Historical David: The Real Life of an Invented Hero* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 95–96. Baden considers David's actions to be more out of necessity from an extended time in the wilderness; Alice Bach, "The Pleasure of Her Text," *USQR* 43/1 (1989): 50; Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 259, acknowledges the possibility, but does not give it a wholehearted endorsement; Esler, *Sex*, 241–43; Barbara Green, "Enacting Imaginatively the Unthinkable: 1 Samuel 25 and the Story of Saul," *BibInt* 11/1 (2003): 11; Stansell, "Honor and Shame," 62; Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 580; John Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 187. Pfoh takes a slightly different tack where he sees David as attempting to establish a patron-client relationship with Nabal where David is the patron and Nabal is the client (see Emmanuel Pfoh, "A Hebrew Mafioso: Reading 1 Samuel 25 Anthropologically," *Semitica et Classica* 7/1 [2014]: 39–40).

48. Stansell, "Honor and Shame," 62.

49. Esler, *Sex*, 240–41.

protector/patron is the superior/stronger party. For a powerful and wealthy person, like Nabal, to receive protection from a desperado, like David, would be dishonorable. As such, Nabal views David's request as a challenge, which he must reject—even scorn.[50] It is worth noting that Stansell demonstrates the inconsistency with which the term "shame" is oft-employed. He seems to mean "dishonor." One could argue that Nabal's shame—his concern for his honor—leads him to respond to David in such a crude manner. Nevertheless, David's actions do not "shame" Nabal as this study employs the term.

However, a closer examination of the language David employs seems to go against Stansell's view. First, David gives careful instructions to the young men about precisely what they are to say to Nabal. "Thus you shall say to him" (v. 6).[51] Even though David is instructing his men, his words to Nabal are reflected as direct speech. David's greeting is respectful from the start. His salutation uses the word שׁלם three times: "peace to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that is yours" (v. 6).[52] His request for food is predicated on the fact that Nabal's shepherds were with David's retinue, not the other way around. His request is for "favor" for his men as much as himself. It is couched in the polite language of "whatever you have at hand" (v. 8). David ultimately refers to himself as "your son." Ellen van Wolde states: "Because David starts his discourse respectfully (v. 6) and ends even humbly (v. 8), and because its main content is a plea for

50. Malina, *New Testament World*, 35.

51. Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text*, 196. Driver observes the unique Hebrew expression employed here: ואמרתם כה לחי. He notes that some think this was a unique form of salutation not in evidence anywhere else: "And ye shall say thus, To him that liveth" or perhaps comparing to the common Arabic salutation: "God keep you in life."

52. Ellen van Wolde, "A Leader Led by a Lady: David and Abigail in I Samuel 25," *ZAW* 114/3 (2002): 358.

favour, one has to infer that the middle term of his discourse (v. 7) could not possibly contain a threat."[53] She notes that had a threat been intended, one would expect modal verb forms (volitives). By contrast, the three indicative *qatal* (perfect) forms in verse 7 indicate that David is describing how he wants Nabal to perceive David's positive intentions.[54] Van Wolde's insights fit better with the textual evidence against Stansell's agonistic presupposition.

If David is not issuing an honor challenge to Nabal, then two other inter-related possibilities are worth considering. The first is that David's speech was a request for hospitality. The narrative setting is the time of the sheepshearing. It appears that this was also some sort of festival period (see 2 Sam 13:23–28). Since David and his men were living in the wilderness and had been in close contact with Nabal's servants, a modest request for hospitality would be a reasonable expectation. Jean-Jacques Glassner notes the prevalence of hospitality descriptions in ancient Near Eastern poetic literature and diplomatic documents.[55] Daniel Bodi identifies a pattern in ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs at work in this narrative. The customs included the following:

1. An exchange of conventional words, each careful to avoid offense.
2. The sharing of food, drink, and general pleasantries.
3. The offering of a toast that often becomes the prelude to a challenge followed by confrontation or verbal joust designed to test the newcomer's strength, courage, or quick wit. The purpose of which is to judge the newcomer against communal standards.[56]

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53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Jean-Jacques Glassner, "L'hospitalité en Mésopotamie Ancienne: Aspect de la Question de l'étranger," *ZA* 80 (1990): 62.

56. Daniel Bodi, "David as an ʿApiru in 1 Samuel 25 and the Pattern of Seizing Power in the Ancient Near East," in *Abigail, Wife of David, and Other Ancient Oriental Women*, ed. Daniel Bodi (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 53.

David's message seems to bear the hallmarks of a carefully crafted statement to Nabal with the desire to avoid causing any offense. Bodi notes that initial contact between parties is crucial concerning hospitality. He notes that the response to a salutation by a potential guest is "as good as uttering an oath inasmuch as it commits the speaker."[57] For this reason, he states that in Bedouin society, strangers may approach a small child first. If the child returns the salutation, the family might be bound by the rule of hospitality. Since David's entourage has already had positive interactions with members of Nabal's household, one might reasonably surmise that David had some expectation of hospitality—even though Nabal would be the only person authorized to extend the offer formally.[58] As Hamilton observes, the festival was a typical time of gift-giving. "David would assume that an איש גדול would routinely engage in bequests to properly deferential subordinates."[59] It is important to note that hospitality included not only food and shelter but also protection. Given David's tenuous status with Saul, offering hospitality (including protection) to such a man could put Nabal's entire household at significant risk.

The second, related, possibility is that David was seeking to enter into a covenant relationship with Nabal. It is related because the rule of hospitality in the ancient Near

57. Ibid., 56.

58. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 83–87 and Ahmed M. Abou-Zeid, "Honour and Shame Among the Bedouins of Egypt," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965), 254–55.

59. Mark W. Hamilton, *A Kingdom for a Stage: Political and Theological Reflection in the Hebrew Bible*, FAT 116 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 91.

East was a form of covenant relationship between parties—at least for a limited time.[60] Hamilton notes that gift-giving is an essential aspect of this exchange, which depends on the parties working out the nature of their relationship. Not everyone can receive or give a gift—only those who are in a reciprocal relationship. This is the reason that David makes the request on behalf of his men.[61] Wiseman sees similarities in David's greeting with Akkadian negotiations to establish covenantal relationships—particularly the use of the word שׁלם. The greeting of peace was followed by a statement that Nabal's shepherds were "with us," meaning that David had protected them. In other words, David and Nabal had already been informally cooperating as allies. The messengers' entreaty for a favorable reply included a request for a token gift ("whatever you have at hand") from Nabal. Furthermore, David's self-reference as "your son" indicates that David seeks to be Nabal's client rather than his patron. As Wiseman states, "This would seem to be an instance of negotiation with an invitation to Nabal to enter into a regulated covenant with David."[62] This view is underscored when later David accepts Abigail's gift. His acceptance was given with the words, "Go up to your house in peace; see I have heeded your voice, and I have granted your petition" (v. 35).[63] Hamilton summarizes David's intentions in a way that brings the notions of hospitality and covenant together:

> In 1 Samuel 25, David asks a gift from Nabal in order to create a reciprocal relationship. He has already given something he believes Nabal should value, protection of his personnel and capital, and he expects some reciprocal action.

60. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 85–86.

61. Hamilton, *Kingdom*, 92.

62. D. J. Wiseman, "'Is It Peace?' – Covenant and Diplomacy," *VT* 32/3 (1982): 318.

63. Ibid., 319.

> Moreover, he imagines that the exchange of gifts will create a relationship, albeit asymmetrical in Nabal's favor, between the two men and their retinues.[64]

Together, Hamilton's and Wiseman's analyses further undermine the notion that David's actions were a protection racket designed to extort goods from Nabal; or that David intended to challenge Nabal to enhance his honor at Nabal's expense.

Nabal's response via David's young men is as churlish as his name would indicate: "Nabal replied to David's servants, 'Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? Today, many servants are breaking away from their masters. Should I take my bread and my water and that which I have slaughtered for my shearers and give it to men I don't know where they are from?'" (1 Sam 25:10–11). The narrator has masterfully crafted Nabal's response in light of David's initial speech. Table 3.1 depicts the symmetry in the dialogue between David and Nabal through their intermediaries.

Table 3.1. Contrasts in David and Nabal discourse[65]

David	Nabal
Extends greeting of peace	No greeting
Instructs servants	Denigrates servants
Seeks relationship	Rejects relationship
Identifies servants as reliable witnesses	Rejects servants as reliable witnesses
Seeks unspecified gift	Specifies gift but refuses to give it

A proper understanding of Nabal's churlish response is directly related to how one interprets David's initial speech. If one sees this as a challenge to Nabal's honor, then his reaction is logically one of scorn and disdain because someone of lower social standing has challenged his honor. If, on the other hand, David intends to establish a relationship

64. Hamilton, *Kingdom*, 93.

65. Ibid., 96.

with Nabal, his rejection is more nuanced. Wiseman thinks Nabal's response is a formal rejection of David, rather than reflective of any ignorance of him.[66] Alter sees in Nabal's rejection, "the disdain of a propertied man . . . for all landless rebels who threaten the established social hierarchy."[67] For Hamilton, Nabal rejects the entreaty due to David's (or his family's) social status and the political uncertainty of shifting alliances. To Nabal, a man of significant position and means, David is a potential threat to the social order. He is a man of uncertain social and political standing.[68] Nabal has nothing to gain (and much to lose) from such an alliance.

Stansell sees further proof of challenge and riposte in David's call to arms in response to Nabal's insult. "In an honor/shame culture, David must respond to the insult; otherwise, he is a coward, and becomes dishonored."[69] Indeed, in a Mediterranean challenge and response contest between equals, David must respond to preserve his honor. However, this may not be true in all circumstances. In an engagement between social equals, Nabal's scorn would justify vengeance on the part of David. In many ways, David's response matches that expectation. But is David Nabal's social equal? The narrator portrays the contrasts between these men. However, from a social perspective, it is difficult to argue they are of equal standing. That is the irony of the situation as the narrator describes it. If David is of lesser standing, then Malina's challenge and response model would indicate that he needs to accept Nabal's scornful rejection of his

66. Wiseman, "Is It Peace?," 318.

67. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:281.

68. Hamilton, *Kingdom*, 94–95.

69. Stansell, "Honor and Shame," 64.

inappropriate challenge.[70] However, this may very well be the distinction the narrator intends to make. David's reaction to Nabal's scorn is not acceptable either. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

Another aspect of David's intent, as expressed in the dialogue, is worth exploring in this context. The narrator provides additional details of David's speech as his encounter with Abigail approaches. "And David said, 'Surely it is in vain that I watched over everything that this [man] has in the wilderness. And nothing went missing from all that was his. But he has returned me evil for good. Thus will God do to David and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male that belongs to him'" (1 Sam 25:21–22).[71] The promise to eradicate every male of Nabal's household is an interesting and somewhat obscure euphemism in Hebrew: מֹשְׁתִין בְּקִיר. The King James Version translates it in an apparent literal fashion as "pisseth against the wall." Talmon and Fields, in their detailed analysis of this phrase, note the following difficulty with this interpretation: "The image evoked—pissing against the wall—reflects a typically Western experience of a male relieving himself. But commentators have correctly observed that such a description does not at all accord with Near Eastern customs, ancient or modern."[72] The uncertainty arises in the interpretation of the word קִיר. Following a rather lengthy analysis of extra- and inter-biblical texts, they conclude that קִיר within this idiom best references an elevated or upper room in a palace reserved for dignitaries and royalty. Citing Judg 3:24

70. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34.

71. The MT has "the enemies of David." However, the LXX has "to David" which makes better sense.

72. Shemaryahu Talmon and Weston W. Fields, "The Collocation of מֹשְׁתִין בְּקִיר וְעָצוּר וְעָזוּב and it's Meaning," *ZAW* 101/1 (1989): 97.

as an example, they conclude that such residences would have had a private chamber for guests to relieve themselves in private.[73] As such, the idiom is better understood as "one who pisses in the upper room." Their analysis, if correct, provides additional insight into David's speech. David is not merely uttering vulgarity; he intends to wipe out the "noble" line of Nabal. This reading adds credence to the wealth and social stature of Nabal within the Calebite clan while also confirming the difference in the current social status of these two men. As such, David's vengeance is not appropriate in light of a Mediterranean challenge and response framework.

Furthermore, it sheds light on the editor's choice to insert this story between the two wilderness encounters with Saul.[74] The contrast is David's attitude and behavior towards these two powerful men. As mentioned earlier, 1 Sam 24–26 considers the question of whether David will incur bloodguilt as he ascends to the throne.[75] In this story, David nearly falls short of the mark—save for the intervention of Abigail.

Upon hearing from one of the servants about the events which have transpired, Abigail, Nabal's wife, takes the initiative to prevent the coming battle.

> When Abigail saw David she hurried and got off her donkey and fell before David upon her face, bowing to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "Upon me, my lord, is the guilt. Please let your handmaid speak to your ears and hear the words of your handmaid. Please my lord, do not take this worthless man seriously, this fool. For as his name is so he is. Nabal is his name and foolishness is in him. But I, your handmaid, did not see my lord's young men whom you sent.

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73. Ibid., 101.

74. Green, "Enacting Imaginatively," 6–7. Green goes so far as to view 1 Sam 25 as a dream of Saul, David, and Saul's household. She sees it as an allegorical representation of Saul's death and YHWH's involvement in the royal succession. A full treatment and analysis of this view is beyond the scope of this thesis.

75. Gordon, "David's Rise," 43.

> Now my lord, as YHWH lives and you yourself live, since YHWH has restrained you from bloodguilt and delivering yourself by your own hand, may your enemies and those seeking to do evil to my lord be like Nabal" (1 Sam 25:23–26).

Here, Stansell doubles down on Malina's challenge and response framework. In his view, Abigail serves as a "self-selected" mediator between the disputing parties.[76] There are certain aspects of Abigail's entreaty that function in this manner. According to Bourdieu, honor among the Kabyle requires that the time-lapse between offense and remedy must be short.[77] Abigail's actions bear out a similar urgency of the situation. Bourdieu further notes that "Custom requires that, to start with, they [mediators] dissociate themselves from the party for whom they have come to intercede."[78] The mediators also seek to find fault with the party from whom they seek a pardon to even the playing field. In this context, Abigail does distance herself from her husband. Also, her reference to David's potential bloodguilt might be seen as a way of spreading the fault. Stansell claims that Abigail's intercession is a new challenge (or counter-challenge) to which David is obligated to respond.[79]

However, Stansell ignores essential aspects of Mediterranean honor and the challenge and response models that undermine his argument. First, the narrative casts doubt on Abigail's role as a mediator described by the Mediterranean honor models. Abigail's discourse is seemingly inconsistent with the influential role she plays within the

76. Stansell, "Honor and Shame," 64.

77. Bourdieu, "Sentiment of Honour," 214.

78. Ibid., 196.

79. Stansell, "Honor and Shame," 64.

narrative.[80] The narrator previews Abigail's speech with three action verbs designed to demonstrate obeisance: she *fell* before David on her face, *bowing* to the ground. She *fell* at his feet (vv. 23b-24a). She refers to David as "my lord" and herself as "your handmaid" three times each. Her demeanor in front of David matches the humility of her words. She also takes the blame for dishonoring David. Her demeanor and language cast doubt on the notion that she is a self-selected mediator in the honor battle between Nabal and David. While it is clear that she interjects herself into the confrontation to avoid battle, it is difficult to view her as a mediator in the classic sense of the Mediterranean honor models.

The most apparent issue that Stansell fails to consider fully is that Abigail is a woman. According to the Mediterranean models, Abigail has left the secret space of the household and inserted herself into the public arena usually reserved for men.[81] Her actions dishonor herself, her husband, and their household. In the context of the Mediterranean models, Abigail's actions are shameful in that they show an apparent lack of concern for honor.[82] All of the Mediterranean challenge and response models make it clear that a contest of honor can only take place among equals. Because Abigail is a woman, these same models disavow her the social standing necessary to participate in a

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80. Edward J. Bridge, "Desperation to a Desperado: Abigail's Request to David in 1 Samuel 25," *ABR* 63 (2015): 17.

81. Bourdieu, "Sentiment of Honour," 219. Peristiany, "Honour and Shame," 182. Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," 71. Pitt-Rivers notes an exception among upper class women: "the lady of the upper class can command men without inverting the social order, since her power derives from her rank, not from her sexuality."

82. Josephus, *Ant*. 6.13.301. Josephus hints at the unusual nature of Abigail's actions. He claims that she did not advise Nabal of her actions because "he was not sensible on account of his drunkenness." The implication is that she would not have gone behind his back had he been sober. It seems that, in Josephus's view, the time-critical nature of the events forced Abigail to act in a potentially dishonorable manner.

challenge and response engagement with David. In a further contradiction, Bourdieu claims that the role of women in a fight (challenge and response engagement) is to stand on the sidelines, shouting, singing, and encouraging their men in the melee.[83] In Kabyle society, women exalted the family's honor by encouraging their men; they did not go behind their backs nor act as mediators of the conflict.

While the Mediterranean challenge and response models do not adequately fit the narrative, Abigail's dialogue and objectives align more consistently with Facework theory. Edward Bridge sees aspects of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson's extension of Facework) at play in this narrative. As described in chapter one, the actors in a Facework encounter seek to preserve the honor (i.e., face) of the parties involved in the conflict. In this regard, Abigail's actions align with what Oetzel et al. describe as "integrative tactics" (see Figure 1.5).[84] Individuals who place a high value on their self-esteem and the esteem of others utilize integrating tactics. Integrating tactics do not seek concessions but desire a win-win or mutually acceptable solution.[85] "She [Abigail] is in a desperate situation—her husband and his men will be massacred—and so her language is designed to appease David, the desperado and entice him to call off the massacre."[86] For Abigail, the win-win solution is the preservation of her household (i.e., husband, property, servants, and self) while, at the same time, preserving David's honor.

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83. Bourdieu, "Sentiment of Honour," 201.

84. Oetzel et al., "Facework Behaviors," 400.

85. Sillars, "Attributions and Communications," 188.

86. Bridge, "Desperation," 17.

Abigail's rhetoric is carefully crafted to preserve David's honor. Her argument centers around the claim that David's intended course of action will not restore David's honor but dishonor him. He and his men will incur bloodguilt if they continue in their pursuit of vengeance.

> Now my lord, as YHWH lives and you yourself live, since YHWH has restrained you from bloodguilt and delivering yourself by your own hand, may your enemies and those seeking to do evil to my lord be like Nabal. Now may this blessing, which your maid servant has brought to my lord, be given to the young men following my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your handmaid; because YHWH will surely make a sure house for my lord. For my lord is fighting YHWH's battles and evil will not be found in you as long as you live. If anyone will rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord will be bound in the bundle of the living with YHWH your God; but the lives of your enemies he will sling from the hollow of a sling. And when YHWH has done all the good he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord will have no grief or conscience for shedding blood without cause or my lord saving himself. And when YHWH has done well for my lord, remember your handmaid (1 Sam 25:26–31).

As mentioned earlier, Abigail's speech indicates that David's intended actions against the house of Nabal are inappropriate—even evil. Bloodguilt (דמים) is a technical legal term for homicide. As Pamela Barmash states, "The term is derived from the sense that the spilled blood of the victim has a concrete existence of its own and cannot be ignored."[87] Abigail argues that David's path to the throne will be hindered if he murders a prominent Calebite clan member in Hebron.

The nature and content of Abigail's speech align with politeness strategies described by Brown and Levinson. Bridge identifies this as an "off record" strategy due

87. Pamela Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World* (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 17–18. Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text*, 202. Driver notes peculiarities in the Hebrew text of both verses 26 and 31. He views their meaning as "Let David avoid the difficulties which shedding innocent blood might hereafter involve him in, and the qualms of conscience which inevitably will follow it." McCarter, *I Samuel*, 323. McCarter notes the mortal contamination of bloodguilt arises from the slaying of a person who does not deserve to die.

to the extreme politeness and indirectness of her speech.[88] In particular, Abigail seeks to put some pressure on David to turn from his present course of action by reminding him that he is YHWH's anointed.[89] She claims that YHWH is responsible for restraining David from "delivering yourself by your own hand" (הוֹשַׁע ידך לך)—before it has happened. The Hebrew verb, ישׁע (here as a *hiphil* infinitive absolute), has the sense of "to help with the work," "to help save," or "to help deliver."[90] Rather than depending upon YHWH for help or deliverance, David was about to do it for himself—an exact reversal of David's commitment not to deliver himself from Saul in the preceding chapter. Auld observes an important distinction between Saul and Nabal that may factor into David's reaction. Saul is YHWH's anointed and, therefore, off-limits to David.[91] In another sense, Abigail reminds David of the protector/protectee relationship David enjoys with YHWH (reminiscent of Stewart's model). She provides David with an honorable, face-saving means of altering his course. Abigail provides the sought-after gifts for David's men while assuming responsibility for the earlier oversight. She reminds him that YHWH shall act as judge and executioner against David's enemies; YHWH will establish a "sure house" for David, and she is the first to claim David shall be "prince" (נגיד) over Israel.[92]

88. Bridge, "Desperation," 22.

89. Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson. "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena," in *Questions and Politeness*, ed. Esther N. Goody (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 192–94, 216–32. Abigail's apology and taking the blame for the oversight fits with their negative politeness apology strategy. Her indirectness exhibits elements of their off-record strategy as well.

90. HALOT, 448–49.

91. Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 296.

92. Levenson, "1 Samuel 25," 20.

There is an interesting contrast between the speeches of David and Abigail and their relationship to the divine. David invokes YHWH in the form of a vengeance oath. "Thus will God do to David and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male that belongs to him" (v. 22). Van Wolde observes that David attempts to legitimize his actions by conditionally trapping God as his witness, or even defender, in his efforts to wipe out Nabal's house. She notes that the narrator neither endorses nor contradicts David's thoughts and premeditated homicidal plans.[93] As Mobley points out in other texts, David's language may be intended to plead his case before the heavenly court to secure victory in the coming battle.[94]

Abigail's speech, on the other hand, invokes the divine to alter David's course of action. Seven times she mentions YHWH. Campbell notes that Abigail's speech can be broken down into two parts: the first dealing with Nabal's offensive rejection, and the second regarding David's future kingship.[95] The first part of her speech (vv. 26–28a) employs the phrase "and now" (ועתה) three times. In two of these instances, what follows looks to the future rather than David's actions heretofore. "Abigail describes a modal world as an indicative world. In other words, she speaks as if something still to be realized has already taken place, as is marked by the *qatal* form מנעך, »has kept you«. And she expresses it as if YHWH were the performer and not David."[96] Alter observes that Abigail "exploits the temporal ambiguity of the Hebrew imperfective verb" to make

93. van Wolde, "Led by a Lady," 361–62.

94. Mobley, *Empty Men*, 101.

95. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 260.

96. van Wolde, "Led by a Lady," 362.

statements that are both descriptive and predictive in the way David conducts himself.[97] Bridge notes another essential change in Abigail's speech when referring to YHWH's actions. "When she speaks as if on behalf of YHWH, she takes the role of superior; when she requests, she takes the role of inferior. Thus the narrator presents her as subordinate to David in her plea for restraint yet superordinate to David in the matter of how his actions will affect his future as king."[98] In verses 28b–30, Abigail refers to David seven times as "you" (using the 2nd person singular pronominal suffix) while only referring to him as "my lord" twice. Since chapter 25 opens with Samuel's death and burial, van Wolde claims that Abigail represents Samuel through her discourse. Her words reflect those of a prophet, and she likewise confers upon David the status of a leader. "For lack of an Israelite prophet, she acts as a prophetess."[99]

Abigail's reference to a "sure house" (בית נאמן) (v. 28) harkens back to the man of God who confronts Eli for the sinfulness of his sons. YHWH will "raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed one forever" (1 Sam 2:35, NRSV). However, this reference is to a priestly line, not a leader of Israel. It is also reminiscent of YHWH's promise, via the prophet Nathan, to establish a house for David

97. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:283.

98. Bridge, "Desperation," 24.

99. van Wolde, "Led by a Lady," 367.

that will endure (2 Sam 7:5–27).[100] What Abigail's discourse shares with these passages is the prophetic nature of the speech.

Abigail's speech may represent divine proxy better than any other text considered in this thesis. Her words are those of divine action within David's life. She reminds him that YHWH will establish David's house without resorting to vengeance. YHWH will take care of all David's enemies. As a result, David should not engage in any actions that might later cast doubts on who was responsible for David's rise to the throne. YHWH shall deliver David from his enemies and place him on the throne.

David's response to Abigail affirms the divine involvement in this narrative as well as the problems with his intended course of action:

> David said to Abigail, "Blessed be YHWH, God of Israel, who sent you to meet me this day. Blessed be your discernment and blessed be you, because you have kept me from bloodguilt and delivering myself with my own hand. For as surely as YHWH the God of Israel lives, who restrained me from doing evil to you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, by the light of morning there would not be one male belonging to Nabal."
>
> Then David took from her hand that which she had brought to him and said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. I have listened to your voice and granted your request" (1 Sam 25:32–35).[101]

David acknowledges that Abigail has protected his honor (saved his face) by keeping him from engaging in unwarranted vengeance. Her intervention not only saved his honor, but maintained the honor of Nabal's house. In effect, each party leaves the encounter in peace (שׁלם)—the very thing David was seeking with the house of Nabal from the start. Rather

100. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 401. McCarter believes that verses 28–31 are an "elaboration of the older narrative." He sees similarities between speeches of Jonathan (1 Sam 20:14–18) and Saul (1 Sam 24:21–22) where each asks for mercy for their families in David's future monarchy.

101. "granted your petition" is literally "I lift up your face."

than Mediterranean challenge and response, this looks very much like Facework theory. At the same time, David recognizes the hand of YHWH in bringing this about.

One final aspect of this narrative deserves attention: what did David have to gain, if anything, from Nabal's death and his subsequent marriage to Abigail? Scholars pose a variety of theories. Baden believes that David's purpose from the beginning was to assume control of Nabal's vast wealth and lofty tribal position.[102] McCarter observes that by marrying the widow of a high-ranking member of the clan that controlled Hebron, David is becoming a prominent figure in the heartland of Judah.[103] Levenson views David's marriage to Abigail as pivotal in his ascent to kingship in Hebron. He argues that David's marriage to Nabal's widow entitled him to leadership in the clan. He considers that David may have picked a fight with Nabal for this very purpose.[104] Bodi shares the view that David is seeking to increase his power by marrying Nabal's widow.[105] Pfoh believes that David came to own Nabal's house through his marriage to Abigail.[106] Alter, on the other hand, sees Abigail's schemes at work in Nabal's death. He ponders that she might have exploited the situation (and Nabal's frailty) to facilitate his death and better her personal situation.[107] As these scholars represent, there is a widespread view that Nabal's death and David's subsequent marriage to Abigail secured power, prestige,

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102. Baden, *Historical David*, 98.

103. McCarter, *I Samuel*, 402.

104. Levenson, "1 Samuel 25," 25, 26–27; also Jon D. Levenson and Baruch Halpern, "The Political Import of David's Marriages," *JBL* 99/4 (1980): 508.

105. Bodi, "David," 57.

106. Pfoh, "Hebrew Mafioso," 41.

107. Alter, *Hebrew Bible*, 2:284–85.

alliances, and (in some cases) vast wealth for David. However, there are some challenges with these arguments.

Is there evidence that a widow could inherit her husband's estate in the absence of male children? King and Stager consider that widows without an adult son could inherit the property of their deceased husband.[108] Halpern states that by marrying Abigail, David acquired Nabal's substantial estate.[109] Baden notes that, since Abigail apparently had no son, she would be the inheritor of her husband's property.[110] Hamilton appears to concur with this assessment.[111] Biblical support for this view may come from the book of Ruth. Thompson observes that Naomi has the right to return her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to their respective father's households following the deaths of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:8–18). Naomi also appears to have the right to arrange the sale of Elimelech's land to Boaz (Ruth 4:3). Whether her rights to sell the land were limited only to the kinsman-redeemer or more broadly permissive is uncertain.[112]

On the other hand, Matthews and Benjamin note that widows were without legal, social, political, or economic status.[113] Based on their view, it is unlikely that the wife had a right to inheritance. Westbrook and Wells claim that the woman's dowry reflects

108. King and Stager, *Life*, 53.

109. Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 77.

110. Baden, *Historical David*, 97.

111. Hamilton, *Kingdom*, 98.

112. Thompson and Thompson, "Legal Problems," 96.

113. Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 17, 132–33. However, it is worth noting that Matthews and Benjamin acknowledge that the father had the right to designate heirs of his choosing, including his own daughter or someone not his natural child.

her primary means of financial support after her husband's death rather than inheritance. They make the distinction between dowry and inheritance. While they state that some ancient Near Eastern law codes give the wife some right of inheritance, biblical law is not among them.[114] This principle may be evident in Abram's response to YHWH's promise of blessing in Gen 15:2: "But Abram said, 'O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'" His wife, Sarai, is not mentioned in the inheritance discussion.

Perhaps extra-biblical evidence can illuminate regional practices of interest. The Mesopotamian Nuzi archives (Late Bronze Age) include documents that provide evidence that women inherited estates and had the right to adopt heirs.[115] In another instance, a daughter receives an inheritance that is nearly identical to the daughters of Zelophehad in Num 27:8–11.[116] However, it does not follow that this right was automatic. The Gortyn code from Crete (5th century BCE) includes the following reference to inheritance rights:

> Whatever woman has no property either by gift from father or brother or by pledge or by inheritance as (enacted) when the Aithalian *startos*, Kyllos and his colleagues, formed the *kosmos*, such women are to obtain their portion; but there shall be no ground for action against previous female beneficiaries. When a man or a woman dies, if there be children or children's children or children's children's children, they are to have the property. And if there be none of these, but brothers of the deceased and brothers' children or brothers' children's children, they are to have the property. And if there be none of these, but sisters of the deceased and sisters' children or sisters' children's children, they are to have the property. And if there be none of these, they are to take it up, to whom it may

114. Raymond Westbrook and Bruce Wells, *Everyday Law in Biblical Israel: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 97–101.

115. Hildegard Lewy, "The Nuzian Feudal System," *Or* 11/4 (1942) 300–1.

116. Thompson and Thompson, "Legal Problems," 98.

> fall as source of the property, And if there should be no kinsmen, those of the household composing the *klaros* are to have the property (V 1–29).[117]

In the Gortyn code, it appears that the wife's right to inheritance is primarily subject to the husband's inheritance instructions. However, there seems to be some consideration that prevents a woman from being excluded altogether. Nevertheless, there is no specific condition whereby the customary rights of survivorship include the surviving wife.

In a study of Neo-Babylonian law and administrative documentation from the 6th and 7th centuries BCE, Martha Roth examines the rights and inheritance status of widows in Mesopotamia. She highlights two legal provisions known from a 7th century BCE school tablet, LNB ¶ 12 and LNB ¶ 13. The first concerns a widow without children:

> LNB ¶ 12 (Concerning) a woman whose husband has taken her dowry (*nudunnû*), and she has no sons or daughters, and her husband has died—he (her husband's heir) will give to her from her husband's estate a dowry equivalent to the dowry (which her husband had received). If her husband had awarded to her a widow's settlement (*širiktu*), she will take the widow's settlement awarded by her husband together with her dowry (equivalent), and she will be quit. If she had no dowry, the judicial authority will assess the value of her husband's estate, and will give her something in accordance with the value of her husband's estate.[118]

The second addresses a woman with children from a first marriage who remarries and has children with her second husband:

> LNB ¶ 13 (Concerning) a man who has taken a wife, and she has borne him children, and later that man has died and that woman has decided to enter another man's house—she will receive (from her first husband's estate) the dowry (*nudunnû*) that she brought from her father's house and anything that her husband awarded to her, and the man she chooses may marry her. As long as she lives, they (the wife and her second husband) will have the usufruct of the properties. If she bears children to her (second) husband, after her death the children of the first and second (marriages) will have equal shares in her dowry. [break][119]

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117. Ronald F. Willetts, *The Law Code of Gortyn* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 43.

118. Martha T. Roth, "The Neo-Babylonian Widow," *JCS* 43/45 (1991–1993): 5–6.

119. Ibid., 6.

These legal provisions entitle the widow to her dowry (*nudunnû*) and any widow's settlement (*širiktu*) specified by her late husband. Roth's review of the available administrative documents confirms these entitlements. These artifacts indicate that the courts consistently defended the widow's rights in this regard. If there was no dowry, if the husband of means had failed to provide resources for his widow's continued well-being, or if the heirs refused to provide such support from the estate, judicial avenues were available to her. Understandably, there is a particular concern in the documents related to housing.[120] Another consistent feature of the artifacts Roth examined was that none described a situation where the widow inherited her husband's estate, regardless of the existence of children. While this evidence is from a different period and region, it is worth considering.

A second question worth considering is whether David's marriage to Abigail meant that he took over Nabal's implied position in the Calebite clan. As stated earlier, Levenson holds this position. In support of this view, he cites three biblical texts: (1) Abner's purported taking of Saul's concubine, Rizpah (2 Sam 3:6–7), (2) YHWH's statement via the prophet Nathan to David: "I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom" (2 Sam 12:8a), and (3) Absalom publicly sleeping with David's concubines as part of his coup (2 Sam 16:20–22). The issue is whether Abner's, David's, and Absalom's actions are the consequence of becoming king, or does the act bestow kingship? In a sense, this question may be *de minimis*—especially from the perspective of the women. Since marriages represented alliances (both economic and

120. Ibid., 26.

political), it seems more probable that the taking of the women is something done after one has claimed the throne.

The final issue is whether Abigail could unilaterally agree to a marriage with David. Marriages were matters of economics, alliance, and relationship.[121] Curiously, the text makes no mention of any Calebite involvement in arranging David's marriage to Abigail—although it is apparent that David uses his men as intermediaries. One would expect there to be some negotiation regarding their betrothal, not to mention the payment of the bride-price. In a patriarchal society, like ancient Israel, the head of the household would be responsible for negotiating such a marriage. Baden notes, "the husband's family was responsible for providing a new husband for her from within the clan so that the family's landholdings would not pass to an outsider—a concept known as levirate marriage."[122] Brichto notes that a childless widow (as most assume of Abigail) was not free to marry outside the levir unless rejected by the redeemer (גאל).[123] Given Nabal's status, the narrator's silence in this matter is curious.

Considering Nabal's wealth, the Calebite clan would likely be interested in retaining the rights to land and his resources. There is a strong sense within the Bible that tribal inheritance and family allotments were not to pass outside the near kin. Baden claims that David likely married Abigail by force, empowered by his 600-man army. However, it seems far more likely that if David had taken Nabal's household (including Abigail) by force, he would have alienated the Calebite clan. Under that scenario, it is

121. King and Stager, *Life*, 54–55, Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 13–16, 31.

122. Baden, *Historical David*, 96–97.

123. Herbert C. Brichto, "Kin, Cult, Land, and Afterlife—A Biblical Complex," *HUCA* 44 (1973), 19–20. As examples, see the cases of Tamar (Gen 38) and Ruth's marriage to Boaz (Ruth 4).

even more challenging to agree with Levenson's position that David's marriage to Abigail entitled him to leadership within the Calebite clan. There was undoubtedly a nearer relative, a redeemer, who would be responsible for redeeming Nabal's property and redeeming Nabal from the danger of the afterlife by continuing his line.[124]

Considering the data, it is possible Abigail could have been named the inheritor of Nabal's estate, but it does not seem probable—especially considering the apparent significance of the estate. It would go too far to claim that she inherited the estate by default. Within the text, there is no indication that Abigail or David inherited Nabal's property, save for the five maidservants who accompanied her.[125] One wonders if these five maidservants represented Abigail's dowry from her marriage to Nabal. As such, she was free to take them, but nothing else from Nabal's property.

Circling back to the original question of David's gain from this encounter, it would seem more consistent with other biblical texts that David's marriage to Abigail resulted from an alliance made with the other Calebite clan leaders following Nabal's death—something not expressly stated in the narrative. This alliance would provide David with economic and political connections around Hebron—the very thing that David was attempting to establish with Nabal from the start. Furthermore, it likely meant that most of Nabal's holdings passed back to a nearer relative within the clan. The fact that David establishes his first capital in Hebron indicates that the disposition of Nabal's estate and his marriage to Abigail were completed on favorable terms with the Calebite clan elders.

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124. Brichto, "Kin," 21.

125. Tsumura, "First Book of Samuel," 593, contra Hamilton, *Kingdom*, 98.

Abner and the Sons of Zeruiah

Second Samuel 2–3 summarizes the prolonged war between the Houses of David and Saul following Saul and Jonathan's deaths. Saul's household was propped up by Abner, his first cousin and military commander. Three of David's closest confidants and warriors were his nephews, the sons of his sister, Zeruiah (Joab, Abishai, and Asahel). Second Samuel 2 includes three action-packed scenes involving these warriors. Three dialogues between them add color to the narrative: Joab and Abner by the pool of Gibeon (2 Sam 2:12–17), Asahel's pursuit of Abner (2 Sam 2:18–23), and Abner and Joab at the hill of Ammah (2 Sam 2:24–28). The warrior banters in 2 Samuel 2 do not entirely adhere to the four stages of Malina's challenge and response framework. There are marked differences in the banter here as contrasted with the more classic examples, like David and Goliath. These differences have much to say about honor on the battlefield.

Combat by the Pool of Gibeon

Abner and Joab's dialogue by the pool of Gibeon (2 Sam 2:12–17) can hardly be considered banter. It consists of a single line of dialogue for each. The narrative places the warring parties on either side of the pool of Gibeon. Abner proposes to Joab: "Let the young men arise and have a contest before us" (יקומו נא הנערים וישׂחקו לפנינו). Joab agrees with a single word response in Hebrew, "let them arise" (יקמו).

Strictly following Malina's challenge and response protocol, one might expect Joab to make the initial challenge at the pool of Gibeon. The city was within Benjamin's tribal borders and, therefore, Abner's home turf. However, the inhabitants of Gibeon were not Israelites. Furthermore, according to the books of Samuel, Saul's relationship

with the city had been problematic.[126] As such, the social etiquette of Abner initiating the challenge makes sense. Since the other two dialogues take place amid battle, the convention proposed by Malina may not apply.

The dialogue and nature of the event center around a single verb in Hebrew, שׂחק (*piel* imperfect 3mp jussive). The NRSV translates this as "have a contest." However, שׂחק more often has the sense of "play," "mock," or even "celebrate" in the *piel*. This uncertainty calls into question the nature of the action or whether the narrator is playing with the range of meanings for this word.[127] Fensham notes that Sukenik and Eissfeldt each thought the better meaning was "fight in a battle in all earnest."[128] McCarter agrees with the assessment of Fensham.[129] For McCarter, this bears the marks of a form of single combat, *monomachia*. Batten proposes a differing view. He sees no evidence that שׂחק means "to fight." "It is a word used too often to leave us in doubt about its meaning."[130] In his opinion, Abner proposes a sporting competition between the rival

126. 2 Sam 21:1–6 (NRSV): Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of YHWH. YHWH said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. (Now the Gibeonites were not of the people of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; although the people of Israel had sworn to spare them, Saul had tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the people of Israel and Judah.) David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of YHWH?" The Gibeonites said to him, "It is not a matter of silver or gold between us and Saul or his house; neither is it for us to put anyone to death in Israel." He said, "What do you say that I should do for you?" They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel—let seven of his sons be handed over to us, and we will impale them before YHWH at Gibeon on the mountain of YHWH." The king said, "I will hand them over."

127. HALOT, 1315–16.

128. Frank C. Fensham, "Battle between the Men of Joab and Abner as a Possible Ordeal by Battle?" *VT* 20/3 (1970): 356.

129. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB 9 (New York: Doubleday, 1984): 95.

130. Loring W. Batten, "Helkath Hazzurim, 2 Samuel 2, 12–16." *ZAW* 26/1 (1906): 92.

factions. For Batten, Abner has planned "a ruse by which he might inspire Joab's army with terror."[131] Batten concludes that only the Judean soldiers were killed by the Benjaminites rather than all twenty-four men dying. McCarter disagrees with this assessment. For him, the text of verse 16 more easily reads that all twenty-four died together. As a result, the single-combat outcome was indecisive, and a more full-blown battle was required.[132] Batten claims as support for his position that the name of the place was changed to *Helkath Hazzurim* (חלקת הצרים), which he claims could mean either "the field of the sides" or "the field of treacherous fellows" (supported by LXX: Μερὶς τῶν ἐπιβούλων).[133] Driver translates this phrase as "Field of the Flints" or "Field of the Sword Edges" while acknowledging the possibility of the former translation options."[134]

A second consideration is how one translates הנערים. The NRSV translates it as "young men." McCarter notes the varied use and complexity of the noun, נער. It can mean a male child, a young man, a servant, or an attendant of an influential citizen. However, this word can also have military connotations.[135] Anson Rainey identifies texts from Egypt and Ugarit where similar words have a military connotation. Papyrus Anastasi I, from Egypt's New Kingdom, uses the term *n ʿrn* to mean able fighting men in Canaan. The Great Qadesh Inscription uses the term to mean a military unit, which is also later used to describe the elite fighting forces of Pharaoh. An inscription of Merneptah defines

131. Ibid., 91.

132. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 95.

133. Batten, "Helkath," 94.

134. Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text*, 242–43.

135. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 95–96.

nʿrn as "veterans of the army." Rainey goes on to claim, "In the light of these texts there can be little doubt that the *nʿrm* of Ugarit were first-class experienced fighting men."[136] Within the context of this passage (and others in Samuel), the logical conclusion is that הנערים were seasoned warriors—even if they might be younger men than Abner and Joab.

The nature of the engagement between the pairs of men is also curious. "Each grasped his opponent by the head, and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together" (v. 16). McCarter notes that a relief found at Tell Ḥalāf (biblical Gozan), which comes from a time contemporary with these events, bears a remarkable resemblance to this verse's imagery. Figure 3.1 is a photograph of that relief.

Figure 3.1. Tell Ḥalāf relief – Two Men Fighting.[137]

136. Anson F. Rainey, "The Military Personnel of Ugarit," *JNES* 24/1 (1965), 21.

137. Two men fighting (stabbing each other). Orthostat, limestone relief. From the West Palace in Tell Ḥalāf, Syria, 9th century BCE. Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Germany. Photo courtesy of Osama Shukir

The extra-biblical evidence of cognate terms for הנערים plus the striking similarities between the fight description and the Tell Ḥalāf relief, undermine Batten's argument. Furthermore, Batten's portrayal of Abner's underhanded plot appears culturally dishonorable. Would a mighty warrior, like Abner, stoop to dishonorable tactics within a sporting competition? The dialogue that follows casts doubt on Batten's position.

Asahel's Pursuit of Abner

The dialogue between Abner and Asahel is nearly as sparse as that at Gibeon. This terseness could be because the banter occurs while the participants are at a full run. Abner speaks all but a single word of the conversation. Twice Abner implores Asahel to stop his pursuit. First, he tells him to reach out against one of the young men and take his plunder (v. 21). The second time, he implores him to stop so that Abner is not forced to kill him (v. 22). Time appears to slow down in the narrative with the description of Asahel's death. The narrator uses the dialogue to show that Abner has the moral high ground.[138] Abner's honorable behavior is somewhat unexpected as he represents the forces allied against David. One might expect that an apologetic text for David, like the books of Samuel, would paint his enemies in a dishonorable light. No doubt, the narrator is foreshadowing future actions that David will take. His intent may also be to salvage Abner's reputation with the northern tribes that might have viewed his subsequent actions as a betrayal (2 Sam 3).

Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons.

138. Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 22.

The Abner-Asahel dialogue demonstrates the honor dynamics between warriors in some interesting ways. The narrative is clear that Abner is the superior warrior. There was no honor in killing Asahel. According to Malina's model, Abner, as the superior warrior, could have issued a positive rejection (scorn or disdain). Instead, he opts for a different approach. In a twist that may seem surprising to our ears, Abner encourages Asahel to turn aside to select a more suitable opponent. Abner seeks to maintain Asahel's honor and give him a fighting chance at preserving his life—even at the potential death of one of his men. Abner's actions are contrary to the Mediterranean challenge and response models but are consistent with Facework theory. Abner seeks a win-win situation for Asahel and himself. When it is clear that Asahel's only interest is Abner, he appeals to honor again. In his second statement, Abner makes it clear that he has no interest in killing Asahel. Furthermore, Asahel's death would be to Abner's dishonor. In a final appeal (v. 22b), Abner says, "How could I show my face to your brother Joab?" Consistent with Facework theory, Abner pleads with Asahel to help him save his face (honor). In so many words, Abner is asking Asahel not to force bloodguilt upon him. Finally, after exhausting the appeals, Abner converts Asahel's swift speed into the driving force that carries his spear entirely through Asahel, killing him. The preservation of one's own life trumps the imputed dishonor of killing an inferior opponent.

Abner and Joab at the Hill of Ammah

The theme of mutual honor carries through to the final scene where Abner and the Benjaminites make their stand against the men of Judah. Unlike Asahel, Abner considers Joab to be a worthy adversary. The outcome of their combat would be much less certain. Abner appeals to Joab as an equal. The final dialogue is the culmination of the battle and

pursuit that began by the pool in Gibeon. Joab and Abishai have continued their pursuit of Abner following the death of their brother, Asahel. Abner and the Benjaminites stop to make their final stand on the hill of Ammah. Abner calls to Joab to end the battle. His appeal in verse 26 is to the futility of endless violence between brothers: "Is the sword to keep devouring forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you order your people to turn from the pursuit of their kinsmen?"[139] Joab's response is curious. He agrees to end the battle, but only because Abner has asked for it. Why not come to this conclusion on his own?

The word that stands out in the banter between Abner and Joab is "kinsman." In Hebrew, the word is אח. While it certainly has the semantic range to include kinsman, the most literal translation is "brother." Hamilton notes, "War bonded males together in ways otherwise impossible to achieve, and defined their roles in a community they defended."[140] Abner's appeal to his former comrades-in-arms goes deeper than their tribal ties. The complete sense of his appeal is that they are brothers in the fullest sense of the word. As the senior warriors, it was their responsibility to have the wisdom to see the futility of continued bloodshed. Joab's reply is equally honorable. However, he makes it clear that the only reason for cessation of the pursuit was Abner's request: "if you had not spoken, the people would have continued the pursuit of their brothers until the morning" (v. 27).

Abner's challenge to Joab also breaks Malina's challenge and response model. His challenge was designed to stop the engagement. Is this a battle between enemies or

139. NRSV translation.

140. Hamilton, *Body Royal*, 184

between brothers? In other words, what honor is there in killing your brothers? The answer is clear: killing brothers was a dishonorable business that only leads to endless death. Calling for a truce in this manner enabled both men to maintain honor, living to fight another day. In this light, Joab's response not only ends the battle but also bestows honor to his young warriors. His recognition of their bravery and desire to continue the pursuit through the night enhances their honor while reducing blood lust. Rather than the classic Mediterranean challenge and response framework, this episode exhibits aspects of Facework theory: warriors seeking to maintain their mutual honor in order to find a win-win conclusion to their conflict.

What prevented Joab from coming to this conclusion on his own? Could he not see the same futility as Abner? Perhaps this is the question the narrator prods the reader to ask. From the perspective of honor, there are several considerations. In one sense, the narrator consistently represents the sons of Zeruiah as mighty warriors who prefer violence, responding in the heat of the moment with bravado of speech and action. This rashness is in contrast to Abner's honorable reason and restraint.[141] Joab, Abishai, and their warriors were likely consumed with a need to avenge the deaths of Asahel and the young men of Judah. As much as he tried to avoid it, Abner had initiated a blood feud. The flood of emotions at losing their brother was, no doubt, driving their actions. On top of that, the narrative is clear that Joab and company had won the day.[142] They were in pursuit of the remaining opposition forces. No military commander would fail to press

141. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 99.

142. 2 Sam 2:30–31. David's servants lost only 20 men (including Asahel), while Abner and the Benjaminites lost 360.

the advantage to its fullest. Their honor as warriors mandated that they continue the pursuit.

However, there may be a simpler reason for Joab's persistent pursuit against Abner, the clues of which may be found in Homer's epic. There are echoes of this final exchange between Abner and Joab in the *Iliad*. In Book 7, Hector and Ajax engage in *monomachia*. Hector initiates the challenge, to which Ajax ultimately responds. Their pre-battle banter was discussed in chapter 2. However, their battle does not end in death. As the day draws to a close, Zeus intervenes by sending heralds to each side (Talthybius and Idaeus), who separate the warriors, ordering a stop to the fighting:

> "No more, my sons—don't kill yourselves in combat!
> Zeus who marshals the storm cloud loves you both.
> You're both great fighters—we all know that full well.
> The night comes on at last. Best to yield to night" (*Il*. 7:322–325).

Ajax's response to the prophetic intervention is reminiscent of Joab's response to Abner:

> But the giant Ajax answered briskly, "Wait,
> Idaeus, tell Hector here to call the truce.
> Mad for a fight, he challenged all our bravest.
> Let him lead off. I'll take his lead, you'll see" (*Il*. 7:326–329).

Abner offered the initial challenge to Joab in 2 Sam 2:14. He likewise, offers the truce to Joab as the sun is going down (2 Sam 2:24–26). Like Hector, Joab makes it clear that he will not yield the day until Abner proposes it. The small detail in the *Iliad* may shed some light on the similar exchange between Abner and Joab.

In all three encounters, there is no escalation of the banter, unlike David and Goliath. The fact that there is no escalation may say something about the mutual respect between these warriors. Unlike David and Goliath, where there was clear intention to impute dishonor, these warriors—especially Joab and Abner—deal with each other as

relative equals, worthy of honor. Similar respect is evident in the *Iliad*. Hector's proposal to end his battle with Ajax shares similar honor-filled language:

> His helmet flashed as Hector nodded: "Yes, Ajax,
> since god has given you power, build and sense
> and you are the strongest spearman of Achaea,
> let us break off this dueling to the death,
> at least for today. We'll fight again tomorrow,
> until some fatal power decides between our armies,
> handing victory down to one side or another" (*Il*. 7:330–336).

What is even more remarkable is that this exchange ends with an exchange of gifts (*Il*. 7:349–351). Both warriors depart the battlefield in honor, to victory celebrations from their mutual armies.

The battle narratives of 2 Sam 2 leave the reader with a sense of the futility of civil war. The warrior code of honor spurs on a needless loss of life in each instance. The narrator seems to imply that honor alone is insufficient—and even detrimental—to resolving conflicts. In the end, it is breaking the cycle that restores peace. However, with these warriors, that peace will be short-lived.

As with some of the other dialogues, there is an implicit narrative sense that more is at stake than cultural honor. The only mention of YHWH in these dialogues comes in Joab's final line in verse 27: "as YHWH lives . . .". This oath statement reminds the reader that YHWH is at work behind this narrative. Unlike David and Goliath, this is not a battle of Philistine gods versus YHWH fought by proxies. These scenes depict the battle for Israel's kingship fought by proxies. The primary question of the narrative is: who is the rightful king of Israel?

The *monomachia* at the pool of Gibeon is reminiscent of other one-on-one combat narratives where the divine verdict is given via battle's outcome. What makes this

encounter interesting is that the battle is effectively a tie. Unlike David and Goliath, there is no winner between the groups of young warriors. They all die. What is the reader to make of this? Perhaps the intended message is that there is no divine sanction of this battle.

Through the culmination of the encounter at the hill of Ammah, the narrator uses the dialogue to provide the divine verdict via Abner's speech in verse 26: "Is the sword to keep devouring forever? Do you not know that the end will be bitter? How long will it be before you order your people to turn from the pursuit of their kinsmen?" The narrator's body count in verses 30–31 makes it clear that David's men carried the day, affirming David as king. YHWH had already decided who the rightful king of Israel was. David was the YHWH's chosen since 1 Samuel 16. However, Abner's final dialogue with Joab (v. 26) also carries the weight of divine proxy. Does YHWH rejoice in a civil war? The outcome of the *monomachia* and Abner's speech point to the same conclusion: Israel's civil war is wasteful and contrary to YHWH's will. Even more striking is that it is uttered by the commander of the forces opposed to David. Through Abner, YHWH's wisdom and will prevail, resulting in Joab's cessation of hostilities.

Summary

Compared with the Israelite warrior dialogues with foreigners, these discourses between Israelites demonstrate a much more comprehensive range of honor models. It is, perhaps, not surprising that Stewart's protector-protectee model is more evident when dealing with people of shared ancestry. However, the evidence for preservation of honor as described by Facework theory is particularly interesting and opposed to the traditional Mediterranean honor models used to interpret these passages.

This chapter highlights some of the difficulties with the social-scientific interpretation of biblical texts. If one ignores the assumptions inherent in these models, it can lead to interpretive challenges. One runs the risk of forcing a text through a model rather than examining the text for its internal evidence and using various models to probe the text for new questions and interpretations.

Divine proxy is evident in some of these texts, but not all. In particular, Abigail's speech to David and Abner's final dialogue with Joab seem to fit the criteria. Their speeches rise above the level of calling on YHWH to judge in their favor in the struggle. The narrator seems to use their dialogue to communicate YHWH's will within the scene.

CHAPTER IV

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter returns to the initial questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. What do these warrior dialogues in Samuel reveal? How does the narrator use these exchanges to advance the narrative? What insights do they provide into ancient Israel's cultural and theological frameworks? As has been discussed in the preceding chapters, there are no one-size-fits-all answers to these questions. Nevertheless, this chapter attempts to develop some conclusions related to honor dynamics between warriors and divine proxy.

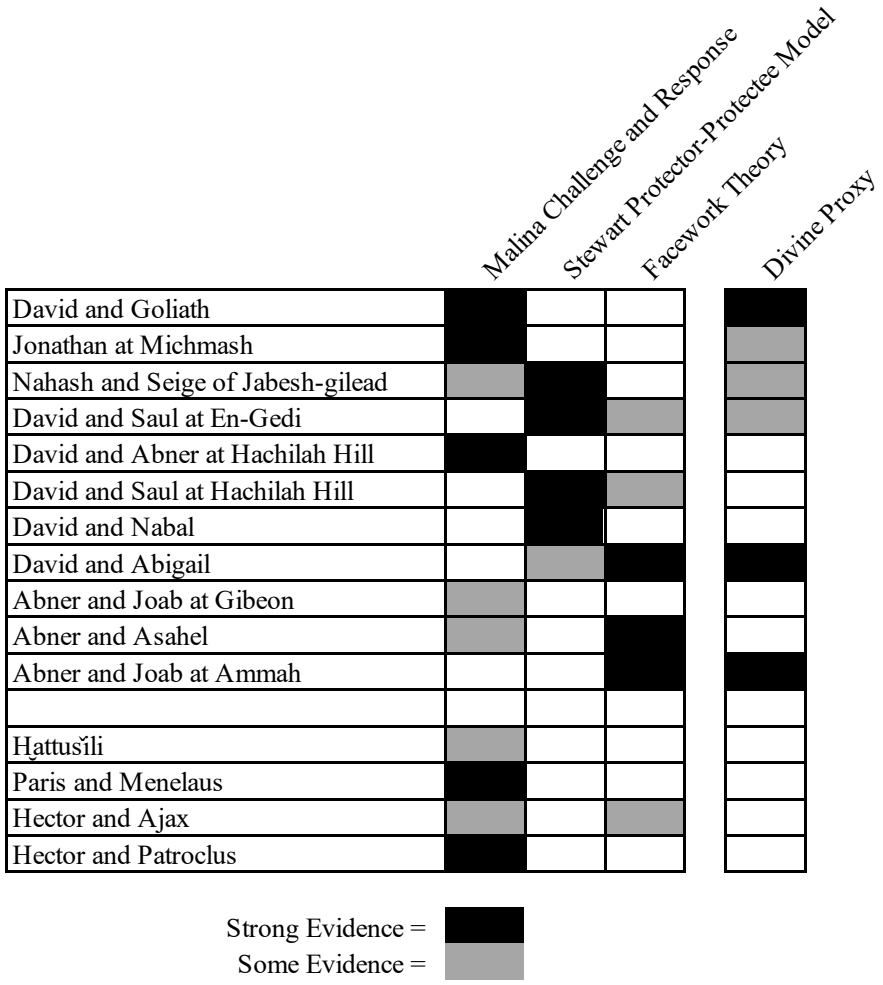
Robert Alter observes that "in reliable third-person narrations, such as in the Bible, there is a scale of means, in ascending order of explicitness and certainty for conveying information about the motives, the attitudes, the moral nature of characters."[1] Alter identifies four levels of explicitness. At the bottom of the scale, where the narrative reports only a character's actions, the reader must rely heavily upon inference. Above that is direct speech either by the characters themselves or others about them. At this level, the reader must evaluate the weight, or veracity, of the claims. Inward speech by a character is a narrative tool whereby the reader gains greater certainty regarding the character's motives and intentions, although these may still be questioned. At the top

1. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 146.

level is the narrator's explicit statements about the character's emotions, motives, and intentions.[2] Since this thesis's primary focus is on the dialogue between warriors, it is important to recognize that, on Alter's scale, we are more in the realm of inference than certainty for narrative intent. Fortunately, the narrator in Samuel is adept at utilizing all of these levels to tell Saul and David's stories, which provides a more complete picture for this analysis. As the basis for drawing conclusions from these texts, Table 4.1 summarizes the evidence for the various honor models within the examined texts and the use of divine proxy.

2. Ibid., 146–47.

Table 4.1. Overview of evident honor models and divine proxy



Divine Proxy

As noted in previous chapters, pleas to the divine court to render verdicts in human disputes were common throughout the ancient Mediterranean and ancient Near East. Surviving texts are replete with examples. The practice of *monomachia* seems to be a means by which the gods rendered their verdict through single combat. Evidence suggests the practice was relatively widespread. The single combat narratives in the *Iliad* between Paris and Menelaus and Hector and Ajax are good examples. In the Bible, David and Goliath is the classic example.

In ancient texts of the region, there is also a clear focus on divine involvement in the everyday affairs of humanity. Ḫattušili III credits Ištar with everything that led to his unlikely ascension to the throne. His devotion to his patron goddess is a central theme in his apology. Likely due to his personal success, Ḫattušili has a positive view towards Ištar and her support. In the *Iliad*, Homer pulls back the curtain to show how the course of human events is at the mercy of the gods, often driven by their whims and maneuverings against one another. It is perhaps, therefore, not surprising that many of the *Iliad's* dialogues express frustration with the gods and the futility of human efforts in the face of such forces. Homer's overall view of the gods is less than favorable from the perspective of his human players.

The books of Samuel communicate a different view of the divine than the *Iliad*—an overall view more closely aligned with Ḫattušili. Following Samuel's death, YHWH does not speak directly to David or Saul until after David ascends to the throne.[3] Unlike the *Iliad*, only rarely does the narrator credit YHWH with direct intervention in the narrative. Much like the Aegean and ancient Near Eastern literature, there are calls for YHWH to render a verdict between individuals and groups. However, in some instances, the discourse seems to go beyond these invocations to reflect something more about YHWH's involvement in these events. In these instances, the narrator uses the dialogue to communicate a greater truth about YHWH's involvement. In these cases, the speaker acts as a proxy for the divine within these narratives.

3. By this, I mean that YHWH does not speak through a prophet, like Samuel or Nathan, to the king. Nor does he communicate through dreams as YHWH does with Solomon in 1 Kings 3.

Divine proxy pulls back the curtain to reveal YHWH's involvement in human events and to communicate the greater truth the narrator desires the reader to glean from the story. In the confrontation between David and Goliath, the divine proxy shines through in David's proclamation about his impending victory: "and all the land will know that there is a God for Israel, and all this assembly will know that YHWH does not save by sword and spear. For the battle is YHWH's and he will give you into our hand" (1 Sam 17:46b–47). In the absence of a prophet in Israel, Abigail's rhetoric stops David from murdering Nabal. She states that YHWH will establish a "sure house" for David (1 Sam 25:28). On top of that, Abigail is the first to claim David shall be "prince" (נגיד) over Israel (1 Sam 25:30). The narrator uses Abner's dialogue with Joab to communicate YHWH's desire to end the long civil war between the houses of David and Saul (2 Sam 2:26). While some of these dialogues are within the realm of generic divine judgment, they seem to go beyond the mere verdict to communicate a greater theological truth within the narrative. Going back to Alter's scale, the subsequent narrative action validates the veracity of these claims.

Honor

As Table 4.1 shows, these texts demonstrate that honor concepts are more complex and nuanced than reflected in the Mediterranean models. No model fully describes the cultural engagements for honor. Evidence of Stewart's view of protector-protectee relationships and Facework theory is just as prevalent in the narrative as evidence for the traditional Mediterranean challenge and response model represented by Malina. Furthermore, there is some evidence that this complexity is evident in the

Aegean and ancient Near Eastern literature as well—although the sample size is too small for definitive conclusions.

This complexity raises questions about certain assumptions inherent within the Mediterranean models. Some basic tenets of these models are that Mediterranean society was agonistic and that honor was a limited good. As such, virtually every engagement outside one's family "had undertones of a challenge to honor."[4] However, these texts demonstrate that warriors (and others) regularly sought to maintain their personal honor by preserving and enhancing another's honor. David seeks to deflect the blame for Saul's actions to unnamed men (1 Sam 24:9), and Abigail saves her household (and their honor) by elevating David's honor (1 Sam 25:23–31). Even in the *Iliad*, Hector and Ajax praise each other and exchange gifts when their *monomachia* ends in a draw (*Il*. 7:330–351). In chapter 1, Table 1.1 identified attributes of individualistic and collectivistic cultures and their tendencies when engaging in and resolving conflicts. Malina's challenge and response model seems more aligned with individualistic societies than collectivists. However, there is general agreement that ancient Israelite society was generally collectivistic. Facework theory and Stewart's model fit more closely with the attributes of collectivistic cultures.

Is there a way to clarify the complexity and nuance of honor engagements within these texts? Two general factors describe the relationships between warriors in these biblical texts: Protector/Oppressor and In Group/Out Group. Protector/Oppressor represents the nature of the power relationship between the individuals (or group). For example, King Saul and David are supposed to be in a protector/protectee relationship,

4. Malina, *New Testament World*, 33.

while the Philistines are oppressors of Israel. In-group/out-group represents the relative "otherness" of the participants. Philistines and Ammonites are not in the same group as Israelites, but—if one considers Gen 19:38 to reflect some memory of kinship—Ammonites are less "other" than Philistines. Figure 4.1 attempts to plot out these Samuel texts along these axes.

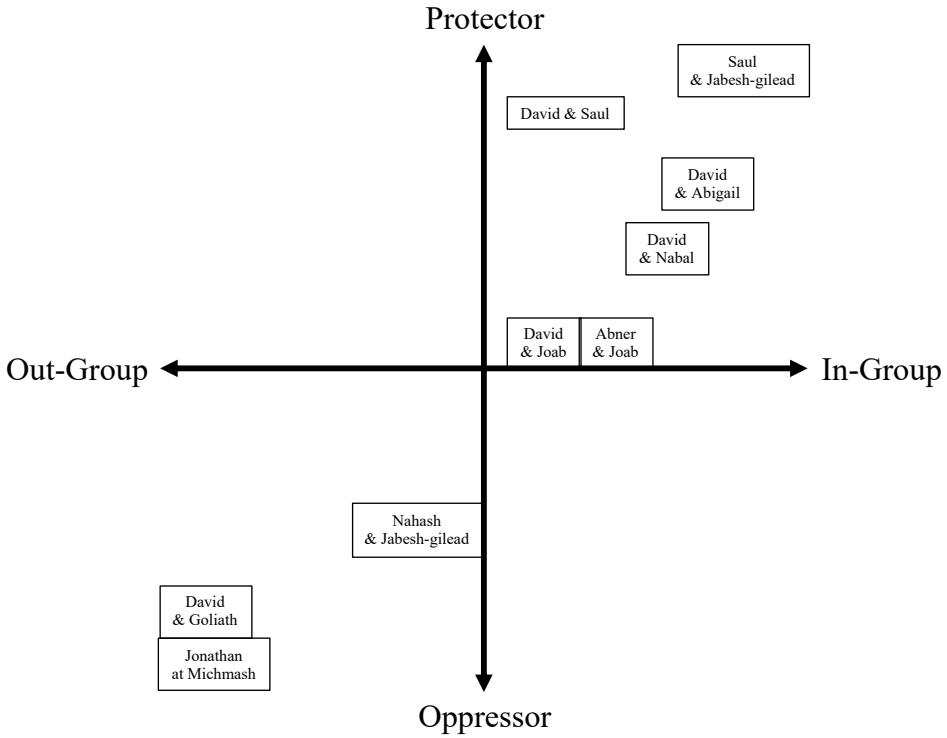


Figure 4.1. Power relationship and "otherness" in Samuel texts.

These factors may also influence an individual's response to a conflict or challenge to their honor. For example, when in conflict with a person from an out-group, preservation of personal honor (as a proxy for in-group honor) takes precedence (i.e., Malina's challenge and response). In contrast, if one views the other party as a member of the same group, elevating their honor—even at the expense of personal honor—may take precedence (i.e., Facework). With this in mind, Figure 4.2 overlays the three honor models onto these axes and events.

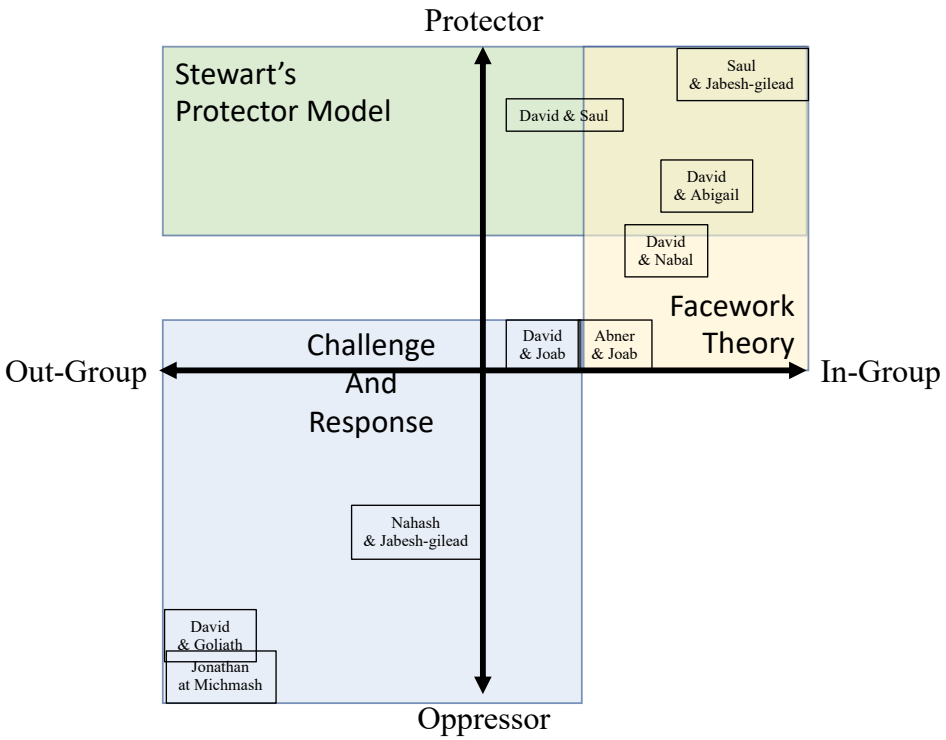


Figure 4.2. Honor models, power relationship, and "otherness."

The two quadrants not examined in this thesis are situations in which the protector was someone from an out-group (e.g., Achish and David) or in which someone from the in-group acted as an oppressor (e.g., Ahab and Naboth). Perhaps this is a topic for another day.

Conclusions

In the books of Samuel, the narrator uses warrior dialogue to help tell the story of Israel's fledgling monarchy. These exchanges show honor and shame dynamics at work between individuals and groups. Through their discourse, these warriors plead for divine judgment in their cases against their foes. Moreover, at times, the narrator communicates a more important theological message through these speeches. The characters are some of the most developed in the Hebrew Bible. Through them, the narrative reflects the complexities of human nature and the struggles these individuals face along the way.

The main challenge of social-scientific interpretation (or any other interpretive technique) is to not see everything as a nail upon which you must use your hammer. Indeed, Mediterranean honor models, like Malina's challenge and response framework, have been over-applied in the interpretation of biblical texts, overlooking important contradictory details. Any such cross-cultural comparison for exegesis must be made with extreme care to avoid this pitfall. Recognizing the inherent assumptions within a particular model and identifying contradictory textual evidence helps avoid these risks. This process should prompt the formulation of new questions, new ways of textual interpretation, and insights. Stewart's cross-cultural model and Facework theory are just two other social theories that may help develop insights into certain texts. However, the text must always take precedence over the model. In that light, perhaps it is best to conclude with the observation of the statistician, George Box: "All models are wrong, but some are useful."

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APPENDIX

"Warrior" Dialogues in the Hebrew Bible

During the initial research phase of this thesis, a search of the Hebrew Bible texts was conducted to identify dialogues that fit the criteria defined in chapter one. Some of these exchanges may not perfectly fit the definitions of "warrior," but they reflect dialogue in a conflict situation of some sort.

Text Reference	Dialogue
Gen 19	Sodom & Gomorrah
Gen 31	Laban and Jacob
Gen 32	Jacob and the Nighttime visitor/wrestling match
Gen 32–33	Jacob meets Esau
Gen 34	The Dinah Incident at Shechem
Exod 5–12	Moses & Aaron before Pharaoh
Num 22	Balaam and his donkey
Num 22–24	Balak and Balaam
Judg 8	Ephraimites to Gideon
Judg 8	Gideon w/Zebah and Zalumnna
Judg 9	Jotham to people of Shechem
Judg 9	Gaal, son of Ebed vs. Abimelech
Judg 11–12	Jephthah and elders of Gilead/Ammonites
Judg 14–16	Samson
Judg 19–20	Levite & Concubine / Civil War with Benjamin
1 Sam 11	Nahash the Ammonite and Jabesh Gileadites
1 Sam 14	Jonathan & Armor Bearer vs. Philistines
1 Sam 17	David and Goliath
1 Sam 21	David at Gath
1 Sam 24	David and Saul at En Gedi
1 Sam 25	David, Nabal, and Abigail
1 Sam 26	David and Saul at Hachilah
1 Sam 28–29	David and Achish
1 Sam 30	David and his warriors at Ziklag
2 Sam 1	David and Amalekite warrior
2 Sam 2	Abner and Sons of Zeruiah

Text Reference	Dialogue
2 Sam 3	Abner and Ishbaal
2 Sam 3	Abner, David, and Joab
2 Sam 4	Rechab, Baanah, and David
2 Sam 5	Jebusites vs. David
2 Sam 10	Joab vs. Ammonites
2 Sam 12	Nathan/God to David over Bathsheba
2 Sam 14	Joab/Old Woman and David
2 Sam 14	Absalom and Joab
2 Sam 15	David and Ittai the Gittite
2 Sam 16	David, Abishai, and Shimei
2 Sam 18	David and his Generals
2 Sam 18	Joab and Man regarding Absalom
2 Sam 18	Messengers to David
2 Sam 19	Joab and David
2 Sam 19	David and Shimei
2 Sam 20	Joab vs. Amasa & Sheba, and the people of Abel Beth-Maacah
2 Sam 21	David and Gibeonites
2 Sam 23	David's springwater request
2 Sam 24	Joab's counsel against the census
2 Sam 24	David and Araunah
1 Kgs 2	David's house-cleaning instructions to Solomon
1 Kgs 12	Rehoboam and Jeroboam
1 Kgs18	Elijah at Mt. Carmel
1 Kgs 20	Ben-Hadad and Ahab
2 Kgs 5	Naaman's condition - Letter from King of Aram to King of Israel
2 Kgs 9	Jehu and Joram - Joram's assasination
2 Kgs 10	Jehu eliminates Ahab's house
2 Kgs 14	King Jehoash to King Amaziah
2 Kgs 18–19	The Rabshakeh/Hezekiah/YHWH
2 Kgs 20	Hezekiah's illness/YHWH's reprieve
1 Chr 11	Jebusites vs. David (and Israel)
1 Chr 11	David's water request from Stronghold
1 Chr 12	Benjamites and Judahits come to David in Stronghold
1 Chr 19	Joab and Abishai vs Ammonites/Arameans
1 Chr 21	David and Ornan/Aruna the Jebusite
2 Chr 10	Rehoboam and Jeroboam
2 Chr 11	God's response to Rehoboam
2 Chr 13	War between Jeroboam & Abijah
2 Chr 18	Jehoshaphat and Ahab

Text Reference	Dialogue
2 Chr 24	Priestly Speech
2 Chr 25	King Jehoash to King Amaziah
2 Chr 25	Amaziah vs. Edomites and banter with the prophet
2 Chr 28	Prophet Oded to Israelites about captive Judahites
2 Chr 32	Assyrians to Jerusalem