

1–2 SAMUEL

In this commentary to 1–2 Samuel, Marvin A. Sweeney focuses on the qualities of leadership displayed by the major characters of the book. He reads 1–2 Samuel in relation to Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, which provide a comparative evaluation of the qualities of leadership displayed by Eli, Samuel, Saul, David, Ish-Bosheth, Abner, Abshalom, Joab, and others. Additionally, Sweeney provides an analysis of the synchronic, literary structure of Samuel, as well as a new theory regarding its composition. He also re-evaluates the role of 2 Samuel 21–24 within the synchronic literary structure of the book, arguing that the so-called Succession Narrative in 2 Samuel 9–20 is a northern Israelite composition that stands as a component of the Jehu Dynastic History. Highlighting the geography and cities of the land of Israel, Sweeney's commentary enables readers to understand the role that the land of Israel plays in the narrative of the book of Samuel.

Marvin A. Sweeney is Professor of Hebrew Bible at the Claremont School of Theology, California. He is the author of some seventeen volumes in the fields of Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies, such as *Jewish Mysticism* (2020); *The Pentateuch* (2017); *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah* (2008); *King Josiah of Judah* (2001); and commentaries on Kings (OTL, 2007); Isaiah 1–39 (FOTL, 1996); Isaiah 40–66 (FOTL, 2016); Jeremiah (Illuminations, 2 vols., in press); Ezekiel (ROT, 2013); the Twelve Prophets (BO, 2 vols., 2000); and Zephaniah (Hermeneia, 2003).

NEW CAMBRIDGE BIBLE COMMENTARY

GENERAL EDITOR: Ben Witherington III

HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT EDITOR: Bill T. Arnold

EDITORIAL BOARD

Bill T. Arnold, *Asbury Theological Seminary*
 James D. G. Dunn, *University of Durham*
 Michael V. Fox, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*
 Robert P. Gordon, *University of Cambridge*
 Judith M. Gundry, *Yale University*

The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (NCBC) aims to elucidate the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures for a wide range of intellectually curious individuals. While building on the work and reputation of the Cambridge Bible Commentary popular in the 1960s and 1970s, the NCBC takes advantage of many of the rewards provided by scholarly research over the last four decades. Volumes utilize recent gains in rhetorical criticism, social scientific study of the Scriptures, narrative criticism, and other developing disciplines to exploit the growing advances in biblical studies. Accessible jargon-free commentary, an annotated “Suggested Readings” list, and the entire *New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition* (NRSVue) text under discussion are the hallmarks of all volumes in the series.

PUBLISHED VOLUMES IN THE SERIES

The Pastoral Epistles, Scot McKnight
The Book of Lamentations, Joshua Berman
Hosea, Joel, and Amos, Graham Hamborg
1 Peter, Ruth Anne Reese
Ephesians, David A. deSilva
Philippians, Michael F. Bird and Nijay K. Gupta
Acts, Craig S. Keener
The Gospel of Luke, Amy-Jill Levine and Ben Witherington III
Galatians, Craig S. Keener
Mark, Darrell Bock
Psalms, Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr
Matthew, Craig A. Evans
Genesis, Bill T. Arnold
The Gospel of John, Jerome H. Neyrey
Exodus, Carol Meyers
1–2 Corinthians, Craig S. Keener
James and Jude, William F. Brosend II
Judges and Ruth, Victor H. Matthews
Revelation, Ben Witherington III

1–2 *Samuel*



Marvin A. Sweeney

Claremont School of Theology, California

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-47261-6 — 1 — 2 Samuel
Marvin A. Sweeney
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108472616

DOI: 10.1017/9781108560795

© Marvin A. Sweeney 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Sweeney, Marvin A. (Marvin Alan), 1953– author.

TITLE: 1–2 Samuel / Marvin A. Sweeney.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2023. | Series: New Cambridge Bible commentary | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023014151 (print) | LCCN 2023014152 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108472616 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108460040 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108560795 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Bible. Samuel–Commentaries. | Leadership in the Bible. |

Kings and rulers–Biblical teaching.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BS1325.3 .S94 2023 (print) | LCC BS1325.3 (ebook) | DDC 222/.407–dc23/eng/20230425

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023014151>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023014152>

ISBN 978-1-108-47261-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-46004-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-47261-6 — 1 — 2 Samuel
Marvin A. Sweeney
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

*For
Soo
Song of Songs 2:1*

Contents



<i>List of Supplementary Sections</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>A Word about the Names of G-d</i>	xvii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Canonical Role	1
Textual Versions	2
Synchronic Literary Form	6
Diachronic Considerations	8
Theological and Historical Considerations	16
2 SUGGESTED READINGS ON SAMUEL	21
Commentaries	21
Surveys of Research	22
Text Editions and Studies	23
Former Prophets/Deuteronomistic History	23
Methodological Issues	24
Historical and Archeological Studies	24
Other Useful Studies	24
3 COMMENTARY PART I: THE RULE OF THE HOUSE OF ELI – 1 SAMUEL 1–7	26
Samuel's Introduction to the House of Eli – 1 Samuel 1:1–4:1a	27
Samuel's Birth and Placement at Shiloh – 1 Samuel 1:1–2:11	33
YHWH's Condemnation of the House of Eli – 1 Samuel 2:12–4:1a	36
The Philistine Defeat of Israel at Aphek and the Capture of the Ark – 1 Samuel 4:1b–7:17	40
The Account of the Philistines' Defeat of Israel and Capture of the Ark of the Covenant – 1 Samuel 4:1b–22	42
	ix

The Sojourn of the Ark in Philistine Territory – 1 Samuel 5:1–12	47
The Philistines' Return of the Ark to Israel – 1 Samuel 6:1–7:1	50
Samuel's Rule over Israel – 1 Samuel 7:2–17	56
Samuel's Institution of Kingship under Saul ben Kish – 1 Samuel 8–12	60
The People's Demand for a King – 1 Samuel 8:1–22	63
Samuel's Anointing of Saul as King of Israel – 1 Samuel 9:1–10:16	66
The People's Choice of Saul at Mizpah – 1 Samuel 10:17–27	75
Saul's Deliverance of Jabesh Gilead – 1 Samuel 11:1–15	77
Samuel's Instruction Speech Concerning Obligations to YHWH – 1 Samuel 12:1–25	82
4 COMMENTARY PART II: THE RULE OF KING SAUL BEN KISH OF ISRAEL – 1 SAMUEL 13–31	88
Saul's Rejection as King in Battle against the Philistines – 1 Samuel 13–14	89
Saul's Rejection as King for Disobeying YHWH and Samuel's Secret Anointing of David – 1 Samuel 15:1–16:13	100
Saul's Depression and David's Efforts to Relieve It – 1 Samuel 16:14–23	109
David's Victory over Goliath – 1 Samuel 17:1–58	111
The Love of Saul's Own Children for David in Contrast with Saul's Jealousy – 1 Samuel 18:1–30	122
Saul's Further Attempt to Kill David – 1 Samuel 19:1–24	127
David's Escape from Saul – 1 Samuel 20:1–21:1	130
David Seeks Assistance from Ahimelech of Nob and Achish of Gath – 1 Samuel 21:2–16	135
Saul's Pursuit of David and Slaughter of the Priests of Nob – 1 Samuel 22:1–23	139
David's Defense of Keilah and Saul's Continuing Pursuit in Judah – 1 Samuel 23:1–28	143
David's Encounter with Saul at Ein Gedi – 1 Samuel 24:1–23	147
David's Marriage to Abigail the Widow of Nabal the Calebite – 1 Samuel 25:1–44	150
David Spares Saul at Hachilah – 1 Samuel 26:1–25	158
David Becomes a Philistine Vassal – 1 Samuel 27:1–12	162
Saul's Encounter with the Ghost of Samuel Through the Witch of Endor – 1 Samuel 28:1–25	165
The Philistines' Dismissal of David – 1 Samuel 29:1–11	170
David's Defense of Ziklag – 1 Samuel 30:1–31	172
Saul's Tragic Death at Mt. Gilboa – 1 Samuel 31:1–13	178

<i>Contents</i>	xi
5 COMMENTARY PART III: DAVID'S RISE TO POWER AS KING OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL – 2 SAMUEL 1:1–5:3	182
David's Mourning for the Deaths of Saul and Jonathan – 2 Samuel 1:1–27	183
The Reign of King David ben Jesse in Judah and the Reign of King Ish-Bosheth ben Saul in Israel – 2 Samuel 2:1–4:12	189
David's Accession to the Throne of Judah in Hebron – 2 Samuel 2:1–32	190
The War between the House of Saul and the House of David – 2 Samuel 3:1–4:12	197
The Continuation of the War between the House of Saul and the House of David – 2 Samuel 3:1–5	197
The Assassination of Abner – 2 Samuel 3:6–39	199
The Assassination of Ish-Bosheth ben Saul – 2 Samuel 4:1–12	204
6 COMMENTARY PART IV: THE REGNAL ACCOUNT OF KING DAVID BEN JESSE OVER ISRAEL – 2 SAMUEL 5:1–24:25/1 KINGS 2:11	208
The Initial Regnal Account of King David ben Jesse of Israel and Judah – 2 Samuel 5–8	209
David's Anointing as King of Israel – 2 Samuel 5:1–3	210
The Introductory Regnal Formula for David's Reign over Israel and Judah – 2 Samuel 5:4–5	210
David's Conquest of Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 5:6–10	211
Hiram's Recognition of David – 2 Samuel 5:11–12	213
The Birth of David's Sons in Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 5:13–16	214
David's Defeat of the Philistines – 2 Samuel 5:17–25	214
David's Transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 6:1–19	216
David's Refusal to Father Sons with Michal bat Saul – 2 Samuel 6:20–23	221
YHWH's Eternal Covenant of Kingship with David and Israel – 2 Samuel 7:1–29	222
The Summation of David's Reign – 2 Samuel 8:1–18	227
David's Exercise of Kingship – 2 Samuel 9:1–24:25	232
David and Mephibosheth – 2 Samuel 9:1–13	233
David's Adultery with Bath Sheba – 2 Samuel 10–12	236
David's War with King Hanun of Ammon – 2 Samuel 10:1–19	237
David's Adultery with Bath Sheba and the Consequences of His Actions – 2 Samuel 11:1–12:31	240
Revolts against David ben Jesse – 2 Samuel 13:1–20:26	251

David's Failures of Leadership of His Own House – 2 Samuel 13:1–14:33	252
The Rape of Tamar – 2 Samuel 13:1–22	252
Abshalom's Murder of Amnon – 2 Samuel 13:23–29	256
Abshalom's Return to David's Court – 2 Samuel 14:1–33	257
Revolts against the House of David – 2 Samuel 15:1–20:26	263
Abshalom's Garnering of Support among the People of Israel and Judah – 2 Samuel 15:1–12	264
David's Flight from Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 15:13–16:14	267
Abshalom's Entry into Jerusalem and Consultation with His Advisors – 2 Samuel 16:15–17:23	272
David's Victory over Abshalom – 2 Samuel 17:24–19:9 (NRSVue, 19:8)	277
David's Return to Jerusalem – 2 Samuel 19:10–44 (NRSVue, 19:9–43)	285
Sheba's Revolt – 2 Samuel 20:1–26	290
Further Actions by King David ben Jesse of Israel and Judah – 2 Samuel 21:1–24:25	295
David's Disposition of the Sons of Saul – 2 Samuel 21:1–14	297
David's Victories over the Philistine Giants – 2 Samuel 21:15–23:39	300
David's Selection of the Threshing Floor of Araunah as the Site for YHWH's Altar – 2 Samuel 24:1–25	315
<i>Author Index</i>	321
<i>Subject Index</i>	325

Supplementary Sections



A Closer Look at Samuel's Ordination	39
A Closer Look at the Ark Narrative	41
A Closer Look at YHWH and Dagon	49
A Closer Look at the Emergence of Kingship in Benjamin	60
A Closer Look at the People's Demand for a King	65
A Closer Look at Saul's Lack of Qualities for Leadership	70
A Closer Look at the LXX Text of 1 Reigns (Samuel) 11:1	79
A Closer Look at the Two Versions of 1 Samuel 17	117
A Closer Look at the Textual Versions of 1 Samuel 18	124
A Closer Look at the Massacre of the Priests of Nob	142
A Closer Look at Saul's Suicide	180
A Closer Look at the Battle at Gibeon	195
A Closer Look at Jerusalem	212
A Closer Look at the Transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem	218
A Closer Look at YHWH's Promise of an Eternal Dynasty for David	225
A Closer Look at Joab's Role in Abshalom's Return to Court	261
A Closer Look at the So-Called Appendices in 2 Samuel 21-24	296

Preface



My interest in 1–2 Samuel goes back to my undergraduate years at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1971–1975, where I was a double major in Political Science, with concentrations in US Constitutional Law and International Relations, and Religious Studies, with concentrations in Hebrew Bible, Judaism and Jewish Thought, and Asian Religions. I am especially indebted to my undergraduate advisor in Religious Studies, Professor David L. Petersen, who did much to introduce me to the field of Hebrew Bible studies and who supervised my 1974 undergraduate thesis on the origins of Davidic Kingship, which enabled me to develop my interests in political science and Hebrew Bible studies. His ongoing friendship and mentorship have been special blessings throughout my career.

I would also like to acknowledge two other mentors who enabled me to develop my interests in Judean kingship and 1–2 Samuel. Professor Thomas W. Mann, my de facto advisor as a special, non-degree student at the Princeton Theological Seminary, taught a course on Religion and Politics in Ancient Israel in the Spring 1976 semester that greatly stimulated my interest in this area. Professor Antony F. Campbell SJ, z'l, taught a course on 1–2 Samuel while on leave at the Claremont School of Theology in the Spring 1977 semester that played a key role in deepening my knowledge of 1–2 Samuel and the Deuteronomistic History in the context of my Ph.D. studies. His ongoing friendship was another special blessing throughout the rest of his life during my tenure as a Professor at Claremont School of Theology. His memory is a blessing.

I am also grateful to Professor Bill T. Arnold, Hebrew Bible Editor for the New Cambridge Bible Commentary series, and Beatrice Rehl, Publisher, Religious Studies at Cambridge University Press, for their invitation to contribute the volume on Samuel to the series and their guidance in its production. I am honored to follow Professor Peter R. Ackroyd, z'l,

author of the earlier Cambridge Bible Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel, from whose work in Samuel, Isaiah, and other areas I have learned immensely throughout my career. I am indebted to copyeditor Robert Holden, who saved me from many mistakes. Any remaining are my own responsibility. I am grateful to my Research Associate, Mr. Hyunghee Kim, Ph.D. Student in Hebrew Bible at the Claremont School of Theology, for preparing the indices for this volume.

Although I am especially indebted to my mentors named here and to many others, I am also especially indebted to my lovely wife, Dr. Soo J. Kim Sweeney. She, too, is a Hebrew Bible scholar, and it is her love, support, and expertise that has seen me through major transitions in life, the writing of this commentary, and so much more. I therefore dedicate this volume to her with love.

A Word about the Names of G-d



In keeping with the practice of some circles in Judaism, this commentary uses YHWH, L-rd, and G-d as designations for G-d. Such practice is intended to acknowledge the holiness of the Divine.

The text of the NRSVue retains the full spelling of these terms in keeping with contractual requirements for use of the NRSVue.

Abbreviations



AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , 6 vols. D. N. Freedman et al. (eds.). GardenCity: Doubleday, 1992
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANEM	Ancient Near Eastern Monographs
ANEP	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> . J. B. Pritchard (ed.). Princeton, 1969
ANET	<i>The Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> . J. B. Pritchard (ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1907, 1974
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BO	Berit Olam
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CH	Codex Hammurabi
ConBibOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
DDD ²	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> , 2nd ed. K. van der Toorn et al. (eds.). Leiden: Brill, 1999
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert

DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
EBR	<i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception</i> , 20 vols. to date. H.-J. Klauck et al. (eds.). Berlin and New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2009–present
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religionen und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HALOT	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , 5 vols. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner (eds.). Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999
HCKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBT	Interpreting Biblical Texts
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible and Old Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic text
NEAEHL	<i>New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , 5 vols. E. Stern et al. (eds.). Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society; Carta, 1993, 2008
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NJPS	New Jewish Publication Society version
NRSVue	New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OT Guides	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
ResBibS	Resources for Biblical Study
ROT	Reading the Old Testament commentary series, Smyth and Helwys Press
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

List of Abbreviations

xxi

SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Study Monograph Series
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , 17 vols. G. J. Botterweck et al. (eds.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974–2021
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZBK/AT	Zürcher Bibelkommentar Altes Testament