

A Tradition of Defiance: The Peculiar Resilience of David, Ruth, and Yehudah

A surprising end note:

1.

II Samuel 24

(1) The anger of the LORD again flared up against Israel; and He incited David against them, saying, "Go and number Israel and Judah."... (9) Joab reported to the king the number of the people that had been recorded: in Israel there were 800,000 soldiers ready to draw the sword, and the men of Judah numbered 500,000. (10) But afterward David reproached himself for having numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, "I have sinned grievously in what I have done. Please, O LORD, remit the guilt of Your servant, for I have acted foolishly."

(11) When David rose in the morning, the word of the LORD had come to the prophet Gad, David's seer: (12) "Go and tell David, 'Thus said the LORD: I hold three things over you; choose one of them, and I will bring it upon you.'" (13) Gad came to David and told him; he asked, "Shall a seven-year famine come upon you in the land, or shall you be in flight from your adversaries for three months while they pursue you, or shall there be three days of pestilence in your land? Now consider carefully what reply I shall take back to Him who sent me."

(14) David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for His compassion is great; and let me not fall into the hands of men."

(15) The LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning until the set time; and 70,000 of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba... (17) When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, "I alone am guilty, I alone have done wrong; but these poor sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house!"

(18) Gad came to David the same day and said to him, "Go and set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." (19) David went up, following Gad's instructions, as the LORD had commanded... (24) But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I will buy them from you at a price. I cannot

שמואל ב כ"ד

(א) ויִסֶּף אֶת־יְהוָה לְחַרּוֹת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסַּח אֶת־דָּוִד בְּהִסּוֹם לָהּ מִגֹּת אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־יְהוּדָה... (ט) וַיֹּאבֵד יוֹאָב אֶת־מִסְפַּר מִפְקְדֵי־הָעָם אֶל־הַמִּלָּחָה וַתְּהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמֹנֶה מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף אִישׁ־חֵלֶל שֶׁלֶף חָרֵב וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה חֲמִש־מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף אִישׁ. (י) וַיֹּדַע לִב־דָּוִד אֲתָוֹ אַחֲרֵי־כֵן סָפַר אֶת־הָעָם (ס) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־יְהוָה חַטָּאתִי מֵאֲדָשׁ עָשִׂיתִי וְעַתָּה יְהוָה הַרְחֵם־נָפְלִי וְיִסְחָרֶנִּי וְיִרְחֹקֵנִי מִיָּדֶיךָ מֵאֵלֶיךָ

(יא) וַיָּקָם דָּוִד בִּבְקֹר (פ) וַיְדַבֵּר־יְהוָה הַיָּהּ אֶל־גֹּד הַנְּבִיא חֹזֶה דָּוִד לֵאמֹר. (יב) הֲלוֹךְ וְדַבַּרְתָּ אֶל־דָּוִד כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלֹשׁ אֲנֹכִי נוֹטֵל עֲלֶיךָ בַּחֲרֹלָה אֶחָת־מֵהֵם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה־לָּךְ. (יג) וַיֵּבֵא־גֹד אֶל־דָּוִד וַיִּגְדֵּלֵהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִתְבּוֹא לָהּ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וְרָעַב וְבִאֲרָצְךָ אִם־שְׁלִשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים נֹסֶה לְפָנֶיךָ וְהָיָה רִדְפָּךְ וְאִם־הָיִיתָ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים דָּבָר בְּאֲרָצְךָ עַתָּה הֵן יְהוָה הַחֲשִׁיבֶנִּי וְשָׁלַח בְּרַחֲמָיו

(יד) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־גֹּד צִרְיִי מֵאֲדָה נִפְלִי־נָא בְּיַד־יְהוָה כִּי־רַבִּים רַחֲמוֹ [הַחֲמִיּוֹ] וּבְיַד־אָדָם אֲלֹא־אֶפְלֶה.

(טו) וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה דָּבָר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מִהַבְּקָר וְעַד־עַתָּה מוֹעֵד וַיָּמָת מִן־הָעָם מִדּוֹן וְעַד־בְּאֵר שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָעִים אֶלֶף אִישׁ... (יז) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל־יְהוָה בְּרָאתָו וְאֶת־הַמִּלָּאָה וְהַמִּכָּה בָּעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי חַטָּאתִי וְאֲנֹכִי הַעֲלִיתִי וְאֵלֶּה הַצֹּאֵן מִן־עֵשׂוֹ תְהִי נָא יָדְךָ בִּי וּבְבֵית אָבִי. (יח)

(יח) וַיֵּבֵא־גֹד אֶל־דָּוִד בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ עֲלֶה־הָקָם לַיהוָה מִזְבֵּחַ בְּגֵרֶן אֲרֻנָּה [אַרְנוֹנָה] הַיִּבְסִי. (יט) וַיַּעַל דָּוִד כְּדַבַּר־גֹּד כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה... (כד) וַיֹּאמֶר הַמִּלָּחָה אֶל־אַרְנוֹנָה לֹא כִּי־קָנָה אֶקְנֶה מֵאוֹתָהּ בְּמַחֲרִיר וְלֹא אֶעֱלֶה לַיהוָה אֵלֶּהי עֲלֹת חֹנֶם וַיִּקֶּן דָּוִד אֶת־הַגֵּרֶן וְאֶת־הַבֹּמֶר בַּכֶּסֶף שְׁקָלִים חֲמִשִּׁים. (כה)

sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that have cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. (25) And David built there an altar to the LORD and sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. The LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague against Israel was checked.	וַיִּבֶן שָׁם דָּוִד מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיַּעַל עֹלֹת וַיִּשְׁלֹמִים וַיַּעֲתֶר יְהוָה לְאַרְצָא וַתַּעֲזָר הַמַּגֵּפָה מֵעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
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In the beginning:

In what ways does the ending of II Samuel resemble or echo the beginning of I Samuel? (sources 2-3)

<p>2</p> <p>I Samuel 1:1-8</p> <p>(1) There was a man from Ramathaim of the Zuphites, in the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. (2) He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other Peninnah; Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless. (3) This man used to go up from his town every year to worship and to offer sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts at Shiloh.—Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD there. (4) One such day, Elkanah offered a sacrifice. He used to give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; (5) but to Hannah he would give one portion only—though Hannah was his favorite—for the LORD had closed her womb. (6) Moreover, her rival, to make her miserable, would taunt her that the LORD had closed her womb. (7) This happened year after year: Every time she went up to the House of the LORD, the other would taunt her, so that she wept and would not eat.</p> <p>(8) Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying and why aren't you eating? Why are you so sad? Am I not more devoted to you than ten sons?"</p>	<p>שְׁמוּאֵל אֵלֶּיךָ אֵלֶּיךָ</p> <p>(א) וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִן־הַרְמָתִים צֹפִים מִהָר אֶפְרַיִם וּשְׁמוֹ אֶלְקָנָה בֶן־יֵרֹחָם בֶּן־אֵלִיהוּ בֶן־תּוֹהוּ בֶן־זֻפִּי אֶפְרַיִמִי. (ב) וָלוֹ שְׁתֵּי נָשִׁים שֵׁם אַחַת חַנָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית פְּנִינָה וַיְהִי לַפְּנִינָה יָלָדִים וּלְחַנָּה אִין יָלָדִים.</p> <p>(ג) וַעֲלָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מַעֲבִירוֹ מִמְּקוֹם לְהַשְׁתַּחֲוֹת וּלְזָבֹחַ לַיהוָה צִבְאוֹת בְּשִׁילָה וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בְנֵי־עֲלִי חֹפְנִי וּפְנִינָהס כַּהֲנִים לַיהוָה. (ד) וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיִּזְבַּח אֶלְקָנָה וְנָתַן לַפְּנִינָה אֲשֶׁתּוֹ וְלִכְל־בְּנֵיהָ וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ מִנּוֹת. (ה) וּלְחַנָּה יָתֵן מִנָּה אַחַת אֲפִים כִּי אֶת־חַנָּה אָהָב וַיְהוּה סָגַר רַחֲמָהּ. (ו) וַתַּעֲסַתָּהּ צָרָתָהּ גַּם־כָּעַס בַּעֲבוּר הַרְעָמָה כִּי־סָגַר יְהוָה בְּעַד רַחֲמָהּ. (ז) וְכֹל יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה מִדֵּי עֲלֹתָהּ בְּבֵית יְהוָה כִּן הָיְתָה וְחַנָּה וְיֵלֵךְ הָיְתָה.</p> <p>(ח) וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ אֶלְקָנָה אִשְׁשָׁה חַנָּה לָמָּה תִּבְכִּי וְלָמָּה לֹא תֹאכְלִי וְלָמָּה יֵרַע לְבָבְךָ הַלֹּא אֲנִכִּי טוֹב לִּי מֵעֲשֶׂרָה בָנִים.</p>
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<p>3</p> <p>I Samuel 1:9-16</p> <p>(9) After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose.—The priest Eli was sitting on the seat near the</p>	<p>שְׁמוּאֵל אֵלֶּיךָ אֵלֶּיךָ</p> <p>(ט) וַתֵּקֶם חַנָּה אַחֲרֵי אֲכָלָהּ בְּשִׁילָה וְאַחֲרֵי שְׁתָּה וַעֲלִי הַכֹּהֵן יָשָׁב עַל־הַכִּסֵּא עַל־מְזוֹזֹת הַיֵּכָל יְהוָה.</p>
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<p>doorpost of the temple of the LORD.— (10) In her wretchedness, she prayed to the LORD, weeping all the while. (11) And she made this vow: “O LORD of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the LORD for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head.”</p> <p>(12) As she kept on praying before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth. (13) Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk.</p> <p>(14) Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!” (15) And Hannah replied, “Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the LORD. (16) Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress.”</p>	<p>(י) והיא מרת נפש ותתפלל עליה ויבכה תבכה. (יא) ותדר נדר ותאמר יהוה צבאות אם-ראה תראה בעני אמתך וזכרתני ולא-תשכח את-אמתך ונתתה לאמתך זרע אנשים ונתתני ליהוה רלימי חיו ומורה לא-יטלה טל-ראשו.</p> <p>(יב) והיה כי הרבתה להתפלל לפני יהוה ועלי שמר את-פיה. (יג) וחנה היא מדברת על-לבה רק שפתיה נעות וקולה לא ישמע ויחשבה עלי לשכרה.</p> <p>(יד) ויאמר אליה עלי עד-מתי תשתכרין הסירי את-ייגה מעליך. (טו) ותען חנה ותאמר לא אדני אשה קשת-רוח אנכי וזין ושכר לא שתיתי ואשפה את-נפשי לפני יהוה. (טז) אלי-תתן את-אמתך לפני בת-בליעל כמרב שייתי וכעסי דברתי עד-הנה.</p>
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The mark of a hero:

In *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell compares stories from different times and places and shows how most of their heroes have to face similar challenges and must therefore exhibit certain similar traits. The following quotes from his book describe the hallmark of a hero (source 4), and one of the typical obstacles or villains that delay the hero on the other (source 5). Using Campbell's terms, who are the “threshold guardians” in the beginning of I Samuel (sources 2-3), and what makes Hannah the hero? And in what way does David resemble Hannah in source 1?

4.

Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become... He does not mistake apparent changelessness in time for the permanence of Being, nor is he fearful of the next moment... as destroying the permanent with its change. (209)

5.

Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

...the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance to the zone of magnified power. Such custodians bound the world... standing for the limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon. (64)

The two kings:

<p>6. I Samuel 28:15-20</p>	<p>שמואל א כ"ח:ט"ו-כ"</p>
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<p>(15) Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me and brought me up?" And Saul answered, "I am in great trouble. The Philistines are attacking me and God has turned away from me; He no longer answers me, either by prophets or in dreams. So I have called you to tell me what I am to do." (16) Samuel said, "Why do you ask me, seeing that the LORD has turned away from you and has become your adversary? (17) The LORD has done for Himself as He foretold through me: The LORD has torn the kingship out of your hands and has given it to your fellow, to David, (18) because you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His wrath upon the Amalekites. That is why the LORD has done this to you today. (19) Further, the LORD will deliver the Israelites who are with you into the hands of the Philistines. Tomorrow your sons and you will be with me; and the LORD will also deliver the Israelite forces into the hands of the Philistines." (20) At once Saul flung himself prone on the ground, terrified by Samuel's words. Besides, there was no strength in him, for he had not eaten anything all day and all night.</p>	<p>(טו) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל-שָׁאוּל לָמָּה הֲרָגְתָּנִי לְהַעֲלֹת אֹתִי וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל צָר-לִי מְאֹד וּפְלִשְׁתִּים וְנָלְחָמִים בִּי וְאֱלֹהִים סָר מֵעָלַי וְלֹא-עֲנִי עוֹד גַּם בְּיַד-הַנְּבִיאִים גַּם-בַּחֲלֻמּוֹת וְאֶקְרָאָה לָּהֶם לְהוֹדִיעַנִי מָה אֲעֲשֶׂה. (ס) (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל וְלָמָּה תִּשְׁאַלֵנִי וַיְהִינֶה סָר מֵעָלַי וְהִנֵּי עֹרֶה. (יז) וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לֹא כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר בְּיַד יִשְׁכָּרְעֵל יְהוָה אֶת-הַמִּמְלָכָה מִיָּדָה וַיִּתְּנָה לְרַעְיָה לְדָוִד. (יח) כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמַעַתְּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה וְלֹא-עָשִׂיתָ חֲרוֹן-אָפֶיךָ בְּעַמְלֹק עַל-כֵּן הִדְּבַר הָיָה עֲשֶׂה-לָּהּ יְהוָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. (יט) וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה גַּם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ בְּיַד-פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמָחָר אֲתָה וּבָנֶיךָ עִמָּי גַּם אֶת-מִחְנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל יִתֵּן יְהוָה בְּיַד-פְּלִשְׁתִּים. (כ) וַיִּמָּתֶר שָׁאוּל וַיִּפֹּל מֵלֵא-קוֹמָתוֹ אַרְצָה וַיֵּרָא מְאֹד מִדְּבַר שְׁמוּאֵל גַּם-כֹּחַ לֹא-הָיָה בּוֹ כִּי לֹא אָכַל לֶחֶם כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה.</p>
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<p>7. I Samuel 17:33-50 (33) But Saul said to David, "You cannot go to that Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth!" (34) David replied to Saul, "Your servant has been tending his father's sheep, and if a lion or a bear came and carried off an animal from the flock,..(37) The LORD," David went on, "who saved me from lion and bear will also save me from that Philistine."...</p>	<p>שְׁמוּאֵל א' י"ז:ל"ג-ג' (לג) וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל אֶל-דָּוִד לֹא תוּכַל לִלְחֹם אֶל-הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַזֶּה לְהַלָּחֵם עִמָּי כִּי-נָעַר אַתָּה וְהוּא אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה מִנְעָרָיו. (ס) (לד) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-שָׁאוּל רַעְיָה הָיָה עֲבָדְךָ לְאֵבִיו בְּצֹאן וּבָקָה הָאֲרִי וְאֶת-הַדּוֹב וְנִשְׂאָ שָׁה מִהָעֵדֶר... (לז) וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הִצִּילָנִי מִיַּד הָאֲרִי וּמִיַּד הַדּוֹב הוּא יִצִּילֵנִי מִיַּד הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי הַזֶּה.</p>
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Why now?

8.

Yoram Hazony, The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture:

...biblical ethics proposes to evaluate human action from a completely different point of vantage than that of Greek ethics – a point of vantage associated with the life of the nomad, who observes and evaluates all that goes on in human life from a perspective that is outside the political state and

free of any prior commitment to it...Independence of judgement and action, then, depends on an ability to resist the creeping advance of justified fears and unjustified commitments to human beings and their institutions – which together work to deprive the individual of his freedom to discern what is right and to act in its name. A vigilant maintenance of one's ability to resist these justified fears and unjustified commitments is thus basic to the ethics of a shepherd, the ethics of the History of Israel. (133-135)

Ultimately, it is the qualities associated with Judah that are vindicated by the narrative as being most suited for ruling over men, and this despite the fact that Joseph's political abilities... are recognized to be superior...the ability of the ruler to humble himself and change his ways is seen as the only hope of correcting the direction of the state when its off course. (72-73)

9.

Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces:

Only birth can conquer death...Within the soul, within the body social, there must be - if we are to experience long survival - a continuous "recurrence of birth"... to nullify the unremitting recurrence of death... (11-12)

Rachel Sharansky Danziger grew up in Jerusalem, where she completed degrees in philosophy and history and taught Tanach to new immigrants. Her MA focused on the way 18th century American protoevangelicals told their personal stories, and what their stories tell us about their experiences of emotions and self. As an educator, Rachel explores similar connections between storytelling, religion, and emotions in the Hebrew Bible. She blogs about Judaism, Israel and current affairs for the Times of Israel, Kveller, and other online venues.

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