Love of God and *Apologia* for a King

Solomon as the Lord's Beloved King in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Contexts

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Abstract

The birth story of Solomon is unique in the ancient Israelite historiography from the monarchic period. Though the birth name of the newborn child was “Solomon,” he received an additional name “Yedidyah.” The purpose of this name should be understood within three contexts: the immediate passage in 2 Samuel 12; the wider story regarding Solomon's rise to power in 1 King 1–2; and comparable ancient Near Eastern texts that recount the claims of usurpers outside the royal line to a throne. The latter attempted to legitimize their kingship by introducing themselves as beloved or chosen by patron deities, occasionally taking a new throne-name to reflect their status vis-à-vis the god or gods. This historical and literary phenomenon is clearly reflected from Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Persian, and Egyptian writings of different periods. The discussion here reveals that in ancient Israel and in the surrounding cultures, both Semitic and non-Semitic, the method of self-legitimation by usurpers was to claim that they had divine legitimization.

Keywords

Solomon – Yedidyah – divine legitimization – Sargon the Great – Sargon II – Ḫattušilli III – Xerxes the Great – Hatshepsut – Succession Narrative

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1 Introduction

Solomon's brief birth story (or report, announcement), as recounted in 2 Sam 12:24–25, is unique in the entire historiography of the ancient Israelite kingdoms. Though there are birth stories regarding judges or rulers, such as Samson (Judges 13) and Samuel (1 Samuel 1), there is no story regarding the birth of any other king, unless one accepts several scholars' suggestion that either the birth story in 1 Samuel 1 was originally not about the Prophet Samuel but about King Saul,¹ or that Samuel's birth story was composed from materials regarding Saul's birth and *nazirite* dedication.² There is no story at all regarding either the birth of David or any later king of Judah or Israel. Moreover, David had several other sons from his different wives, but none of the circumstances around their births has been recounted. We may wonder, then, whether there was a particular purpose in narrating Solomon's birth from amongst all David's sons and from amongst all Israelite and Judahite kings.

Elsewhere I discussed the name Solomon (שלמה) and the biblical-historical setting of Solomon's birth-story as revealed in its literary framework. There I argue that it is integrated into the literary framework of the "David-Bathsheba

1 The root שאל appears in 1 Sam 1:17, 20, 27 and particularly verse 28 (including as an etymology for Samuel's name; see also 2:20). Though all three characters of שאל appear in Samuel's name (שמואל), Saul's name (שאול) offers a closer parallel. See J. Dus, "Die Geburtslegende Samuels, I. Sam. 1: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu I. Sam. 1–3," *RSO* 43 (1968), 163–194; M. M. Buber, "Samuel and the Sequence of the Israelite Authorities," *Way of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1978; Hebrew), 238–269 esp. 246–247, and there, in notes 19–20, references to earlier bibliography; Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981), 25 ("Ursprünglich handelte diese Erzählung von Saul, nicht von Samuel"); M. Brettler, "The Composition of 1 Samuel 1–2," *JBL* 116 (1997), 601–612 esp. 602; M. White, "The History of Saul's Rise: Saulide State Propaganda in 1 Samuel 1–14," in *A Wise and Discerning Mind: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, ed. S. M. Olyan and R. C. Culley, BJS 325 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2000), 271–292 esp. 287–288; W. Dietrich, *1 Samuel 1–12*, BKAT 7/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2010), 29; R. Gilmour, *Representing the Past: A Literary Analysis of Narrative Historiography in the Book of Samuel*, VTS 143 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 47–49. Note that the motif of the *nazirite* appears in 1 Sam 1:11 and in the birth story of Samson (Jud 13:5, 7, 14); see also Num 6:1–21; Am 2:12.

2 "But the entire account has been overlaid with the personal details of Samuel's childhood—his father's name, his mother's name, the name of his native village"; see P. K. McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB 8 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 65–66. Moreover, it seems that the author of 1 Samuel 1 purposely created word-play between the names שמואל and שאול; see R. Kessler, *Samuel: Priester und Richter, Königsmacher und Prophet*, Biblische Gestalten 18 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 44–46.

story" (2 Sam 11:1c–12:25), and within a still larger "comprehensive narrative" (2 Samuel 10–12).³ Nonetheless, the comprehensive narrative itself also appears within the so-called "Succession Narrative" (2 Samuel 9–20 + 1 Kings 1–2), which is driven by questions such as: "Who will succeed to the throne of David?" or, more specifically, "Why should Solomon have risen to his father's throne?"⁴ As will be seen, these questions are directly related to several others: What is the relationship between the two names Solomon and Yedidyah (יִדִּידְיָה)? What do they mean or represent, and, as J. Alberto Soggin asks, is there a relationship between the two names?⁵ Why did the divine messenger, the Prophet Nathan,⁶ give the second name—Yedidyah—to the child, and why was the affirmation "and the Lord loved him" appended?

The intention of this article is to discuss these questions, and to correlate this birth-story's motifs—particularly the statement of divine predilection and the giving of a second name—within its own historico-political, religious, and literary contexts, and especially in relation to comparable ancient Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Egyptian, and Persian birth-stories and royal succession traditions. I will show that Solomon's birth story is not only deeply rooted within 2 Samuel 10–12 as part of David's Throne Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9–20, 1 Kings 1–2), but it should be understood as the birth-story of a usurper king (Solomon) when read against the background of 1 Kings 1–2 as well as the surrounding cultural setting of the ancient Near East.⁷

3 See I. Kalimi, "Reexamining 2 Samuel 10–12: Redaction History versus Compositional Unity," *CBQ* 78 (2016), 24–46.

4 On "David's Succession Narrative" see I. Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth* (forthcoming, 2018), Chapter Nine, §111.

5 See J. A. Soggin, "King Solomon," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, vol. 1, ed. C. Cohen et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 169–174 esp. 169.

6 Contra McKenzie who claims: "it is striking that verse 25 reports that *David* called the boy Jedidiah ("beloved of Yahweh") ..." (emphasis mine); see S. McKenzie, *King David: A Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 182. That this name was given to Solomon by the Prophet Nathan is clearly stated by the biblical verse: וַיְהוֹה אֹהֶבּוֹ: וַיִּשְׁלַח בְּיַד נָתָן הַנָּבִיא וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ יִדִּידְיָה ("And the Lord loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah").

7 After this article was completed, Andrew Knapp's study was published, which addresses some of the sources discussed here and others. See A. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East* SBLWAW SS 4 (Atlanta: SBL, 2015). Nonetheless, the reader can easily recognize that our focuses, evaluations, interpretations, as well as conclusions are significantly different, as explicitly noted throughout the discussion below. Moreover, my major point is the interpretation of 2 Sam 12:24–25, which Knapp barely touches (see *ibid.*, p. 253). Knapp also does not discuss the Sumerian, Old Babylonian, and Neo-Assyrian sources regarding Sargon the

The idea of the divine origin of kingship and the divine election of the kings of Israel and Judah lies at the center of ancient Israelite historiography. Indeed, there are several clear-cut accounts of the divine election of and support for the succession of Saul (1 Sam 10:1–12; 15:1, 17), and David (1 Sam 16:1–13; 2 Sam 3:9–10; 5:2; 7:8–9; Ps 78:70–72; 89:4–38 [ET, 89:3–37]; see also 2 Sam 22:51 // Ps 18:51 [ET, 18:50]; 2 Sam 23:1–3), as well as the divine rejection of Saul from the kingship (1 Sam 15:10–11, 26–28; 16:1a, 14; 28:15–18). Scholars have discussed this concept in the writings of the great civilizations of the ancient Near East.⁸ Some researchers have also addressed the apologetic nature of David and Solomon's stories.⁹ However, as of today, no comprehensive, comparative, and detailed discussion has been devoted to the purpose and meaning of Yedidyah and the phrase “and the Lord loved him” within their wider biblical and ancient Near Eastern contexts and parallels. This investigation will demonstrate that 2 Sam 12:24–25 uniquely combines two motifs found in many ancient Near Eastern royal apologetic texts: divine legitimation and the taking of a new name by usurper kings.

2 “Solomon” and “Yedidyah”: The Biblical Text and Scholarship

The biblical narrator emphasizes the significance of Solomon and his future impact on the Davidic dynasty and Israelite history from his first appearance.

Great of Akkad and Sargon II of Assyria. In the Hittite texts regarding Hattušilli III, Knapp overlooks the connection between the apology of this king and that in the legend of Sargon the Great. Nor does he discuss the Egyptian writings regarding Hatshepsut and some other Pharaohs, or the case of Xerxes I of Persia.

- 8 See, e.g., T. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, BZAW 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 6–25, 55–80; N. Brisch, ed., *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, OIS 4 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008); Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*. In addition to the examples discussed below and by Ishida and Knapp, it is worth mentioning King Darius I (“the Great,” 522–486 BCE) of Persia. Darius was neither direct descendant of Cyrus II nor of his son Cambyses; in fact, he was an illegitimate king. Thus he states in his Behistun Inscription that he ascended the throne by overthrowing the usurper Gaumāta, and “according to the will of Ahuramazdā I became king; Ahuramazdā has given me the kingship”; see R. Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achämeniden* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2009), 42–45 esp. 45 and compare 38 (§5), 40 (§9).
- 9 See, e.g., P. K. McCarter, “The Apology of David,” *JBL* 99 (1980), 489–504; T. Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 55–80 esp. 70–80; idem, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, SHCANE 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 107–110, 151–157; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 161–276. Knapp barely discusses 2 Samuel 11–12 (see *ibid.*, 198–199, 253–254), but Ishida compares the David-Bathsheba story with Nathan’s Prophecy, and artificially concludes that the “David-Bathsheba story is identical with Nathan’s Prophecy in the structure” (152–154 esp. 154).

Solomon is introduced as the second-born child of David and Bathsheba. But whereas the first-born is presented without any name, the second child receives two names—Solomon and Yedidyah.¹⁰ Moreover, while the name Solomon was given to the newborn by one of his parents, the name Yedidyah was given to him by the Prophet Nathan, by command of the Lord:

And *the Lord loved him*, (therefore) He sent word through (literally: by the hand of) Nathan the prophet that for the sake of the Lord (בעבור יהוה)¹¹ he should be given (/called) the name Yedidyah (2 Sam 12:24d–25).

The phrase “and the Lord loved him” (ויהוה אהבו) in 12:24d, explains the name and adds sense to it, and, through a chiastic ordering of the elements, clarifies why the child should have received it: Yedidyah (ידידיה), “beloved of the Lord.”¹² The words אהב and ידד in this context appear as synonyms.¹³ In fact, the child could have been named אהוביה, or 12:24 could have read ויהוה ידידו, and the effect would have been the same. Nonetheless, the name-giver chose to use ידידיה instead of אהוביה, while the author preferred the more common term אהב to explain it.

Furthermore, the narrator does not specify *when* exactly the name Yedidyah was given to Solomon, although the general impression the text offers is that it occurred at some point shortly after the birth of the child.¹⁴ Nor does the narrator indicate the rationale for such a divine love for this mewling infant who was as yet innocent of deeds worthy of any note. The question naturally arises as to what was the purpose of giving a second name to the child. Biblical scholarship has provided a number of suggestions, for example:

(1) Segal explains the name Yedidyah as an “honorary title” only, similar to the phrase in Deut 33:12: “to Benjamin he said: beloved of the Lord”

10 On this issue, see Kalimi, “Reexamining 2 Samuel 10–12,” 41–42.

11 On the term בעבור, its appearance in the Hebrew Bible, its meaning (“for the sake of”), and its rendering in some MT manuscripts, LXX Lucian, and Old Latin, see Kalimi, “Reexamining 2 Samuel 10–12,” 26 note 3.

12 Thus, for a better understanding of the text, the last phrase of the previous verse (2 Sam 12:24d), should be read together with verse 12:25, and then there is no need to “correct” the text in 2 Sam 12:25, as suggested by A. Klostermann, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (Nördlingen: Beck, 1887), 182.

13 That ידיד means “beloved” and comes together with דוד, so for instance in Isa 5:1, אשירה נא לידידי שירת דודי לכרמו (“Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard”). On this verse in Isaiah, see the discussion by N. Wyatt, “Jedidiah’ and Cognate Forms as a Title of Royal Legitimation,” *Biblica* 66 (1985), 112–125 esp. 115–116.

14 See Ishida, *History and Historical Writing*, 156.

(לְבַנִּימָן אָמַר יֵדִידְיָהּ). Therefore, asserts Segal, this name was not used in the everyday life of the king,¹⁵ and as such it never appears elsewhere in the books of Samuel and Kings. Indeed, it is puzzling that the name Yedidyah was not used explicitly by Solomon himself or anyone else in all of biblical literature. There is no example of a custom in Israel or any ancient Near Eastern society of the divine or parental imposition of an “honorary title” upon a newborn.

(2) Stolz assumes that the name “Solomon” means “replacement,” that is, that he is replacing the first child who had died. Nathan disliked this name of the second-born child, because in his view the first child should not be considered as a human being and therefore should not be replaced at all. Accordingly, he gave to Solomon a new name: “Yedidyah.”¹⁶ But there is no clue in the biblical literature that Nathan considered the first child as non-human or that he disliked the second child’s name. It is true that the first child was considered a bastard and therefore had a low social status.¹⁷ But it is a leap to assume that the infant was treated as a non-human because of his parents’ adulterous affair.

(3) Wyatt considers Yedidyah to be a cognomen (/family name) that is equivalent to “David,” in the sense of דָּוִד (“beloved”). According to this scholar, the “divine choice of kings of Judah was indicated by the giving to them of a cognomen, which tended to be the same one.”¹⁸ In support of this, Wyatt claims that several other occurrences of דָּוִד or דָּד in the Hebrew Bible could refer to the Davidic king (e.g. Ps 60:7 [ET, 60:5]; 108:7 [ET, 108:6]; 127:2; Isa 5:1), and that the name or title was used as a means of identifying the legitimate royal successor under the Davidic monarchy.¹⁹ If correct, this would offer a separate means

15 See M. Z. Segal, *The Books of Samuel* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1976; Hebrew), 308.

16 “Dass Nathan dieser Name missfällt, ist verständlich; das erste Kind ist in seinen Augen ein Un-Mensch, für den es keinen Ersatz geben kann und darf”; see Stolz, *Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, 242.

17 On the legal and social status of bastards in ancient Israel, see Deut 23:3 (ET, 23:2): “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord”; see also Zech 9:6. Unfortunately, the study of N. Avraham, *Marginal People in Biblical Times: Lawbreakers and Banished Persons, Lepers and Gonorrhea Sufferers, Homosexuals and Transsexuals, Prostitutes and Temple-Prostitutes* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2011; Hebrew), does not address the status of bastards.

18 See N. Wyatt, “Jedidiah’ and Cognate Forms,” 112, 117.

19 In another article, Wyatt speculates even further that Uriah and Bathsheba were in fact the king and queen of Jerusalem before David conquered it, and that the latter’s marriage to Bathsheba represents his claim to kingship, so that their son Solomon must be the heir, as confirmed by the oracle given to Nathan; see N. Wyatt, “‘Araunah the Jebusite’ and the Throne of David,” *ST* 39 (1985), 39–53. There is no basis whatsoever for this imaginative reconstruction.

of support for my argument below that Yedidyah is a term of royal legitimation. However, Wyatt's argument is philologically dubious and lacks concrete evidence. First, it is neither clear what he means by "cognomen" nor which precise name—David, Yedidyah, or simply any form of דוד or דד—he thinks was used in this way. Second, in contrast to the Romans, there is no indication of the custom of the giving or holding of cognomina in ancient Israel or any other Semitic societies. In the latter, usually a person's name was attached either to his or her father's/mother's name and/or to his or her clan/tribe or place name, thus: "X, son/daughter of Y from Z clan/tribe (and/or place)."²⁰ Third, Wyatt's claim that "David" was not actually a personal name, but rather a kind of title or throne name—an argument already made by other scholars²¹—is especially questionable, since it does not actually explain why Solomon is referred to as Yedidyah rather than "David." Nor is there any other evidence that "David" was ever used as a cognomen or a throne name. The name "David" is used throughout biblical literature as well as in the Tel Dan Stele (line 9: *bytdwd* "House of David")²² as a personal name. Hence David introduced himself to Saul: "And David said: 'I am the son of ... Jesse the Beth-lehemite'" (1 Sam 17:58).²³ Nor is there any basis for concluding that Yedidyah reflects a cognomen used regularly by the Davidic kings, as the term is never repeated. More interesting, however, is Wyatt's suggestion that Yedidyah parallels both the titles attached to the Canaanite gods Yam and Mot (*mdd il* and *ydd il*, respectively), and the legitimation formulae used by Egyptian kings, *Mer-(n)-[divine name]* (that is, "beloved of [divine name]"). The Ugaritic texts offer a close linguistic and conceptual parallel, but do not refer specifically to human kings or usurpers, but Wyatt's discussion of the Egyptian dynastic lists and the case of Ḥaremḥab can be seen to supplement the examples of Hatshepsut and other Pharaohs that are discussed below (§4.2.3).

20 Thus, e.g., a person either (1) attached his name to his father's/mother's name: "Joab the son of Zeruiah [...] Abner the son of Ner [...] Amasa the son of Jether" (1 Kgs 2:5); (2) to his place/land name: "Barzillai the Gileadite," "Ruth the Moabite" (1 Kgs 2:7; Ruth 2:2); (3) or to his father's or clan name, and to his tribe and to his place names: "Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjaminite of Bahurim," "Mordechai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjaminite, who had been exiled from Jerusalem" (1 Kgs 2:8; Est 2:5).

21 See below no. (5), and cf. Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Two, §1, regarding the Tel Dan inscription.

22 See A. Biran and J. Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993), 81–98; cf. idem, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," *IEJ* 45 (1995), 1–18.

23 Note, similarly the Chronicler identifies the new king as "Solomon son of David" (2 Chr 1:1; cf. 1 Chr 29:1; 2 Chr 13:6; 35:3).

(4) Alter proposes: “perhaps the second name, indicating special access to divine favor, reflects a political calculation *on the part of Nathan*: he is already aligning himself with Solomon (and Bathsheba), figuring that in the long run it will be best to have a successor to David under some obligation to him” (italics mine).²⁴ Nevertheless, as stressed above, the biblical text gives the impression that the second name for the newborn child was given briefly after his birth at the behest of the Lord. It is difficult to attribute to Nathan—or, in fact, to anyone else—such a very long-term personal calculation. Besides, Alter does not explain why Nathan gave to the child this name in particular and not another one, such as מְבוֹרֵךְ or בְּרוּךְ (“blessed one”), which would also show a positive attitude towards the child.

(5) Some scholars, such as Honeyman, de Vaux, and McCarter, consider the name Yedidyah as the private (or birth) name, and “Solomon” as the throne (or coronation/regnal) name.²⁵ De Vaux, for instance, compares this case to those of the Judean kings who had two names: “Uzziah—Azariah” and “Jehoahaz—Shallum.”²⁶ However, as de Vaux himself admits, “in every instance, we are still

24 See R. Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 & 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999), 263. Similarly, John Van Seters asserts, without reference to Alter, “It [i.e., 2 Sam 12:24] merely establishes a close link between Solomon and the prophet, who apparently used the name ‘Jedidiah’ as a term of affection for the child, and accounts for the fact that Nathan is a member of the Solomon party in the fight for succession;” see J. Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David*, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 300–301 esp. 301.

25 See A. M. Honeyman, “The Evidence of Regnal Names among the Hebrews,” *JBL* 67 (1948), 13–25 esp. 22–23; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1974), 107–108 esp. 108 (and there detailed references to the biblical sources); McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 303, 308.

26 In the cases of “Elyaqim—Jehoiachin” and “Mattaniah—Zedekiah,” the second name had been given to them by the foreign oppressors; see de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 108. On “Uzziah—Azariah,” see also the discussion by Honeyman, “Regnal Names,” 20–22. On 23–24, Honeyman also discusses: “David (throne name; 1 Sam 16:13)—Elhanan (private name; 2 Sam 21:19b).” On the latter issue see L. M. von Pákozdy, “Elhanan—der frühere Name Davids?” *ZAW* 68 (1956), 257–259. However, most likely David and Elhanan do not represent a person with two names, as some scholars harmonize, but rather two names of two different persons: According to one tradition, that survived in 1 Samuel 17, the Philistine hero, Goliath, was struck down by David, while according to another tradition, which is documented in 2 Sam 21:19b, Goliath was defeated by a man named Elhanan. The Chronicler harmonizes these contradictory traditions in Samuel by creating an alternative third version, saying that “Elhanan the son of Jair slew *Lahmi the brother of Goliath* the Gittite,” (1 Chr 20:5b). In other words, David killed *Goliath*, and Elhanan killed *Lahmi*, the brother of Goliath.

in the realm of hypothesis: the most one can say is that it is probable, though not certain, that the kings of Judah took a new name when they succeeded to the throne.”²⁷

3 Towards an Understanding of “Solomon” and “Yedidyah”—The Beloved of the Lord

The reality was precisely the opposite of that suggested by de Vaux and other scholars, since “Solomon” was a birth name, not a coronation name. The biblical narrator specifically states that this name was given to the child by one of his parents immediately after his birth (2 Sam 12:24).²⁸ Moreover, without touching on the question whether or not a coronation name was as customary in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel as it was in Egypt, in this case there is good reason to think that Yedidyah was a regnal or royal name, as I shall set out below. The purpose and meaning of this name and the phrase “and the Lord loved him,” should be understood in three complementary contexts: (a) within the immediate context in which they appear, that is, 2 Samuel 10–12; (b) within the setting of Solomon’s entire story, which includes 1 Kings 1–2; and (c) within the broader surrounding ancient Near Eastern literary and historical context, among which the early biblical literature developed, and from which it cannot be separated. Let us turn our attention to these contexts in detail.

(a) In the case of the birth of the first child, the narrator states: “the child that was begotten by *the wife of Uriah* to David” (2 Sam 12:15). This means that Bathsheba conceived David’s child while still wife to Uriah. He was the product of an adulterous liaison, and therefore a bastard. In the case of the second child, however, the narrator calls her “Bathsheba, *his* [i.e., David’s] *wife*” (2 Sam 12:24). She conceived him as David’s legitimate wife,²⁹ and therefore Solomon was their legitimate child, and not a bastard.³⁰ Thus, the intention of

27 See de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 108. For a discussion of the custom of giving a throne name in the ancient Near East, see already H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 238, 246; more recently, for Mesopotamia, K. Radner, *Die Macht des Namens: Altorientalische Strategien zur Selbsterhaltung*, SANTAG 8 (Wiesbaden; Harrasowitz, 2005), 33–35.

28 On the question of which one of the parents gave the name to the child, see Kalimi, “Reexamining 2 Samuel 10–12,” 44–46.

29 Compare David Kimchi’s commentary on 2 Sam 12:24.

30 Is it for this reason that the narrator stresses the well-known fact, “Bathsheba mother of Solomon” (בת-שבוע אִם-שלמה; 1 Kgs 1:11)? In other words, Bathsheba who is *wife of David*

the reports in 2 Sam 12:15 and 12:24d–25 is, first and foremost, to contrast the case of the first-born child, who was a result of the adulterous affair (and who became sick and died, as prophesied by Nathan, 2 Sam 12:14–23), with the case of the second-born child—Solomon—who was wholly legitimate. Attaching to Solomon the additional theophoric name Yediyah and stating that he was beloved of the Lord (again, by Nathan the prophet), made clear to all that he was a legitimate child who would be privileged by divine care and survive (2 Sam 12:24d–25).³¹ That is to say, although Nathan announced, “the sword shall not depart from your (= David’s) house many years” (2 Sam 12:10), this newborn son would live, despite all the forthcoming crises.

(b) At the same time, the additional name Yediyah, together with the statement “and the Lord loved him,” is intended to bestow a divinely appointed political and religious legitimization upon Solomon’s accession to the throne and to reject the accusations which many directed against him as a usurper.³² In this sense, the name Yediyah functions as a kind of royal/reign-name. The story about Solomon’s rise to power in 1 Kings 1–2 is highlighted through the background of 2 Sam 12:24–25. According to the Masoretic biblical text, Nathan supported Solomon as heir to the throne, together with the active involvement of his mother, David’s beloved wife Bathsheba (1 Kgs 1:11–31).³³ Set against the background of the dramatic struggle between Solomon and Adonijah (1 Kgs 1:1–53; 2:13–25), the name Yediyah, together with the phrase “the Lord *loved* him,” is to be interpreted, “the Lord *preferred* (or: *chose*) him”³⁴ at birth as the

is also *mother of Solomon*. This implies that Solomon’s father was King David, that is, he has a legitimate royal lineage.

31 Compare, for instance, H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, trans. J. S. Bowden, OTL (London: SCM, 1964), 317.

32 A hint in this direction is seen in the narrator’s note: “he (i.e., Adonijah) was born next after Absalom” (1 Kgs 1:6), and from the phrase attributed to Solomon, saying: “he (i.e., Adonijah) is my elder brother” (1 Kgs 2:22). This implies that although Solomon belonged to the royal family, he was out of the royal line to the throne. Much clearer than these was the forthright accusation that Shimei son of Gera vented against David: “Out! Out! Murderer! Scoundrel! The Lord has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned” (2 Sam 16:7–8a; cf. 16:5–8). For more discussion, see Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Eight, §11.

33 See Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Nine, §11.

34 The term בחר (“chose”) is used with the term אהב (“loved”) elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, see, e.g., Deut 7:6–8, לו אלהיך להיות כי בחר יהוה בך בחר יהוה אלהיך לא מרבכם מכל העמים חשק יהוה בכם ויבחר בכם ... כי מאהבת יהוה אתכם ... (“the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people to himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people ...; but because the Lord loved you ...”).

legitimate successor of David. In other words, Solomon was the beloved and preferred of God himself and of his messenger (Nathan), and his king (David). As such, Solomon did not rise to power illegitimately as a usurper through Nathan's activities, because already at birth the Lord himself chose him and was responsible for his accession to the throne. This notion is clearly stated again in 1 Kgs 2:15, where the narrator put the following words into Adonijah's mouth: "the kingdom is turned about, and has become my brother's; *for it was his from the Lord.*"³⁵ As if this were not enough, the narrator put the same notion also into Solomon's mouth, when the latter decided to put Adonijah to death because he had asked for David's concubine, Abishag the Shunammite, as his wife.³⁶ Here Solomon admits that Adonijah is his "elder brother." However, in the same breath he stresses that the *Lord* is the one "*who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised ...*" (1 Kgs 2:24).³⁷

(c) As mentioned above, the biblical narrator does not furnish the reader with an explicit explanation for why the Lord should have loved the newborn child even before he had accomplished anything. On the one hand, the name and the phrase were included within the birth story as if to say that the child had been chosen owing to his extraordinary *potential* qualities and his forthcoming leadership and achievements—namely, his great wisdom, Temple-building, wealth, successful trade, and international diplomacy (roughly 1 Kings 3–10). On the other hand, the story regarding the coronation of Solomon (1 Kgs 1:11–40) does not recount that he had received any additional throne/coronation name. Indeed, if the biblical narrator had stated in the coronation story that the new king was named "Yedidyah," then the political intention of such a statement would be very obvious to the audience. However, though the narrator

For God's love in Deuteronomy and its biblical and ancient Near Eastern settings, see W. L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* 25 (1963), 77–87, and additional references there.

35 See also below, §4.2.1.1 regarding "Sargon of Akkad," and Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Nine, §III, 2. The notion that Solomon was a *legitimate* heir of the throne (rather than a usurper) was clearly expressed later on by the Chronicler (e.g., 1 Chr 28:4–5; 2 Chr 1:9b), who recounts that Solomon was *chosen* by the Lord. For a detailed discussion and additional references, see Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Eight, §iv.

36 The right to have the concubine(s) of the earlier king was saved only for his successor, see 2 Sam 3:7–8; 12:8b; 16:21, see also Gen 35:22. Therefore, Solomon declares to his mother: "why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well!"

37 On this verse, see also below and cf. 1 Kgs 1:48; 3:7a; 5:19 (ET, 5:5; where Nathan's prophecy was interpreted explicitly regarding Solomon as Temple builder); 10:9.

The author's recounting that Solomon received the divine blessing and the name Yedidyah when he was an infant indicates that he was chosen to be a king already in the earliest stage of his life.³⁹ Moreover, the statement of Solomon in 1 Kgs 2:24, וַיִּהְיוּ אֲשֶׁר הִכֵּנִי וַיּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי [וַיּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי qere] עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד אָבִי וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה־לִּי (1 Kgs 2:24, וַיּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי qere) [וַיּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי qere] עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד אָבִי וְאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה־לִּי (*“as the Lord lives, who has established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised ...”*) is presented as an allusion to and fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy in 2 Sam 7:11c–13, וְהָיָה לְךָ יְהוָה כִּי־בֵית יַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ יְהוָה כִּי יִמְלֹאוּ יָמֶיךָ וְשָׁכַבְתָּ אֶת־אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְהִקִּמְתִּי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶד וְהִכֵּנִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ הוּא יִבְנֶה בֵּית לְשִׁמִּי וְכִנֵּנִי אֶת כִּסֵּא עֹלָם (2 Sam 7:11c–13, וְהִקִּמְתִּי אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶד וְהִכֵּנִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ הוּא יִבְנֶה בֵּית לְשִׁמִּי וְכִנֵּנִי אֶת כִּסֵּא עֹלָם) (*“the Lord says to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall proceed out of your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever”*).⁴⁰ In other words, the narrator interpreted Nathan's prophecy about the enduring House of David retrospectively as a reference to Solomon; he was divinely chosen to succeed his father's throne even before he was born.⁴¹ Therefore, the name Yedidyah and the expression of divine love for him point to that earlier choice.

41 Cf. S. Zalewski, *Solomon's Ascension to the Throne: Studies in the Books of Kings and Chronicles* (Jerusalem: Marcus, 1981), 27 (Hebrew); Ahituv, "Designation of Solomon," 6*, 8*. This notion is expressed explicitly by the late historian in 1 Chr 22:6–11 (an "addition"), as well as other sources; see in detail Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the*

This phenomenon is comparable to assertions in Assyrian royal inscriptions in which kings stress in their apologies that they were chosen by god(s) when they were very young or while yet in their mothers' wombs. For example, Aššur-rēš-iši I (1132–1115 BCE), was declared to be one “whom the great gods, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, truly chose (lit. requested, when he was still) inside his mother.”⁴² Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE) describes himself as one “whose name Aššur, Šamaš, Bēl and Nabû, Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela have announced to reign over Assyria since he was a child (*ultu šeḫerīšu*)” (Nineveh A I 5–7).⁴³ He continues: “Although I was the youngest among my elder brothers, my father, upon the command of Aššur, Sin, Šamaš, Bēl and Nabû, Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela, has chosen (literally, “elevated”) me, saying: ‘this is my crown-prince’” (Nineveh A I 8–12).⁴⁴ In another place he declares: “The great gods designated (me) king of the upper and l[ower] lands ... (already) in the womb of my mother who bore me ... for rule of all the lands...”⁴⁵ Assurbanipal (668–627 BCE) announced: “I, Assurbanipal ... whom Aššur and

Myth, Chapter Nine §IV. This phenomenon appears also regarding the Prophet Jeremiah (Jer 1:4–5), and so-called Second Isaiah (Isa 49:1); see I. Kalimi, “The Lord Called me from the Womb, Singled me out from my Mother’s Bowels (Isa 49:1),” in *Companion to the Biblical World: The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 10, ed. Y. Hoffman (Ramat Gan: Revivim, 1986; Hebrew), 231–232; D. M. Pike “Before Jeremiah Was: Divine Election in the Ancient Near East,” in *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews*, ed. K. P. Jackson and A. C. Skinner (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 33–59.

42 See CAD A/1,146a, no. 2.

43 See R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, AfO Beih. 9 (Graz: Self-Published, 1956), 39–40 (§27, Episode 1); see also the recent English edition in E. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)*, RINAP 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 11; cf. also A. L. Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” in *ANET* (3rd ed.; ed. J. B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 265–317 esp. 289a. Similar claims were also made by, e.g., Adad-nīrārī III and Nabonidus; cf. H. Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature,” in *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (Jerusalem: Magnes; Leiden: Brill, 1983), 36–57 esp. 39–40, 48–49; Ishida, *History and Historical Writing*, 145; and below, Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Eight, §II, 2, (3), and §IV. On Esarhaddon’s and Nabonidus’ apologies, see recently Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 301–357.

44 See Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, 40 (§27, Episode 2); cf. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, 11–12; Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” 289a.

45 See Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons König von Assyrien*, 115 (§82:7–10); D. D. Luckenbill, *ARAB* 2, 223 (§571); Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, 91.

Sin, the lord of the crown, already in the distant past had called by name for ruling, and already in his mother's womb had created him for the shepherding of Assyria."⁴⁶

Similarly, the biblical narrative reports that Nathan was sent by the Lord to call the child Yedidyah shortly after his birth. However, from the historical viewpoint the name and the phrase are a divinely authorized apology for Solomon to legitimize his throne usurpation. As such, 2 Sam 12:24d–25 and the assertions of Adonijah and Solomon in 1 Kgs 2:15, 24 represent *post-eventum* characterizations. This case of Solomon correlates well in general with biblical historiographical method, according to which a divine election is frequently claimed, *post-eventum*, in order to justify either usurpation or the problematic succession of a king. For example, the Prophet Samuel chose David from among his brothers to replace King Saul (1 Sam 16:1–13).⁴⁷ David's usurpation was justified by describing it as a divine election that took place after the divine rejection of Saul owing to his sins (1 Sam 15:19, 23b, 26–28; 16:1, see also 1 Chr 10:13–14). Furthermore, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite justified Jeroboam I as king over the northern tribes of Israel (1 Kings 11–12; 14); the prophecies of Elisha validated the military leaders Jehu as king of Israel instead of Jehoram (2 Kings 9–10); and Hazael as king of Aram, instead of Ben-hadad II (= Hadadezer; 2 Kgs 8:7–13).⁴⁸ In principle, the giving of the second name to Solomon and the note that the Lord loves him (as well as other assertions

46 See M. Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Nineveh's*, Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 2/1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916), 2 (text) and 3 (translation). For additional examples and more details, see G. Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God," *ZAW* 73 (1961), 202–225; S. M. Paul, "Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions," in *Divrei Shalom: Collected Studies of Shalom M. Paul on the Bible and the Ancient Near East, 1967–2005*, CHANE 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 11–22; Kalimi, "The Lord Called Me," 231–232; Pike, "Before Jeremiah Was," 33–59. Later, the phenomenon also was used by the evangelist Matthew regarding Jesus: "She (= Mary) will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21; cf. Luke 2:21). The Rabbis also affirmed that the name of the Messiah was one of "seven things ... created before the world was created" (e.g., BT *Pesah* 54a); see I. Kalimi, *Fighting Over the Bible: Jewish Interpretation and Polemic from Temple to Talmud and Beyond*, BRLJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 26 note 23.

47 See also the biblical references listed above, §1.

48 Though the Tel Dan Inscription does not explicitly respond to claims of illegitimacy, its affirmation of Hazael: "Hadad [ma]de m[e] king—me! And Hadad went before me ..." (ll. 4–5) implies a similar divine legitimation for this (according to the biblical sources) usurper. See M. Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, GAT 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 266–269 esp. 268; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 276–300.

in 1 Kings that God chose Solomon) are equivalent to those accounts of divine election of kings.

Such royal apologies are thus common in the Bible and the ancient Near East; but in fact we can also go further. Not only the general motif of divine election, but also the specific elements of divine *love* and the giving of a new name found in 2 Sam 12:24d–25 are also paralleled in a number of other biblical and ancient Near Eastern sources. In that light, both the second name and the emphasis on the Lord's love stress Solomon's status not only as a legitimate child of his parents, and not a bastard, but also as a divinely legitimated monarch, not a violent usurper. The following section presents further examples.

4 New Names, God's Love and Royal Apologia: The Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Sources

4.1 *Biblical Sources*

While there are no biblical references to God's "love" for any other king in Israel or Judah but Solomon (cf. Neh 13:26),⁴⁹ there is at least one other biblical example of a king who was given a new name when he took the throne through unusual means. A little over a decade before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylonia, replaced Jehoiachin, the legitimate king of Judah whom he had exiled to Babylon (598 BCE), with his uncle Mathaniah, the third son of Josiah (1 Chr 3:15). Because Mathaniah was not the legitimate king, Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to "Zedekiah," that is, "the Lord made just" or "the Lord helped me to get my right" (2 Kgs 24:8–17).

4.2 *Ancient Near Eastern Sources*

Though commentators on 2 Samuel have generally struggled to understand the significance of the name Yedidyah and its role in the text, they have overlooked the fact that the name corresponds to various epithets that reflect the love of god(s) for a king in ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian inscriptions. For example, the expression "beloved of [divine name]" (ki.ág-DN/*narām-DN*) is used to describe numerous Mesopotamian kings from Sumerian times onward,⁵⁰ while a similar expression (*mr-[n]-DN*) is also attributed to most of

49 This reference and the rewritten counter-account of Solomon's birth and names in the Chronicist history are discussed in Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Six.

50 See particularly, W. W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philological and Historical Analysis*, AOS 43 (New Haven: AOS, 1957), 132–142; M.-J. Seux, *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967), 189–197.

the Egyptian kings, as mentioned above. Against this background, the understanding of Yedidyah as “beloved of the Lord” reflects widespread custom for describing divine patronage of kings across the ancient surrounding cultures. These titles are applied both to expected royal successors and to those who took the throne through unusual means.

Moreover, the setting of the name Yedidyah and the phrase “and the Lord loved him” against the background of Solomon’s throne succession (despite not being next in the royal line),⁵¹ are paralleled—both in content and formulation—by the stories told of several kings in the ancient Near East who gained their kingship by violent usurpation, putsch/coup, or becoming a king without being part of a royal line to the throne. The latter attempted to legitimize their kingship in literary writing(s), which share several features with Solomon’s succession narrative. In his study, “Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature,” Tadmor focuses on the Neo-Assyrian royal apologies, particularly the autobiographical compositions of Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE; discussed above), his son Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE), and Šamši-Adad v (824–811 BCE, discussed in this order). He states that in all three cases, “the Assyrian king was describing his accession at a time he was about to appoint his successor ... a powerful queen-mother seems to have meddled in the issue of succession and acted as co-regent....”⁵² Tadmor also points out the brief apology of the Persian king, Xerxes I (most likely the biblical Ahasuerus; 485–465 BCE).⁵³ Mention should also be made in this context of those usurpers from the Northwest Semitic world who justified themselves in their autobiographical accounts by claiming that gods appointed them to their thrones, such as: Idrimi, king of Alalah (ca. 1450–1400 BCE), Kilamuwa, king of Ya’dy/Sam’al (modern Zinjirli; ca. 850 BCE), Zakir, king of Hamat and Lu’ath (ca. 780 BCE),⁵⁴ and the above-mentioned Hazael of Damascus.

The following sections concentrate particularly on those examples with motifs that offer the closest parallels to 2 Sam 12:24d–25 and 1 Kgs 2:15, 24, which are overlooked by Tadmor, Knapp, and others.⁵⁵ These include texts from Mesopotamia regarding king Sargon of Akkad (/Agade; see below, §4.2.1.1), and most likely also regarding the Neo-Assyrian king, Sargon II (§4.2.1.2). Similar motifs also occur in sources from contemporary, neighboring non-Semitic

51 See in detail, Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Eight, §11.

52 See Tadmor, “Autobiographical Apology,” 36–57 esp. 54, 57.

53 See *ibid.*, 57; cf. Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” 315b.

54 See H. Donner and W. Röllig, *KAI* (5th ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 4–5 (no. 24, Kilamuwa), 47–48 (no. 202, Zakir); *ANET*, 557–558 (Idrimi), 654b (Kilamuwa), 655b (Zakir).

55 E.g., T. Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1991), 53–60, 215–216.

cultures, namely in the apology of the Hittite king, Ḫattušili III (§4.2.2); about the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut, and a number of other Pharaohs (§4.2.3);⁵⁶ as well as in the inscription of Xerxes I of Persia (§4.2.4).

4.2.1 Mesopotamia: Sargon of Akkad and Sargon II of Ashur

The biblical nominal form סַרְגִּון ("Sargon"; Isa 20:1) has become an accepted term in the scholarship on the Assyrian king, Šarru-kīn II (722/1–705 BCE), the founder of the Neo-Assyrian Sargonid dynasty, whose birth-name is unknown.⁵⁷ This form of the name is also accepted by the scholars for Šarru-kīn⁵⁸ of Akkad (ca. 2334–2279 BCE),⁵⁹ the founder of the Sargonic Old Akkadian dynasty. The origin as well as the birth name of the latter is also unknown.⁶⁰

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- 56 On parallel apologetic biographies and pseudo-autobiographies in Greek sources, see A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 58–60.
- 57 On the name of the NA king, see A. Fuchs, "Šarru-kēnu, Šarru-kīn, Šarru-ukīn," in *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 3/11, ed. H. Baker (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011), 1239–1247 esp. 1239. On an Aramaic seal from the time of Sargon II that mentions the name as *srgn*, see id., "Sargon II," *RIA* 12 (2009–2011), 51–61 esp. 52.
- 58 The transcription of Sargon's name does not contain the usual spelling. In Sumerian documents the name was written: Šar-um-GI, in Akkadian texts: Šar-ru-GI; in Ur-III sources it written as: ^dŠar-ru-gin₂, see J. G. Westenholz, "The Memory of Sargonic Kings under the Third Dynasty of Ur," in *On the Third Dynasty of Ur: Studies in Honor of Marcel Sigrist*, ed. P. Michalowski, JCSSS 1 (Boston: ASOR, 2008), 251–260 esp. 253–254, and there further references. Westenholz concludes that the writing of the name reflects "a phonetic rendering rather than learned lettering." In fact, the spelling of the name of Narām-Sîn's father, Maništūsu, also changes (ibid., 253, 254). Still, the answer to the question "Why his name was written *sar-um-GI* in Sumerian sources," should not be described as "a mystery," contra W. Sallaberger and A. Westenholz, *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, OBO 160/3 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 34. See further, W. Sommerfeld, "Sargon," *RIA* 12 (2009–2011), 44–49 esp. 44–45.
- 59 For the date and long reign of Sargon of Akkad (55 years), see W. von Soden, *The Ancient Orient: An Introduction to the Study of the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 48. For another suggestion, see A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 398.
- 60 On Sargon of Akkad, and his military and political achievements, as well as his imprint on Mesopotamian literature, history and political concepts, see A. K. Grayson, "The Empire of Sargon of Akkad," *AJO* 25 (1974–1977), 56–64; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 398–399, 413; D. O. Edzard, *Geschichte Mesopotamiens: Von den Sumerern bis zu Alexander dem Großen* (Munich: Beck, 2004), 77–83; M. Heinz, "Sargon of Akkad: Rebel and Usurper in Kish," in *Representation of Political Power: Case Histories from Times of Change and*

The name Šarru-kīn means “the king is legitimate” or “the legitimate/true king.” It is considered to be a throne-name adopted by the new king who was either a usurper from entirely outside the royal family, and thus had no legitimate right to the throne, or from the royal family, but not in line for the throne, and thus of doubtful legitimacy to it. By adopting such a name, the new king wished to reinforce his right to claim the kingship.⁶¹

4.2.1.1 *Sargon of Akkad*

The historical background of Sargon of Akkad is very vague.⁶² The closest parallels to Solomon’s birth story are found in an Akkadian poetic (pseudo-) autobiographical or apologetic story, known as the Sargon Birth Legend. The existing *copies* of the Birth Legend are relatively late: Two (Texts A and B) are written in Neo-Assyrian script from the library of Aššurbanipal (668–627 BCE); one (Text C), which contains the first six lines of the legend, might be derived from a Neo-Assyrian copy (an exercise tablet); and one fragment (Text D) is written in Standard Babylonian dialect in Neo-Assyrian script.⁶³ Although a late date of the fragments does not necessarily mean that the original composition of the legend itself is also late, there is no solid evidence for dating the original composition. Consequently, a number of scholars date the legend sometime within the first half of the second millennium BCE (generally, the OB period), while others date it as late as the Neo-Assyrian period.⁶⁴ Without additional evidence, it is hard to reach a definitive conclusion; however, most

Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East, ed. M. Heinz and M. Feldman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 67–86.

- 61 Cf. Edzard, *Geschichte Mesopotamiens*, 78. However, Sallaberger and Westenholz, *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, 34, assert: “Sargon may well have been called Sargon from his birth” Cf. Sommerfeld, “Sargon,” 45.
- 62 For the legend, see B. Lewis, *The Sargon Legend: A Study of the Akkadian Text and the Tale of the Hero Who Was Exposed at Birth*, ASORDS 4 (Cambridge, MA: ASOR, 1980); “The Legend of Sargon,” translated by E. A. Speiser, (*ANET*, 119a–b); “The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad,” translated by B. R. Foster (*COS* 1.133, 461). For definitions of the text under review, see Lewis, *ibid.*, 87–93, with bibliography.
- 63 See Lewis, *ibid.*, 11–23; Longman, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography*, 53–54, and cf. Speiser, “The Legend of Sargon,” 119a. Westenholz is of the opinion that “it was the Babylonian tradition that formed the basis for the copies of the Legend in Aššurbanipal’s library—most of his texts were derived from Babylonian originals;” see J. G. Westenholz, review of *The Sargon Legend*, by B. Lewis, *JNES* 43 (1984), 73–79 esp. 74. Moreover, “a Sumerian literary fragment from Uruk (TCL 16.73), also contains a reference to some similar birth story of Sargon, unfortunately badly broken” (Lewis, *ibid.*, 75; on this text, see below).
- 64 See the detailed discussion by Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, 97–101, with additional bibliographical references.

likely the Sargon Birth Legend reflects a tradition older than the date of its preserved copies.

According to the Birth Legend, Sargon was born to a priestess (*ēntu*),⁶⁵ in the town Azupiranu, on the bank of the Euphrates (its exact location is unknown). The Legend goes on to state that Sargon was abandoned as a baby and miraculously rescued from a basket sailing down the Euphrates by a water-drawer called Aqqi. The latter pulled Sargon out of the river, adopted him as his son, and made him a gardener (prologue, ll. 2–12). The Sumerian text discussed below recounts that mysteriously, Sargon ended up as cupbearer of Urzababa, the king of Kish.⁶⁶ From this position he rebelled against Urzababa and became his successor.⁶⁷

The motif of an abandoned child from a low social stratum who ascended to a high political position is well known, and most likely foretells the rise of a national leader. A similar incident also appears in legends regarding the rescue of Moses: “she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river [= the Nile].” Later, Moses became the leader and legislator of the Israelites (Exod 2:1–10),⁶⁸ cf. the case of Cyrus II (the Great; 559–530 BCE), the founder of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (Herodotus, *Historia* 1.108; Nicolaus of Damascus, Fragment 66.2–4).⁶⁹ The rise of a gardener to kingship

65 Childs states that “Sargon’s claim of an *ēntu* as a mother automatically implied that his father was a king (... which point[s] to some form of *hieros gamos*) ... It functions to legitimize Sargon by claiming a royal ancestry;” see B. S. Childs, “The Birth of Moses,” *JBL* 84 (1965), 109–122 esp. 109–110; idem, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1974), 9–11 esp. 9 (in this regard Childs also cites the article of H. G. Güterbock, “Die historische Tradition und ihre literarische Gestaltung bei Babyloniern und Hethitern bis 1200,” *ZA* 42 [1934], 1–91; Part 2: 44 [1938], 45–145); C. Cohen, “Hebrew *tbh*: Proposed Etymologies,” *JANES* 4 (1972), 37–51 esp. 46–51. However, Sargon himself confesses that he was a “son of nobody” (*mār lā mammānim*); see Ishida, *Royal Dynasties*, 7 and the references cited there. Moreover, Sargon’s statements that his mother bore him “in secret” and “my father I knew not” show that he was an illegitimate child and was therefore concealed.

66 On Kish, see the comprehensive studies by M. Gibson, *The City and Area of Kish* (Coconut Grove, FL: Field Research Projects, 1972) and P. R. S. Moorey, *Kish Excavations 1923–1933: With a Microfiche Catalogue of the Objects in Oxford Excavated by the Oxford-Field Museum, Chicago Expedition to Kish in Iraq, 1923–1933* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978).

67 Cf. Heinz, “Sargon of Akkad,” 67.

68 On this issue, see the detailed discussion by M. Gerhards, *Die Aussetzungsgeschichte des Mose*, WMANT 109 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006), 149–249.

69 See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1926), 361–362 (no. 90: “Nikolaos von Damaskos”). Robert Drews stresses:

was a favorite theme of the Mesopotamian writers.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the assertion that ends the prologue of the Sargon Birth Legend (i, ll. 12–13) is particularly interesting for this study:

During my garden work, Ištar loved me (^dIš-tar lu-u i-ra-man-ni-ma), so that 55 years I ruled as king.⁷¹

Following this assertion, the legend tells of the activities and achievements of Sargon (lines 14–32): He founded the first empire, from the “Upper Sea” (the Mediterranean) to the “Lower Sea” (the Persian Gulf).⁷² The succession of Urzababa by Sargon was therefore justified or legitimized through the assertion: “*Ištar loved me.*” In other words, the kingship was given to Sargon by the gods, especially by his divine protector, Inanna/Ištar, the chief goddess of Kish (and later also of Agade, the capital of the Akkadian Empire).⁷³ In fact,

“The bare bones of Nicolaus’s story of Cyrus must reflect a genuine Babylonian tradition ...: Cyrus was a homeless child, became a gardener on the king’s estate, then a cup-bearer to the king, and then king;” see R. Drews, “Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History,” *JNES* 33 (1974), 387–393 esp. 391–392. The motif of putting a child (or children) in a basket sailing down the river is also known from the Hittite literature: It is told that the queen of Kanish put her thirty sons in baskets sailing down the river (a branch of River Halys), and the gods saved and adopted them. See I. Singer, *The Hittites and Their Civilization* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 2009; Hebrew), 245–246, with additional bibliographical references.

70 Additional examples: “Irra-imitti, the king, installed Bel-ibni, the gardener, on his throne as a ‘substitute king.’” Bel-ibni (known also as Enlil-bani) was a king of the First Dynasty of Isin. For Cyrus as gardener on the king’s estate: see Oppenheim, “Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts,” 267; Drews, “Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History,” 387–393 esp. 389–390 for a discussion as well as further bibliography. Similarly, Saul was a cowherd (1 Sam 11:5) and David was a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11, 19; Ps 78:70: “And he chose David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds”) before they became kings.

71 See Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, 25; Speiser, “The Legend of Sargon,” 119b; Foster, “The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad,” 461a.

72 Cf. Ps 72:8, “May he have dominion also *from sea to sea*,” regarding the borders of Solomonic dominion; also Zech 9:10.

73 On Inan(n)a/Ištar and her place in the Mesopotamian pantheon(s) and beyond, see, e.g., G. Pettinato, “Inanna,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. L. Jones (2nd ed.; Detroit: Macmillan, 2005), 4402–4406 esp. 4402; D. Wolkstein and S. N. Kramer, *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth, Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); W. Meinhold, *Ištar in Aššur: Untersuchung eines Lokalkultes von ca. 2500 bis 614 v. Chr.*, AOAT 367 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009); also J. S. Cooper and W. Heimpel, “The Sumerian Sargon Legend,” *JAOs* 103 (1983), 67–82 esp. 79 note 7.

the description of Sargon as “beloved of Inanna,” is already attested in an OB inscription, which reads: “I, Sargon, beloved of Inanna (*narām-dINANNA*), who roamed through all the four quarters....”⁷⁴ Inanna’s/Ištar’s love for Sargon is the source of his legitimacy for the throne succession, power, and authority.⁷⁵ Before us, therefore, is one of the clearest examples of an apologetic story about a usurper who claimed legitimacy by way of divine love and election. This motif offers a close parallel for what is said about Solomon in the Succession Narrative. He was named “Yedidyah” (i.e., “beloved of the Lord”), and “the Lord loved him.” He succeeded David’s throne, though he was not the next in the royal line.

That similar stories were already told about Sargon long before the Neo-Assyrian period, is also supported by a Sumerian legend recounting Sargon’s rise to power. It affirms that the gods, particularly Inanna, had announced the end of Urzababa’s rule over Kish, and had introduced their new preference, namely Sargon. The story predicts the death of Urzababa and emphasizes Inanna’s protection of Sargon, but unfortunately breaks off before its ending.⁷⁶ Cooper and Heimpel conclude correctly that there is a didactic tendency in this story, like many—if not all—of the Sumerian historical-literary texts. That is to say, “destiny determined by the gods, is unavoidable, and not to be resisted.”⁷⁷ Indeed, Sargon became king of Kish despite Urzababa’s best efforts to prevent this, and despite the war that Lugalzagesi waged against him. In any case, this is clearly an apologetic story that attempts to legitimize Sargon’s usurpation. In other words, this implicit message is similar to the explicit statement in the biblical text, which is ascribed to Adonijah (see above), after his failure in struggling with Solomon, the one who was not in line for David’s throne:

74 J. G. Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, MC 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 34–35. On the expression “beloved of [divine name],” see above §4.2.

75 Westenholz, review of *The Sargon Legend* by B. Lewis, 78–79, interprets Ištar’s love as an expression of military victories in battle but without illuminating additional sense(s) for it. By contrast, my interpretation of Ištar’s love in the Sargon Legend better fits the context in which the phrase appears, and is also supported by comparative literature of surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures. In any case, Ištar’s love for Sargon should not be explained as sexual love, as Lewis believes (*ibid.*, 59, 95–96). As Westenholz, *ibid.*, 79, correctly states, “Any sexual overtones can only be read into the text but cannot be read out of it.”

76 See Cooper and Heimpel, “The Sumerian Sargon Legend,” 67–82.

77 *Ibid.*, 74.

“the kingdom was mine ... but the kingdom is turned about, and has become my brother’s; *for it was his from the Lord*” (1 Kgs 2:15).⁷⁸

4.2.1.2 *Sargon II of Ashur*

As mentioned above (§4.2.1.1), the copies of the Birth Legend of Sargon the Great are relatively late. If the Birth Legend was composed for the first time in the Neo-Assyrian period, its primary purpose would have been to promote the legitimacy of the contemporary usurper, Sargon II (722/1–705 BCE), by identifying him with one of the greatest Mesopotamian kings who bore the same name and whose own royal origin was uncertain. This intention would also account for purposely obtaining the unusual throne name Šarru-kīn with its connotations and deep-rooted associations. All these fit Sargon II, whose accession is mysterious and whose legitimacy to the Assyrian throne questionable,⁷⁹ since, in all likelihood, he was not in direct line to it. As Sidney Smith stressed long ago, although there is a possibility of Sargon’s belonging “to a family descended from kings, as Esarhaddon actually claims,” for a variety of good reasons he is believed to have been a usurper.⁸⁰ Sargon became king just after the rebellion of Assyrian citizens against Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE) and his murder. In the so-called “Ashur Charter,” Sargon recounts that Shalmaneser V “wrongfully imposed corvée on the city of Ashur, with the result that the gods deposed him and appointed Sargon as *legitimate* king.”⁸¹

However, as stated above, it is likely that the Sargon legends derive from traditions reaching back to the 2nd millennium BCE, and were not invented out of whole cloth to legitimate Sargon II. Still, even if they were first composed in the OB period, their continued copying and use in the time of Sargon II

78 Interestingly, a similar notion appears also later on in Greek historiography, as witnessed in the statement of Herodotus that “None may escape his destined lot, not even a god” (*Historia* 1.91; cf. 1.7–13).

79 See Lewis, *The Sargon Legend*, 103, and cf. S. Smith, “The Supremacy of Assyria,” *CAH* 3/1, 32–60 esp. 46; Foster, “The Birth Legend of Sargon of Akkad,” 461; M. van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad and His Successors in Anatolia,” *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* 42 (2000), 133–159 esp. 133–134: “the Assyrians referred to Sargon throughout their history. This may be easily understood as an aspect of the cultural tradition that unified Mesopotamia, which enabled a king of Assyria in the seventh (sic; read: eighth) century, Sargon II, to portray himself to his subject as a worthy namesake of an ancient ruler.”

80 See Smith, “The Supremacy of Assyria,” 45; more recently Fuchs, “Šarru-kēnu, Šarru-kīn, Šarru-ukīn,” 1240. For the various possible connections of Sargon II to the Assyrian royal family, see id., “Sargon II,” 53. See also A. K. Grayson, “Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II (744–705 B.C.),” *CAH* 2 3/2, 71–102 esp. 87–88.

81 See Grayson, “Assyria: Tiglath-pileser III to Sargon II,” 87.

served to legitimate the Neo-Assyrian monarch as well. To cite van de Mieroop, “Unless we believe that there was a mindless copying of the texts [i.e., the accounts of Sargon’s Birth Legend that are available to us now] because of antiquarian interests, there should have been a relevance to them when they were written.”⁸²

There is an additional feature that binds Sargon of Akkad and Sargon II: Both kings wished not to be identified with the old capitals from which they set out, and thus each established a new capital: Sargon the Great moved his capital from Kish to the new city he built, namely Akkad.⁸³ Henceforth, he identified himself as “Sargon, King of Akkad.”⁸⁴ Sargon II founded a new capital in a place that had not been inhabited before, and named it after himself, *Dūr-Šarru-kīn* (“Fortress of Sargon”; modern Khorsabad).⁸⁵ In fact, the founding of a new capital was not exclusive to usurpers, but it was typical for some in other parts of the ancient Near Eastern world. For example, David captured Jerusalem, rebuilt it, renamed it after himself, and made it the capital of the Israelite United Monarchy; Omri, king of Israel established Samaria;

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- 82 M. van de Mieroop, “Literature and Political Discourse in Ancient Mesopotamia: Sargon II of Assyria and Sargon of Agade,” in *Munuscula Mesopotamica: Festschrift für Johannes Renger*, ed. B. Böck, E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, and T. Richter, AOAT 267 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1999), 327–339 esp. 329. It is noteworthy that possibly some other usurpers, such as Sargon I of Assyria (early second millennium), also imitated Sargon of Akkad; see van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad,” 144–145.
- 83 The spelling Akkad follows the city’s Hebrew rendering in Gen 10:10. The exact location of the city is unknown.
- 84 The Sumerian King List refers to “Sargon, the king of Akkad, the man who built Akkad;” see J.-J. Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* (Paris: Belles lettres, 1993), 140; S. Franke, *Königsinschriften und Königsideologie: Die Könige von Akkade zwischen Tradition und Neuerung* (Hamburg: LIT, 1995), 94; Heinz, “Sargon of Akkad,” 68, 74–75.
- 85 See, e.g., A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen: Cuvillier, 1994), 37–38, 292–293, ll. 34–43; S. Parpola, “The Construction of *Dūr-Šarru-kīn* in the Assyrian Royal Correspondence,” in *Khorsabad: le palais de Sargon II, roi d’Assyrie*, ed. A. Caubet (Paris: Documentaion française, 1995), 47–77; van de Mieroop, “Literature and Political Discourse,” 334–339; v. A. Hurowitz, “Fort Sargon (*Dūr-Šarru-kīn*): A Portrait of the Royal Builder,” in *Royal Assyrian Inscriptions: History, Historiography and Ideology*, ed. I. Eph’al and N. Na’aman (Jerusalem: IASH, 2009; Hebrew), 25–52. Most likely, *Dūr-Šarru-kīn* should be identified with the biblical “Resen” (Gen 10:12), see V. A. Hurowitz, “In Search of Resen (Genesis 10:12): *Dūr-Šarru-kīn*,” in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, vol. 1, ed. C. Cohen et al. (Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 2008), 511–524; A. van der Kooij, “Nimrod, A Mighty Hunter before the Lord!/: Assyrian Royal Ideology as Perceived in the Hebrew Bible,” *JS* 21 (2012), 1–27 esp. 7.

Cyrus II of Persia founded Pasargadae, and Darius I founded Persepolis. All these kings were usurpers.⁸⁶ This is a point where Solomon differs from the common motif. Perhaps he did not found a new capital because he wanted to emphasize continuity with David, rather than a break (a motivation also reflected, for instance in “David’s Testament,” and the Davidic preparations for the Temple-building, especially in Chronicles).

4.2.2 Anatolia: King Ḫattušili III of Ḫatti

The autobiography, or so-called “apology,” of the Hittite king, Ḫattušili III (1267–ca. 1240 BCE), was composed within a decade after his succession.⁸⁷ It was some time after the peace treaty between Ḫattušili and his contemporary Pharaoh, Ramses II of Egypt, in 1259 BCE (§12b).⁸⁸ In this apology, Ḫattušili recounts in detail how he rose to power and provides a divine legitimization for his usurpation over Ḫatti. He states that his father, Muršili II, had three sons and one daughter. Though Ḫattušili was the third son and the fourth and youngest child of his father, he became the king of Ḫatti, because of “Ištar’s

86 In some detail: David, usurper of King Saul, captured Jerusalem, rebuilt it, renamed it “City of David” after himself, and moved his capital from Hebron to it (2 Sam 5:4–9; although Hebron was not the political residency of the former king, but rather a tribal holy city of Judah, where David established himself). Omri, king of Israel, was certainly not in line for the throne. According to 1 Kgs 16:15–20, he was a general for the legitimate king, Elah, and only claimed the kingship after Elah and his entire house were murdered by Zimri, who in turn committed suicide rather than face Omri’s retaliation (1 Kgs 16:8–20). Omri then defeated another rival for the throne (Tibni; 1 Kgs 16:21–22), then founded “Samaria” and moved his capital there from Tirzah (1 Kgs 16:23–29). Cyrus II (the Great), the king of Anshan, was a vassal of Astyages, king of Media. He rebelled against him (553 BCE) and finally replaced him (550 BCE), established a new city, Pasargadae, and shortly after he moved his capital there. Darius I (522–485 BCE) rose to the Persian throne by defeating the so-called Magus usurper of Bardiya (son of Cyrus the Great and the younger brother of Cambyses II). In ca. 518 BCE he founded a new capital, Persepolis, alongside the four other existing capitals of the Achaemenid Empire; see T. C. Young, “The Early History of the Medes and the Persians and the Achaemenid Empire to the Death of Cambyses,” *CAH*² 4, 1–52 esp. 28–30; I. Kalimi, “Persepolis,” *NIDB* 4 (2009), 450–451.

87 On this king, see A. Ünal, *Ḫattušili III* (Heidelberg: Karl Winter, 1974); T. P. J. van den Hout, “Ḫattušili III, King of Hittites,” *CANE* 2, 1107–1120.

88 See E. Laroche, *Catalogue des Textes Hittites* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), no. 81; “Apology of Ḫattušili III,” translated by T. P. J. van den Hout (*COS* 199–204); Singer, *The Hittites and Their Civilization*, 86–93; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 119–159 (see also his discussion of the earlier Hittite King Telipinu, *ibid.*, 73–117). English citations for the Apology are from van den Hout.

divine providence.” According to the text, Ištar saved his life by making him her priest:

As I was still a boy ... Ištar, My Lady, sent Muwatalli, my brother to Muršili, my father, through a dream (saying): ‘For Ḫattušili the years (are) short, he will not live (long). Hand him over to me (= Ištar), and let him be my priest, so he (will) live.’ My father took me up (while still) a boy, and handed me (over) to the service of the goddess, and as a priest I brought offerings to the goddess. At the hand of Ištar, My Lady, I experienced prosperity, and *Ištar, My Lady, took me by the hand* and provided for me” (§§2–3).⁸⁹

Further, Ḫattušili relates: “*Ištar, My Lady, gave me kingship over Ḫatti Land*. I became the Great King: she took me as a prince and let me (rise) to kingship” (§12a-b). Furthermore, Ḫattušili’s patronage by Ištar is attested also by an Akkadian bullae that describes him as “Beloved ... of Ištar of Šamuḫa” (*na-ra-a[m ... dIšta]r URUŠa-mu-ḫa*).⁹⁰

Ḫattušili’s apology exemplifies, once again, the well-known literary motif of the youngest son who finally rises to power under special divine care. We find similar motifs, in the biblical literature, for example in the cases of Isaac/Ishmael, Jacob/Esau, David among his brothers, and Solomon/Adonijah.⁹¹ As in the case of Sargon of Akkad (and indirectly Sargon II), the goddess Ištar plays an essential role in the usurper’s legitimating process of Ḫattušili. Due to Ištar’s benevolence, as claimed by Ḫattušili, he became the “Great King” of Ḫatti, despite being the youngest child of his father. It happened again at the time when the legitimate king, his nephew Urhi-Tešub, the son of King Muwatalli (elder brother of Ḫattušili, who had died), was alive and still held power (§10b–c). Both of these elements appear in the biblical story of Solomon, who rose to power despite being one of the younger sons of David and while his

89 “The king being taken by the hand of his personal deity is illustrated on many reliefs and seal impressions. Such representations are known for Muwatalli II, Muršili III/Urhi-tešub and Tuthaliya IV; for Ḫattušili III we only have the description of such a scene on the seal on the silver tablet containing the peace treaty with Ramses II; see van den Hout, “Apology of Ḫattušili III,” 199 note 5.

90 See H. G. Güterbock, *Siegel aus Boğazköy: Erster Teil, Königssiegel der Grabungen bis 1938*, AfO Beih. 5 (Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1967), 28 (no. 45). Šamuḫa was the location of the temple in which Ḫattušili served as priest of Ištar.

91 See, respectively: Gen 21:9–13; 25:23; 27:29, 37, 40; 1 Sam 16:10–13; 1 Kgs 1:5–40; 1 Chr 3:5, and below.

elder brother, Adonijah, was alive: because “the Lord loved him,” much as Ištar loved Ḫattušili.

The stories about Sargon the Great of Akkad and his grandson Narām-Sîn (whose name means “beloved of Sin”) were well known in Ḫatti.⁹² As Van de Mieroop writes, “Throughout their history, from the eighteenth to the thirteenth centuries, the Hittites of central Anatolia preserved the memory of these kings. The contexts in which they appear are varied, from historical texts to rituals, and characteristics associated with them are wide-ranging as well.”⁹³ King Ḫattušili I, for instance, compares his military aggressions against the city of Hahhum with those of Sargon of Akkad.⁹⁴ The notion of the special attention of the goddess Ištar for Ḫattušili III, therefore, could be simulated from what was known to him—or to the Hittite scribes—about Ištar’s patronage of Sargon of Akkad. This view may explain why Ḫattušili III chose the Akkadian goddess Ištar as his patron over any other Hittite or Mesopotamian deity.⁹⁵ Indeed, Hoffner cautiously stresses that “it is not impossible to speak of a tradition of royal apologies in the Hittite kingdom, or even of a certain

92 See, e.g., already W. F. Albright, “The Epic of the King of Battle: Sargon of Akkad in Cappadocia,” *JSOR* 7 (1923) 1–20; H. G. Güterbock, “Sargon of Akkad Mentioned by Ḫattušili I of Ḫatti,” *JCS* 18 (1964), 1–6 esp. 5–6; H. A. Hoffner, “Remarks on the Hittite Version of the Naram-Sin Legend,” *JCS* 23 (1970), 17–22; van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad,” 133–159. In this context bearing mention is the important study by G. Beckman, “Mesopotamians and Mesopotamian Learning at Ḫattuša,” *JCS* 35 (1983), 97–114, regarding the Hittites’ borrowing of Mesopotamian cultural, literary, and writing heritage. On the latter topic, see most recently, Y. Cohen, *ZA* 105 (2015): 121–26 (with additional bibliography).

93 Van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad,” 134.

94 See, e.g., Güterbock, “Sargon of Akkad Mentioned by Ḫattušili I of Ḫatti,” 1–6; van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad,” 134–136. Some scholars have stated that the Sargon referred to by Ḫattušili I was not Sargon of Akkad, but rather Sargon I of Assyria in the 19th century. However, as van de Mieroop stresses, “this seems highly unlikely, as there is barely evidence of Old Assyrian military campaigning, except for Šamši-Adad I, and as later Hittite traditions clearly show that Sargon of Agade was well-known there” (*ibid.*, 136 and further references there).

95 On the Hittite pantheon, see, e.g., E. Laroche, “The Pantheon of Asia Minor: The Organization of the Hittite Gods,” in *Mythologies I*, ed. Y. Bonnefoy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 218–222; I. Singer, “The Thousand Gods of Ḫatti: The Limits of an Expanding Pantheon,” *IOS* 14 (1994), 81–102; D. Schwemer, “Das hethitische Reichspantheon: Überlegungen zu Struktur und Genese,” in *Götterbilder—Gottesbilder—Weltbilder, Polytheismus und Monotheismus in der Welt der Antike*, ed. R. G. Kratz und H. Spieckermann, *FAT* 2/17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 241–265; B. J. Collins, *The Hittites and Their World*, *SBLABS* 7 (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 157–195.

loose literary form.”⁹⁶ Whether or not there is a direct connection between the appeals to Ištar’s legitimation of Sargon the Great and Ḫattušili III, this is in any case another clear example of divine election as royal apology made by a king who was not directly in line for the throne, as we have regarding Solomon.

4.2.3 Egypt: Queen Hatshepsut and Some Other Pharaohs

An Egyptian text recounts concerning the god Amon-Re (who was considered to be the true father of the pharaoh) that he chose a king from among his brothers:

Then they laid down the royal brothers before the god, but he did not select any of them. They laid down again the royal brother, son of Amon, born of Mut, lord of heaven, son of Re, Aselta, living eternally. Then this god Amon-Re, lord of the throne of the Two Lands [Upper and Lower Egypt], said: “It is he who is your king. It is he who will cause you to live ... It is he who is your lord.”⁹⁷

This process recalls the biblical stories regarding kings who were chosen from among their brothers, such as David (1 Sam 16:1–13) and Solomon, as presented by the Chronicler (1 Chr 28:5). It is not clear from this Egyptian text if the one who was chosen was or was not in the direct royal line to the throne. Nevertheless, there were certainly cases of unconventional succession in Egyptian history, including the first three kings of the Fifth Dynasty, as well as some rulers of the New Kingdom (18th–20th Dynasties): Queen Hatshepsut (1479–1458 BCE) and Amenhotep III (1391–1353 or 1388–1351 BCE) of the 18th Dynasty, Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) of the 19th Dynasty, and much later Alexander the Great of Macedonia (336–323 BCE)—none of these were considered at their birth to be heirs to the throne. Their legitimacy to the Egyptian throne was, therefore, doubtful from the very beginning.⁹⁸

96 See H. A. Hoffner, “Propaganda and Political Justification in Hittite Historiography,” in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, ed. H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), 49–62 esp. 50. Hoffner distinguishes apologies in the sense of “defenses of usurpations” from “other defenses made by Hittite kings,” and brings some examples for the latter. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 119–120, rejects Hoffner’s approach on this point, but does not consider the parallels with the Sargon legends.

97 See H. Schäfer, ed., *Urkunden der ältesten Äthiopienkönige* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), 94–95.

98 See K. Sethe, “Altes und Neues zur Geschichte der Thronstreitigkeiten unter den Nachfolgern Thutmosis I.,” *ZÄS* 36 (1898), 24–81 esp. 63–68 (“VII. Makere’s Berufung zur

For example, Hatshepsut ruled Egypt *de facto*, as a female Pharaoh, for approximately twenty-two years, despite the fact that Thutmose III stood in line for the Egyptian throne (18th Dynasty; 1479–1425 BCE; this includes those ca. twenty-two years he was co-regent with Queen Hatshepsut). She was the actual ruling power, and Thutmose III was only a “figurehead,”⁹⁹ that is, no more than a nominal co-regent. To cite the mayor of Thebes, Ineny, “she conducted the affairs of the country, the Two Lands being in her control.”¹⁰⁰ As presented in her inscriptions, Hatshepsut repeatedly attempted to legitimize her reign in various ways. She claimed that her earthly father, Thutmose I, chose her as his heir because she was a daughter of his chief wife, Ahmes, and as such she had an advantage over his grandson, Thutmose III, who was born to a lesser wife of his son, Thutmose II. However, as Sethe demonstrated, Hatshepsut’s claim to have been crowned by her father is historically untrue. Thutmose I had a number of sons and one of them followed him to the throne—Thutmose II—rather than his daughter, Hatshepsut.¹⁰¹

Another attempt by Hatshepsut to legitimize her reign, which is of special interest for the current study, is her claim that she was the daughter of the god Amon,¹⁰² and *the one whom Amon loves*. That is to say, she was born to an earthly queen but engendered by a heavenly father.¹⁰³ An inscription recounts

Königswürde”); idem, *Das Hatschepsut-Problem: Noch Einmal Untersucht* (Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1932); W. F. Edgerton, *The Thutmosid Succession*, SAOC 8 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 31; S. Schott, “Zum Krönungstag der Königin Hatschepsut,” in *NAWG* 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 195–219; W. C. Hayes, “Egypt: Internal Affairs from Thutmose I to the Death of Amenophis III,” *CAH*,³ 2/1, 313–416 esp. 317–319; H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs: Studien Zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos*, 2nd ed., Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 195 note 1; E. Hornung, “The Pharaoh,” in *The Egyptians*, ed. S. Donadoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 283–314 esp. 296–297.

99 See J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906; repr., Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 142 (§340), and 142–143 (§341).

100 See Hayes, “Egypt: Internal Affairs,” 317 and the reference there.

101 See Sethe, “Altes und Neues zur Geschichte,” 63–68; idem, *Das Hatschepsut-Problem*, 18–28.

102 Cf. Ps 2:7: “The Lord has said to me (= the king), ‘You are my son; this day have I begotten you.’”

103 “This myth is documented in a detailed sequence of seventeen pictures in her temple at Deir al-Bahri, which describes Amun’s encounter with the queen, the god Khnum forming the child, the birth, *her naming*, the child in the care of divine nurses, and, finally, her solemn recognition by Amun. A second complete cycle is preserved in the temple of Luxor by Amenophis III.” See Hornung, “The Pharaoh,” 296–297 (emphasis mine).

how the god Khnum repeats the instructions that he has obtained from Amon regarding Hatshepsut (while now putting them in the first person), as follows:

I have given you (= Hatshepsut) to be *the first* of all living creatures, while you shine as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, of South and North, according as your father (= the god Amon), *who loves you*, has commanded.¹⁰⁴

Another inscription describes:

Amon's Makere (= Hatshepsut), *whom he* (= Amon) *loves*, who is upon his throne, for whom he has made to flourish the inheritance of Two Lands, the Kingdom of the South and North....¹⁰⁵

This inscription states further: "Utterance of Amon-Re, lord of Thebes: 'Welcome! My sweet daughter, *my favorite*, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Makere (Hatshepsut), who makes my beautiful monuments, who purifies the seat of the great ennead of gods for my dwelling, as memorial of her love."¹⁰⁶ In Hatshepsut's Obelisk in the temple of Amon at Karnak, in the south-side of the Shaft Inscription, there is written: "*Hatshepsut Khenemet-Amun* (= 'united with Amon'), *beloved of Amen-Re*, king of gods, given life like Re forever."¹⁰⁷ This theme is also reiterated in the Base Inscription of the Obelisk: "*Hatshepsut Khenemet-Amun*, who lives forever. The daughter of Amen-Re, *his beloved*, his only one who came from him ... whom Amun himself made appear upon the throne of Southern On; whom he chose as guardian of Egypt."¹⁰⁸ Then appears what is called the "Speech of the Queen," where Hatshepsut declares: "I swear,

104 Cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 82 (§203).

105 Cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 116 (§285).

106 Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 116–117 (§286). Note also another attempt by Hatshepsut to legitimize her reign, "through an oracle ceremony during which the god Amun proclaimed his decision that Hatshepsut was to become king. Scenes show him crowning Hatshepsut, who is kneeling before him, and thereby bestowing the kingship on her"; see Hornung, "The Pharaoh," 297. Such claims of oracular legitimation are also made in the case of David (1 Sam 16:1–13), and according to the Chronicler, Solomon as well (1 Chr 22:9; 28:5); on the latter, see Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Six, IV, 1.

107 See M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 25–29 esp. 25–26. For various inscriptions of Hatshepsut, see now also M. Dessoudeix, *Lettres égyptiennes*, vol. 2 (Arles: Actes sud, 2010–2016), 129–156.

108 See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, 26.

as *I am loved of Re; As Amun, my father, favors me; as my nostrils are refreshed with life and dominion; as I wear the white crown; as I appear with the red crown....*"¹⁰⁹

Indeed, Breasted had already concluded that:

Beginning with the Fourth Dynasty, every Egyptian king might bear the title, 'Son of Re,' the sun-god. It is not an accident therefore, that the interesting folktale preserved to us in the Papyrus Westcar¹¹⁰ narrates that the three children of a priest's wife, begotten by Re, and born among astonishing prodigies, became the first three kings of the Fifth Dynasty ..., but in its strictest sense the title indicated that the king was immediately and physically the offspring of the god and a mortal mother. It is probable that *this interpretation was pressed at first only by kings whose claims to the throne through their mortal parents were questionable....* Later every king claimed Amon (successor of Re) as his physical father....¹¹¹

Breasted also points out the most famous example in later times: "Alexander the Great, who journeyed to the Oasis of Amon that he might be recognized as the god's son, was therefore merely acting in harmony with a state fiction as old as the Fifth Dynasty. He thus became the legitimate king of Egypt by the only possible means."¹¹²

4.2.4 Persia: Xerxes I (the Great)

Xerxes I (the Great; 486/5–465 BCE) of Persia was not the eldest son of Darius I. He was the firstborn of the four sons of Darius' wife Atossa, daughter of Cyrus the Great, but Darius already had other sons from a previous wife. Despite this, Darius rejected his older son, Artabazenes, from his previous wife, as throne successor, and chose Xerxes, because of the great influence that Atossa had on him as well as her special position in the Achaemenid royal court.¹¹³ Indeed, as Herodotus recounts:

109 See Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, 27–28 esp. 28.

110 Papyrus Westcar is from 700 to 1000 years later than the birth of the three kings that it narrates; see Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 76 note b (§187).

111 Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 75–76 (§187), 77 (§189; italics added).

112 See Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 2, 77 (§189). On a different claim that Alexander was addressed as "son of god" by the prophet of Amon, see Plutarch, *Alexander* 27.

113 Cf. R. Schmitt, "Atossa," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 3 (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1989), 13–14 (online: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/atossa-achaemenid-queen> updated August 17, 2011; accessed February 12, 2016).

For Darius had three sons born to him before he became king by his first wife ... and four besides after he became king by Atossa daughter of Cyrus; of the earlier sons Artobazanes was the eldest, and Xerxes of the later ... Artobazanes pleading that he was the eldest of all Darius' offspring and that it was everywhere customary that the eldest should rule; Xerxes that he was son of Cyrus' daughter Atossa and that it was Cyrus who had won the Persians their freedom (*Histories* 7.2–3).

On the advice of Demaratus of Spartan, Xerxes added another plea, saying that “he had been born when Darius was already king and ruler of Persia, but Artobazanes when Darius was yet a subject ... Darius judged his plea to be just and declared him king.” Herodotus continues, “But to my thinking Xerxes would have been made king even without this advice; for Atossa was all-powerful.”¹¹⁴ Consequently, in his inscription Xerxes attempts to legitimate his access to the throne, saying that it was the will of Ahuramazdā: “So says Xerxes, the king: Darius also had other sons; (but) it was Ahuramazdā's desire ... When my father Darius had taken his place (in the hereafter) according to the will of Ahuramazdā, I became king instead of my father.”¹¹⁵ In this case, too, neither God's love nor a new name are explicitly mentioned, but like other usurpers in the ancient Near East, Xerxes claims divine preference by his patron deity. Further, as Ḫattušili claimed to be the fourth child of his father (though the third son), so Xerxes is described as the fourth son of his father. Similarly, according to his Succession Narrative, Solomon became king after David's older sons Amnon (2 Samuel 13), Absalom (2 Samuel 14–18), and Adonijah (1 Kings 1–2) had been rejected.¹¹⁶ However, Herodotus' reference to three older brothers of Xerxes is probably just a coincidence, rather than a result of relying on a standard trope.

5 The Concept of Divine Love in 2 Samuel 12 and Ancient Near Eastern Literature

The land and the people of ancient Israel had various cultural, economic and political interactions with Mesopotamia, Ḫatti and Egypt. Thus, the notion of

¹¹⁴ See Herodotus, *Histories*, vol. 3 (A. D. Godley, LCL), 300–303.

¹¹⁵ See Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achaimeniden*, 162 (XPf §4, ll. A-K). The English translation is mine.

¹¹⁶ On the numerical pattern of “three–four” and its application to Solomon, see Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Six, §11, and Chapter Nine, §111.

the special divine love bestowed on Solomon (2 Sam 12:24d–25) could either have developed independently or have been influenced—in one way or another—by any or all of the cultural entities discussed above. The cultural interactions between Israel and Mesopotamia on the one hand, and Egypt on the other, are particularly noteworthy. Egypt is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible more than any other land and nation; and there is ample evidence for the literary and cultural connections between Egypt and Israel.¹¹⁷ The stories of Sargon (and his grandson, Nārām-Sîn) were also known outside Mesopotamia's boundaries, such as in Ḫatti.¹¹⁸ They are also mentioned in the Hurrian ritual texts,¹¹⁹ and Sargon's epic has even been discovered in Amarna in Egypt.¹²⁰ Moreover, cultural contacts between the Mesopotamian world and Israel are an established fact, with many texts in almost every biblical genre reflecting this.¹²¹ Archaeological finds, such as a fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic found at Megiddo¹²² and the stele-fragment of Sargon II from Ashdod,¹²³ also reflect these contacts. However, while the possibility of transmission of traditions of various sorts to Biblical Israel is clear, one runs into trouble when it comes to matching such activity to specific moments in Israel's history. For instance, Sargon II's stele obviously dates to well after the time of Solomon, while the Gilgamesh fragment dates to the 14th century BCE, which would make it pre-Israelite. Neither offers direct evidence of Sargon traditions known in Israel during the early Israelite monarchy. Moreover, as far as we know, the Mesopotamian empires were not active in the Levant during Solomon's period. The Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian control of the Land of Israel in general and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in particular during the 9th to the 6th centuries BCE, have definitely had a great impact on Israelite literature and thought as reflected from many Akkadian and biblical sources of the First

117 See in detail I. Kalimi, review of *Egyptian Cultural Icons in Midrash*, by Rivka Ulmer *JNES* 71 (2012), 351–354.

118 See above §4.2.2 and the references listed in notes 92–94.

119 See van de Mieroop, “Sargon of Akkad,” 140–141.

120 See Albright, “The Epic of the King of Battle,” 1–20; Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade*, 102–139.

121 See, e.g., W. W. Hallo, B. W. Jones and G. L. Mattingly, eds., *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature*, ANETS 8 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990).

122 A. Goetze and S. Levy, “Fragment of Gilgamesh Epic from Megiddo,” *Atiqot* 2 (1959), 121–128.

123 See H. Tadmor, “Fragments of an Assyrian Stela of Sargon II,” in “*With My Many Chariots I Have Gone up the Heights of Mountains:*” *Historical and Literary Studies on Ancient Mesopotamia and Israel*, ed. M. Cogan (Jerusalem: IES, 2011), 495–504.

Temple period.¹²⁴ To mention just two specific traditions that are relevant to our discussion: (a) The Table of Nations recounts the building of the city of “Akkad” by Nimrod (Gen 10:8–10), who is identified with Sargon of Akkad (or his grandson, Narām-Sîn);¹²⁵ (b) Though the name “Moses” is probably an abbreviation of an Egyptian theophoric name (*mes* = “child”),¹²⁶ the story about his rescue from a basket floating down the Nile (Exod 2:1–10) is a close parallel of the rescue of Sargon of Akkad from a basket floating down the Euphrates, as is told in the Sargon Birth Legend, (again, as has survived from the time of Sargon II in the late 8th century BCE; see above §4.2.1).¹²⁷

Now, the biblical name “Yedidyah” is politically or typologically equivalent to the name “Šarru-kīn,” with the biblical phrase “the Lord loved him” parallel to the Akkadian “Ištar loved me.” Though these cases are from different places and times, their intention is identical: to bestow religious legitimization on the usurper, whether Sargon of Akkad, Sargon II, or Solomon. Possibly the tales of Sargon (and Narām-Sîn) were known in ancient Israel, much as they were in Hatti. Thus one cannot exclude the possibility that the author of 2 Sam 12:24d–25 knew the Sargon Birth Legend, and thought of “Ištar loved me” as a model for

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- 124 One example, from among many, involves the curses listed in Deuteronomy 28 with those listed in the “Esarhaddon Succession Treaty,” which King Esarhaddon of Assyria convened with his vassals regarding the succession of his son Aššurbanipal; see S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, eds., *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA 2 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988).
- 125 For identification of Nimrod and Akkad in Gen 10:8–10 with Sargon himself (or his grandson, Narām-Sîn) and Agade, see, for instance, Y. Levin, “Nimrod the Mighty, King of Kish, King of Sumer and Akkad,” *VT* 52 (2002), 350–366. See also Mic 5:5, which mentions ארץ נמרוד in parallel to ארץ אשור. However, though Nimrod is not presented here as a god, but rather as a mighty human hunter, there are scholars who identify him with the Akkadian god of war, Ninurta, and underline the great power of Nimrod as Mesopotamian king; see van der Kooij, “Nimrod, A Mighty Hunter before the Lord!,” 2–8.
- 126 See J. G. Griffiths, “The Egyptian Derivation of the Name Moses,” *JNES* 12 (1953), 225–231 esp. 231 and references to earlier literature; C. Houtman, *Exodus*, vol. 1, trans. J. Rebel and S. Woudstra, *HCOT* (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 83–86 esp. 83–84 (and the survey of the history of interpretation there, including Philo and Josephus who explained the Greek version of the name on the basis of contemporary Egyptian language). In the biblical story the name is explained according to a midrashic folk-etymology that plays on the sounds of the words משה and משיתו: “she called his name Moses (משה): and she said, because I drew him (משיתו) out of the water” (Exod 2:10); these words are attributed to the Pharaoh’s daughter as if she knew the Hebrew language.
- 127 Although one cannot exclude the hypothetical possibility that both stories had a common folkloristic theme (or *Märchenmotiv*); see H. Greßmann, *Moses und seine Zeit: Ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 1–16.

his note about Solomon that “the Lord loved him,” while ascribing to the latter the name Yedidyah as a political equivalent to Šarru-kīn.

However, it should be acknowledged that, while Šarru-kīn is the only name attested in the case(s) of Sargon, in the ancient Israelite historiography the name Yedidyah was not generally employed. Rather, both histories, the early (“Deuteronomistic”) as well as the late (“Chronistic”), systematically used the birth name “Solomon.”¹²⁸ That leaves it uncertain when or how often this name was actually employed to describe Solomon. Still, the political and religious connotations of the name are now clear: it legitimates the future king Solomon in the same way that similar names and claims to divine love legitimate other usurpers in the ancient Near East. But there remains something unique in this account. While across the ancient Near East we find other appeals to divine love of the usurper, sometimes associated with kings who have taken a new regal name, none of the extant parallels combines these motifs. Only in 2 Sam 12:24d–25 is the new name itself given by the deity and directly described as an expression of divine love: Solomon is both loved by the Lord and, at the same time, given a new name that refers to that love—also by the Lord.

6 Conclusion

The birth story of Solomon (2 Sam 12:24–25) is a unique example of its kind in the ancient Israelite historiography of the monarchic period. Though the birth name of the newborn child was “Solomon,” he received an additional name by the divine messenger, Nathan: Yedidyah, stating that “the Lord loved him.” The purpose and meaning of this name and the phrase should be understood against three complementary backgrounds: its immediate context (2 Samuel 10–12), its wider context in the story regarding Solomon’s rise to power (1 Kings 1–2), and its parallels in comparable ancient Near Eastern texts recounting the claims to the throne by usurpers and kings outside the royal line. The latter attempted to legitimize their kingship by introducing themselves as beloved of or chosen by patron divinities, occasionally taking a new throne name to reflect their status vis-à-vis the god or gods. This historical and literary phenomenon is clearly reflected from Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Egyptian, and Persian writings of different periods. It appears in Mesopotamian sources

¹²⁸ However, the name Yedidyah is alluded to in the book of Nehemiah. On this and the lack of any mention of Yedidyah in Chronicles, see Kalimi, *King Solomon: The Man and the Myth*, Chapter Six §IV, 2. For further similarities between the legend on Sargon and the Solomon narrative, see above, §4.2.1.1.

(regarding Sargon the Great of Akkad and Sargon II of Assyria), Hittite texts (regarding Ḫattušili III), Egyptian writings (regarding Hatshepsut and some other Pharaohs), and to some extent regarding Xerxes I of Persia (though he neither claims a new name nor divine *love*).

This comparative-historical discussion reveals that in ancient Israel, as in the surrounding cultures, one method of self-legitimation by usurpers was to claim that they had divine legitimization. In contrast to Knapp's claim that the similarities between these apologies in ancient Near Eastern cultures reflect similar situations rather than a common literary heritage,¹²⁹ it seems more likely that a tradition existed of such royal apologies with common core features, which were shared among the ancient Near Eastern cultures. This is seen especially in the cases of Sargon the Great and Ḫattušili III, who both emphasize patronage by Ištar (despite Ištar not being a native Hittite deity). That traditions regarding Sargon the Great were widely known in Ḫatti supports the conclusion that the connection is deliberate, and provides a rough parallel to the similar motif in 2 Sam 12:24d–25. This stands against Knapp's conclusion that Solomon's Succession Narrative is unusual in the ancient Near East, because it justifies Solomon's actions but does not legitimate Solomon's right to the throne itself.¹³⁰

Against the background of these parallels, the birth story and additional name of Solomon—Yedidyah—and the notice of his divine love in 2 Sam 12:24d–25 are seen to be closely related to Solomon's accession in 1 Kings 1–2. In fact, the former story in Samuel serves as a background, legitimization, and justification for the latter, and most likely stems from the same hand. Moreover, Solomon's birth story in 2 Samuel 10–12 and his coronation in 1 Kings 1–2 frame the entire succession narrative. Note also that Nathan, who supported Solomon in his competition with Adonijah (1 Kings 1), is the one who gave the name Yedidyah to Bathsheba's second-born child and communicated the divine love to him (2 Sam 12:24d–25).

129 See Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 45–46: "I contend that the recurrence of these motifs is not a product of later authors consciously drawing on the work of the earlier apologies; it seems unlikely that the content of most apologies diffused outside of the societies in which they originate.... These motifs, then, are not exclusive to any one society of the ancient Near East; they sprung up from the cultural and ideological similarities shared by these societies."

130 See Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 264–267, cf. 28–30. He excludes both 2 Samuel 11–12 and 1 Kgs 2:15, 22–24 (which also refer to Solomon's divine election) from the Succession Narrative.

Theoretically, the notion of divine love and this way of justifying a usurper in Israel could have been developed either independently or influenced by any of the above-mentioned surrounding cultures. If the latter, presumably it made its way from Mesopotamia to Israel. Also, the usurpation of Solomon, which is justified as the preference of the Lord (*“for it was his from the Lord,”* 1 Kgs 2:15), is broadly parallel to that of Sargon the Great’s usurpation, which is explained as the preference of the gods, particularly Inanna/Ištar. Moreover, the name “Yedidyah” is politically and ideologically comparable to the name “Šarru-kīn” (Sargon), and the phrase “the Lord loved him” is parallel to the phrase “Ištar loved me” in the Sargon Birth Legend. In both cases the intention is to bestow divine legitimization on the usurper. That is not necessarily to say that the Succession Narrative is drawing on these specific texts, but rather that it reflects similar traditions. In principle, these could have also found their way to Israel from Egypt or through the Hittite apology of Ḫattušili III, which was itself influenced by the Mesopotamian ones (but the Hittite apology does not refer explicitly to divine love or a new name).

In any case, rather than being unrelated to its context, the legitimization of Solomon in the Bible is fully in line with broader ancient Near Eastern traditions. The naming of Solomon “Yedidyah” and the affirmation that “the Lord loved him” are part and parcel of Solomon’s succession narrative, which provides divine legitimization for his usurpation described in 1 Kings 1–2, where this notion is reinforced (1 Kgs 2:15, 24).