



The ark of the covenant as divine representation of God: An exegetical analysis of 2 Samuel 6

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Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts in Ancient Languages with Semitic Languages* at the North-West University

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Graduation: June2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Firstly, I would like to thank my mother Amanda Wepener, grandmother Elize Janse van Rensburg, and my fiancée Jean Thomas for supporting my dreams and aspirations from the very beginning of this journey. It has been my dream since I was a little girl to reach this achievement, and I could not have achieved it without their continued support and motivation throughout the duration of this study. Thank you also to every single family member and friend for their support, words of motivation, and kind prayers. I remember my dear aunt Rina Venter who passed away last year, always sending such kind messages with words of support and motivation, and always letting me know how proud she was of me for chasing my dreams and coming so far. I know from heaven she is celebrating this victory with us.

Secondly, I would like to thank my mentors at the NWU Faculty of Theology, especially Dr. Godwin Mushayabasa and Dr. Lekgetho Moretsi who inspired my love for Biblical Hebrew, and who have provided me with several opportunities to further my knowledge of the field. And of course, I could not express my gratitude enough to my incredible and supportive supervisor, Prof. Gideon Kotzé. Your guidance with this study has greatly helped me to better myself, and I would not have come this far without you. I will forever be eternally grateful to you. Thank you for supporting my ideas, for always lending an ear, and helping me achieve order from the chaos.

Lastly, I would not have been able to start or complete this study without God. Through every word, He has guided me and has given me the wisdom to write this study. Therefore, I dedicate this study and all future research of mine to the glory of God. May my work be a testimony of Your grace, guidance, and love.

ABSTRACT:

The ark of the covenant, also referred to as the ark of God, or the ark of the Lord, was the most powerful and most important symbol of the ancient Israelite world, especially during the conquest and settling of the promised land. It held immense power and supremacy as it not only contained the tablets of the covenant made between God and the Israelites, better known as the Ten Commandments, but it was also seen as the footstool or throne of God, thereby linking heaven and earth. Yet today, the most significant function of the ark of the covenant is often overlooked in media, discussions, and research on the topic, and that is that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of the divine and holy presence of God. There are various biblical passages that associate the ark of the covenant with the presence of God, but the text that stands out most prominently is the narrative of 2 Samuel 6. This narrative deals with the transfer of the ark of the covenant to the city of Jerusalem by King David, and the text provides several unique ways in which the idea that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of God's presence is strengthened throughout the narrative. Therefore, the Masoretic text of 2 Samuel 6 will be examined through a close reading of the text in order to determine how the association of God's presence with the ark of the covenant functions in the passage. The methodology of a close reading of the 2 Samuel 6 text will be incorporated to answer the main research question, and that is the question of how the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 uniquely portrays the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence as part of its content. With this in mind, the description and functions of the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus, the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6, and David as the main character of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 will also be discussed to help achieve a satisfactory outcome to the main research question posed. The aim of this study is to describe how a close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6 will aid in showing how the narrative employed unique ways to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence, and how this argument is re-iterated throughout the narrative.

KEY TERMS:

The ark of the covenant, the ark of God, the ark of the Lord, God, 2 Samuel 6, divine presence, David, translation, interpretation, grammatical analysis, narrative discussion, exegetical analysis, close reading

OPSOMMING:

Die verbondsark, ook verwys na as die ark van God, of die ark van die Here, was die kragtigste en belangrikste simbool van die antieke Israelitiese wêreld, veral tydens die verowering en vestiging van die beloofde land. Dit het geweldige mag en oppergesag verteenwoordig, aangesien dit nie net die tablette van die verbond tussen God en die Israeliete, beter bekend as die Tien Gebooe, bevat het nie, maar dit is ook gesien as die voetbank of troon van God, wat die hemel en aarde verbind het. Tog word die belangrikste funksie van die verbondsark vandag dikwels oor die hoof gesien in die media, besprekings, en navorsing oor die onderwerp, en dit is dat die verbondsark gefunksioneer het as 'n voorstelling van die goddelike en heilige teenwoordigheid van God. Daar is verskeie Bybelse gedeeltes wat die verbondsark met die teenwoordigheid van God assosieer, maar die teks wat die prominentste uitstaan is die verhaal van 2 Samuel 6. Hierdie narratiewe handel oor die oordrag van die verbondsark na die stad van Jerusalem deur Koning Dawid, en die teks bied verskeie unieke maniere waarop die idee dat die verbondsark as 'n voorstelling van God se teenwoordigheid gefunksioneer het, deur die hele narratiewe beklemtoon en versterk word. Daarom sal die Masoretiese teks van 2 Samuel 6 ondersoek word deur 'n noukeurige lees van die teks om te bepaal hoe die assosiasie van God se teenwoordigheid met die verbondsark in die gedeelte funksioneer. Die metodologie van 'n noukeurige lees van die teks van 2 Samuel 6 sal geïnkorporeer word om die hoofnavorsingsvraag te beantwoord, en dit is die vraag hoe die narratiewe van 2 Samuel 6 die verbondsark op 'n unieke manier uitbeeld as 'n voorstelling van God se teenwoordigheid as deel van sy inhoud. Met dit in gedagte, sal die beskrywing en funksies van die verbondsark in die boek Eksodus, die narratiewe agtergrond van 2 Samuel 6, en Dawid as die hoofkarakter van die narratiewe van 2 Samuel 6 ook bespreek word om te help om 'n bevredigende uitkoms vir die hoofnavorsingsvraag te bereik. Die doel van hierdie studie is om te beskryf hoe 'n noukeurige lees van die teks van 2 Samuel 6 sal help om te wys hoe die narratiewe unieke maniere gebruik het om die verbondsark as 'n voorstelling van God se teenwoordigheid uit te beeld, en hoe hierdie argument deur die hele narratiewe herhaal word.

SLEUTELTERME:

Die verbondsark, die ark van God, die ark van die Here, God, 2 Samuel 6, goddelike teenwoordigheid, Dawid, vertaling, interpretasie, grammatikale analise, narratiewe bespreking, eksegetiese analise, noukeurige leeswerk

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

- BDB Brown, F., Driver, S.R. & Briggs, C.A. 1952. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- BHS Elliger, K. & Rudolph, W., eds. 1977. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- BHRG Van der Merwe, C.H.J., Naudé, J.A. & Kroeze, J.H. 2017. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. 2nd ed. New York: Bloomsbury.
- DCH Clines, D.J.A., ed. 1993-2011. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 8 Vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- GKC Gesenius, W. 1910. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by Kautzsch, E. Translated by Cowley, A.E. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- HALOT Koehler, Ludwig & Baumgartner, Walter. 1996. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 4 Vols. New York: E.J. Brill.
- JM Joüon, P. & Muraoka, T. 2011. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2nd ed. Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION:

1.1. General Background:

The English word ‘ark’ is derived from the Latin *arca*, and is a translation of the Hebrew word אֲרוֹן², which can be interpreted as referring to a chest, box, or container (Holladay, 1971:27). There are approximately between 180-200 references to the ark in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, including some twenty-two different names or titles for the ark. About a third of these references to the ark of the covenant appear in 1 and 2 Samuel specifically (Davies, 1962:222). The ark is traditionally referred to as “the ark of the covenant (law)” or “the ark of the testimony” (אֲרוֹן הָעֵדֻת), but the following designations of the ark are also attested in several books in the Hebrew Bible: “the ark of God” (אֱלֹהִים), “the ark of the Lord” (אֲרוֹן יְהוָה), “the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (הַבְּרִית), (אֲרוֹן יְהוָה), and “the ark of the covenant of God” (אֲרוֹן בְּרִית הָאֱלֹהִים). Also, in biblical passages relating to the ark of the covenant, the expression לְפָנֵי יְהוָה “before the Lord” can be understood as equivalent to the expression לְפָנֵי הָאֲרוֹן “before the ark”³ (Van Der Toorn & Houtman, 1994:216). The ark stood in the inner sanctuary, called the Most Holy Place (Exodus 26:34), within the tabernacle, and later within Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:6), and served as a repository for the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written⁴, and some passages in the Hebrew Bible indicate that the

¹ It should be noted that some sections in the general background are based on adaptations from my Honours submission, in which I explained the disappearance of the ark of the covenant from the Hebrew Bible. Reference Wepener (2022:4-7).

² Not to be confused with the usage of אֲרוֹן in Genesis 50:26, where אֲרוֹן refers to Joseph’s coffin, or in 2 Kings 12:9; 10:11; 2 Chronicles 24:8, where the usage of אֲרוֹן refers to a money chest.

³ Examples can be seen in the following passages: Judges 20:26-27; Joshua 6:6, 8; 1 Samuel 6:14-15; 2 Samuel 6:4-5, 13-14, 17; 1 Chronicles 16:1, 4, 6, 37.

⁴ See Exodus 25:16, 21; 40:20; Deuteronomy 10:1-5.

ark also contained the golden pot of manna⁵, Aaron's rod⁶, and the second set of stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments⁷ at some point (Douglas & Tenney, 1989:47-48). The ark also served as a powerful war palladium during Israel's various battles against several enemies, carried onto the battlefield to signify God's power, guidance, and presence with the Israelites (Knight, 2001:42). However, the most noteworthy function of the ark of the covenant was to serve as a meeting place within the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle where God would meet with Moses⁸, Aaron⁹, and Joshua¹⁰ to communicate His instructions and will to the Israelites¹¹. Thus, the most significant function of the ark of the covenant was to serve as a physical symbol of God's divine presence, dwelling in the midst of His people (Payne, 1975:307). The Israelites did not view the ark as an idol or a simple container, but rather as a throne upholding the glory of God¹². Therefore, the ark functioned as the most important and sacred object of the Israelite faith, representing an icon of God's presence, power, and holiness (Lemche, 1998:104).

The ark has a long history witnessed in the Hebrew Bible. In the first five books in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, known as the Pentateuch¹³, the ark is mentioned for the first time in Exodus 25:10-22 when instructions for the ark's construction were given to Moses by God, and later in Exodus 37:1-9 when the ark was constructed at Mount Sinai by a man named Bezalel. The installation of the ark in the tabernacle is also mentioned in Exodus 40:3-21, along with the ritual observances associated with the ark mentioned in the Books of Leviticus¹⁴ and Numbers¹⁵ (Renn, 2005:57). The majority of the ark's history comes from the Former Prophets (including Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings) and 1 and 2 Chronicles. In the Book of Joshua, the ark played a significant role at the crossing of the Jordan river, where the priests carrying the ark went before the

⁵ See Exodus 16:32-34.

⁶ See Numbers 17:1-11.

⁷ See especially Hebrews 9:4.

⁸ See Exodus 25:22; 30:36.

⁹ See Leviticus 16:2.

¹⁰ See Joshua 7:6.

¹¹ See especially Exodus 25:22.

¹² It is important to realize that the space between the two cherubim placed on top of the ark should be considered as God's dwelling place, from where God would speak with the Israelites, and the ark itself functioned as the "footstool" of God's throne (Comfort & Elwell, 2001:110). See the following biblical passages as examples: Exodus 25:22; 30:6; Numbers 7:89; 1 Samuel 4:4.

¹³ The ark of the covenant is mentioned specifically in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

¹⁴ See Leviticus 16:2.

¹⁵ See Numbers 3:31; 4:5; 7:89; 10:33, 35; 14:44.

people of Israel and stood in the middle of the Jordan river, causing the water of the river to part so that the Israelites could cross the Jordan on dry ground (Joshua 3:6-4:18). During the conquest of the land of Canaan, the ark played another vital role in the fall and ultimate conquest of the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:1-20), where the ark was carried for seven days around Jericho before the walls of the city finally fell down on the seventh day, symbolizing Israel's victory over Jericho (Kennedy & Harrelson, 1963:53). These two events already illustrate the power associated with the ark of the covenant, as it represented God's presence. In the Book of 1 Samuel, it is mentioned that the ark came to rest for a period of time in Shiloh (1 Samuel 4:3-4), where it remained until its capture by the Philistines after their victorious battle against the Israelites¹⁶ (1 Samuel 4:11). However, because the ark of the covenant caused severe illness and destruction in the Philistines' possession (1 Samuel 4:6), they returned the ark to Beth-Shemesh (1 Samuel 6:7-12). The ark was then sent to Kiriath-Jearim, where it would remain in the house of Abinadab for twenty years (1 Samuel 7:1-2) (Davis, 1944:41). It would be from this location in Kiriath Jearim (Baalath Judah) that King David brought up the ark to his city of Jerusalem, mentioned in the Book of 2 Samuel in 2 Samuel 6:1-23¹⁷, which forms part of the main events discussed in this study. Lastly, the ark came to its final resting place within the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 8:6)¹⁸ (Comfort & Elwell, 2001:111). From here, the ark of the covenant disappears from the biblical narrative, speculated by some¹⁹ to have been taken or destroyed by the Babylonians during the destruction of the First Temple in 587/586 BCE (Ackerman, 2000:103). What can be determined positively is that no evidence remains of what happened to the ark of the covenant after it was placed in the temple of Solomon. To conclude, in Jeremiah 3:16, the prophet Jeremiah foretold that in the coming times the ark of the covenant will no longer enter the minds of the people, meaning it will no longer be remembered. Thus, in those days, the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's divine presence will no longer hold significance (Green,

¹⁶ The ark of the covenant was taken from the Israelites by the Philistines because the Israelites started to view the ark as a weapon that could be used victoriously against Israel's enemies, failing to remember that the core function of the ark of the covenant was to represent God's holy presence (Ackerman, 2000:103).

¹⁷ The narrative account of the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem by David in 2 Samuel 6 is parallel to the narrative account in 1 Chronicles 13:1-14; 15:1-29; 16:1-3.

¹⁸ See also 2 Chronicles 5:7.

¹⁹ See also Davis (1944:41), Haran (1963:56), Kitchen (1980:11), and Williams (1989:35).

2008:73). This passage then concludes the references to the ark of the covenant in the Hebrew Bible.

To address the topic of this study, we find the idea of God's presence expressed in the key text of 2 Samuel 6. The text describes the return of the ark to Jerusalem by David after it was captured by the Philistines. However, the first attempt proves unsuccessful as David failed to transport the ark in the divinely prescribed manner, i.e. to be carried by Levitical priests. The second attempt proves successful, and the ark is finally welcomed in Jerusalem, accompanied by a lively procession (Firth, 2009:374). The holiness of the ark, as it represented the very presence of God, is emphasized throughout 2 Samuel 6. A few examples may be noted: The first example comes from verse 2, where the significance of the description of the ark as "the ark of God that is called by (the) name, the name of the Lord of armies who dwells (between) the cherubim on it" (אֵת אֲרֹן) emphasizes the

idea that the ark of the covenant represented the holy and powerful presence of God. This epithet combines the idea of God not only as a king, sitting enthroned on the ark between the cherubim, but as a warrior as well. Thus, the procession of the ark to Jerusalem may be seen as a victorious procession, celebrating the victory of God in battle, and His enthronement over all of Israel (Seow, 1992:391). The second example comes from verses 6 and 7, where the anger of God was kindled against Uzzah when he reached for the ark to prevent it from falling off the cart while on its journey to Jerusalem, leading to his immediate death. This action of Uzzah can be seen as a desecration of the holiness of the ark, and therefore the holiness of God Himself (Unger, 1967:203). Again, this example confirms the argument of the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence, since it is portrayed as such a holy and dangerous object that could lead to serious and deadly repercussions if not dealt with respectfully. A final example may be noted in verses 14-16, where the procession of the ark is accompanied by dancing and the playing of musical instruments. Especially in verse 14, King David's joy over the return of the ark to its people, and in a sense the return of the presence of God among the Israelites, is emphasized when he danced before the Lord (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה), represented by the ark, with all his might, exposing himself in the process (Fox, 1999:176). What can be concluded from David's exuberant dancing and extravagant expression of emotions is

that David did not only feel joy and gratitude over the most sacred and precious object of the Israelite faith coming to rest in his city, but most importantly, the presence of God as represented by the ark of the covenant would also find its final dwelling place in the city of David. From only a few examples mentioned, it is evident that 2 Samuel 6 can provide a clear and strong indication of how the presence of God was associated with the ark of the covenant, and how the importance of this association is signified and strengthened throughout the narrative. As this theme, i.e. how the text of 2 Samuel 6 reinforces the idea that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of the divine presence of God, has not received much attention in existing research, specifically on the passage of 2 Samuel 6:1-23, this study will be able to add valuable information as to how the 2 Samuel 6 text expresses the relationship between the presence of God and the ark of the covenant.

1.2. Problem Statement/Research Problem:

The unique ways in which the text of 2 Samuel 6 portrays how the ark of the covenant represented the divine presence of God deserves more attention and further research. The research problem that this study will address, therefore, is the question of how the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 uniquely portrays the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence as part of its content. The study will employ a close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6 to shed light on the idea of the narrative that the presence of God was represented by the ark of the covenant. In other words, this study will analyse the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to determine how uniquely the text expresses and supports the idea that the ark of the covenant represented God's presence.

With this in mind, the following sub-questions will be investigated and answered in the study:

1. How is the ark of the covenant depicted in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the Book of Exodus?
2. What is the function of the ark of the covenant expressed in the Book of Exodus?
3. What is the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6? How will a discussion of the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6 add to the argument of the study?
4. How is David portrayed as the key character of 2 Samuel 6? How will a discussion of David as the key character of 2 Samuel 6 add to the argument of the study?

The outcomes of the proposed study will include answering the above questions, and by answering these questions, the current investigation will be able to fill a gap in recent research on the topic.

1.3. Aim and Objectives:

The aim of the study is to adequately answer the main research question, which is to determine, through a close reading of the text, how the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 uniquely employs the idea that the ark of the covenant represented the presence of God as part of its content.

To this end, the objectives of the study are to find out:

1. How the ark of the covenant is depicted in the Book of Exodus, and how the Book of Exodus expresses the functions of the ark of the covenant.
2. How the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6 sheds light on the ark's representation of God's presence in the text.
3. How the characterization of David as the protagonist of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 sheds light on the ark's representation of God's presence in the text.

1.4. Central Theoretical Argument (Hypothesis):

The Central Theoretical Argument of the study is that the chosen approach of an exegetical analysis or close reading of 2 Samuel 6 will be appropriate and effective to answer the main research question stated. The hypothesis of the study is that the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 employs the idea that the ark of the covenant represented the divine presence of God in a unique way.

1.5. Organisation:

1.5.1. Chapter 2 – The ark of the covenant in Exodus:

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of how the ark of the covenant was described in the Book of Exodus, specifically in Exodus 25 and 37, so that the reader has a basic summary and visual understanding of how the ark of the covenant was depicted in the Book of Exodus. The functions of the ark of the covenant as discussed in the Book of Exodus will also be provided, as the functions of the ark of the covenant expressed in the Book of Exodus will aid in determining the unique ways employed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6

to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of the divine presence of God. Through a discussion of the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus, the reader will be able to understand and appreciate the topic of this study better.

1.5.2. Chapter 3 – Narrative Background of 2 Samuel 6:

Chapter 3 will consist of a discussion of the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6, specifically how the text of 2 Samuel 6 functions within the so-called “Ark Narrative”, and what significance a discussion of the “Ark Narrative” provides for an examination of the narrative background of the text. The objective of this chapter is to help the reader understand the larger cultural, historical, and literary context of the key text, and how the context of such will add to the understanding and appreciation of the study, especially as it pertains to the unique ways employed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of the divine presence of God.

1.5.3. Chapter 4 – Discussion of David as Key Character of 2 Samuel 6:

Chapter 4 will provide a discussion of David as the key character of 2 Samuel 6. An examination of David’s actions, emotions, and dialogue presented in the narrative is crucial to the understanding of how the ark of the covenant represented the presence of God in the chosen narrative. A short overview of the history of David will be provided first, to familiarize the reader with David’s character, followed by a discussion of how the text of 2 Samuel 6 employs David as the main character of the narrative to express the topic of this study. The characterization of David is an important topic to discuss, as the uniqueness of 2 Samuel 6’s employment of ideas about the ark of the covenant as a representation of God’s divine presence do not stand independent of the story’s main character.

1.5.4. Chapter 5 – Grammatical Analysis and Textual Discussion of 2 Samuel 6:

Chapter 5 will provide an in-depth grammatical analysis of the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 6, along with an in-depth textual discussion of the 2 Samuel 6 narrative, using the chosen methodology of exegetical analysis or close reading of the text. Such an examination is of extreme importance when it comes to the understanding of how the text uniquely expresses the idea that the ark of the covenant represented the holy presence of God.

1.5.5. Chapter 6 – Conclusion:

The last chapter will provide a final overview of the study with concluding remarks on how an exegetical analysis or close reading of the 2 Samuel 6 text aided in answering the main research question stated and how the aim and objectives of the study were reached. The chapter will be concluded with recommendations on further studies of the topic.

1.6. Methodology:

The chosen methodological approach for this study is an exegetical analysis, more specifically a close reading, of the text of 2 Samuel 6. Close reading can be understood as a detailed analysis of a certain biblical text, paying attention to its linguistic, artistic, structural, and literary components. The purpose of such an analysis is to determine how form and content work together to expose the underlying meaning and significance of the text (Coetzee, 1994:72). Close reading involves various different approaches, yet according to Noble (1993:131), the following two approaches stand out when dealing with biblical interpretation: (1) The historical-critical, or diachronic, approach. This approach helps us to better understand and interpret the source(s) or origin(s) of the text, traditions surrounding or influencing the text, developments within the text, and the historical, political, and cultural environments from which the text emerged (Noble, 1993:131); (2) The literary, or synchronic, approach. This approach helps us to better understand the text semantically, to determine the underlying meaning of the text (Noble, 1993:131). A few of the key aspects of the diachronic approach includes exploring the historical context of the text, theological development(s), linguistic analysis of the text, and the source and composition history of the text. The aim of this approach is to better understand the historical background of the text (Hasel, 1972:69-70). The synchronic approach provides a literary analysis of the text in its completed final form, without focusing on the various stages of the text's composition or the historical background of the text. The aim of this approach is to better understand the meaning of the text (Tate, 1991:18). In order to achieve a satisfactory exegetical analysis or close reading of the 2 Samuel 6 text, elements from the synchronic approach will be employed in this study so that a better interpretation of the meaning and significance of the text can be made²⁰. In addition, the

²⁰ See Deist (1979:23-27) for the importance of exegetical analysis of the Old Testament.

methodological approach used in this study can also be linked to the methodology of narrative exegesis, and certain elements from narrative exegesis are employed in the examination and interpretation of the key text. Narrative exegesis can be defined as an approach to textual criticism and interpretation where the text itself is examined, without much focus on its historical or cultural background. By focusing on the text or narrative itself, which includes an examination of key components of the text such as main characters, significant events, the setting of the narrative, as well as the employment of specific literary devices, the reader is better able to identify, interpret, and understand the meaning behind the text (Stuart, 2022:162). As this is one of the desired outcomes of this study, incorporating narrative exegesis into the chosen methodology seems necessary and appropriate.

The close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6 involves an analysis of:

- (1) the origin and functions of the ark of the covenant as discussed in the Book of Exodus;
- (2) the larger literary/narrative context of 2 Samuel 6, with emphasis on its function within the so-called “Ark Narrative”, as well as the characterization of David as he is presented as the key character of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6. An examination of the portrayal and functions of the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus, the larger literary/narrative background or context of 2 Samuel 6, and David as the protagonist of the story, is vital in determining the unique ways employed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of God’s presence;
- (3) the structure, grammar, and literary features of the text of 2 Samuel 6, accompanied with relevant references to cultural information. A verse-by-verse analysis and discussion will be provided for this section.

1.7. Conclusion:

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the general background of the study, as well as providing a discussion of the main research problem, aim and objectives of the study, the central theoretical argument or hypothesis, along with the chosen methodology of an exegetical analysis or close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6 that is employed to better understand the topic of the study. The next chapter will discuss the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus, focusing on the description and functions of the ark of the covenant expressed in the Book of Exodus.

CHAPTER 2 – THE ARK OF THE COVENANT IN EXODUS:

2.1. Introduction:

Before a discussion of the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence in 2 Samuel 6 will be provided, a description of the ark as indicated in the Book of Exodus, especially in Exodus 25, will be discussed first in this chapter so that the reader can understand and appreciate the study better, as a description of the ark will add to the significance of the topic at hand. The importance of the ark in light of the Book of Exodus will also be discussed, so that the importance of the ark in 2 Samuel 6 can be better interpreted and understood. A description of the ark of the covenant is meant to provide the reader with a visual idea of how the ark was portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the Book of Exodus. It is important to understand that the ark was not just a wooden box or container, but its design, materials used for construction, and contents have significant symbolic meaning, and add to the idea that the ark functioned as a visual representation of God's holiness, and more importantly, God's presence.

2.2. The origin and functions of ark of the covenant in Exodus²¹:

The ark's building instructions and specifications were given to Moses by God in Exodus 25:10-22. Under the supervision of Moses, Bezalel constructed the ark of the covenant on Mount Sinai in Exodus 37:1-9, as instructed by the earlier biblical passages in Exodus 25. The ark (Hebrew אֲרוֹן) was made in the form of a rectangular box or chest and was constructed from acacia²² wood. The use of acacia wood for the construction of the ark had a more practical than religious purpose since acacia trees were native to the Sinai region and thus easily accessible (Jacob, 1992:804). Acacia wood also added to the durability, strength, and overall resilience against rot and insects that the ark needed to have. As the Israelites were constantly on the move over an extended period of time, it was vital that the ark was constructed as strong, stable, and resilient as possible to survive the long journey set to take place (Bruckner, 2008:239-240). The ark itself measured two

²¹ It should be noted that some sections in the discussion of the origin and functions of the ark of the covenant in Exodus are based on adaptations from my Honours submission, in which I explained the disappearance of the ark of the covenant from the Hebrew Bible. Reference Wepener (2022:4-7).

²² Acacia in Hebrew is אַקָּצִיָּה, often encountered in its plural form אַקָּצִיָּה (Holladay, 1971:367).

and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. In modern measurements, it would have been approximately 114 centimetres by 68 centimetres by 68 centimetres. Pure gold was used to cover the ark from both the inside and the outside, being applied most probably for added protection and religious symbolism²³ (Price, 1997:204-205). The gold moulding placed around the top was not only meant to be decorative, but it also functioned as a rim to secure the lid of the ark in place that had the same dimensions. At the bottom of the ark were placed four feet to keep the ark from resting directly on the ground, as it was such a holy artefact and could not be tainted by standing on impure ground (Payne, 1975:306). Four gold rings were joined to these feet, two on each side of the ark. The poles that were then placed inside the rings were also made of acacia wood and overlaid with ordinary gold. The poles were used to move the ark from one location to another, and as stipulated in Exodus 25:15, they were never to be removed from the ark itself. Not only would the ark of the covenant then be able to remain as mobile as the people, accompanying them on their journey to the promised land (Lemche, 1998:105), but since the ark was sacred as it represented the holy presence of God, no one was permitted to touch it. When the ark needed to be moved, the priests would use the poles to lift the ark off the ground onto their shoulders, being extremely careful not to touch it. Therefore, it was important that the poles remained permanently in place (Davis, 1944:41). The upper portion of the ark consisted of a specially constructed slab of pure gold, made with the same dimensions as the chest itself. This was known as the 'atonement cover' or the more well-known 'mercy seat' (Hebrew כַּפֹּרֶת). The slab not only secured the lid in its place, but it also formed the base for the two cherubim placed on top (Price, 1997:205). The spiritual and religious significance of the 'atonement cover' will be discussed in the following paragraph. The cherubim (Hebrew כְּרוּבִים) that were moulded to the ends of the ark were made out of hammered gold. They were so placed that their wings would touch, facing each other, but their heads were bowed down and their eyes were directed to the ark itself, seeing as they were constantly in the presence of God. Their wings were meant to form a protective

²³ The use of gold to cover the ark with may have served as a representation of the magnificent, eternal, and immaculate nature of God Himself. (Lelièvre, 1958:24). The use of gold to cover and essentially protect the ark with seems appropriate for the construction of the ark as it was such a sacred object since it represented God's presence.

shield over the ark, emphasizing their role as the guardians of the ark and its contents (Falk, 2020:3). Placed inside the ark of the covenant were the 'Tablets of the Covenant Law', better known as the Ten Commandments, or as Exodus 25:16 simply states, the 'Testimony' (Hebrew **עֵדוּת**). They were to remain a permanent fixture within the ark, as we read in 2 Chronicles 5:10. These tablets were not made of clay, as was common practice, but they were formed from stone, stressing the everlasting nature of the covenant relationship made between God and His people. These tablets would serve not only as a witness to the agreement that God made with the Israelites, but also as a reminder of the obligations that God placed upon them (Hinson, 1997:68). Lastly, according to Exodus 40:20-21, after the stone tablets were placed in the ark of the covenant, Moses was instructed to bring the ark into the tabernacle and to place it in the area known as the 'holy of holies' or the 'most holy place' (the term 'holy of holies' is known in Hebrew as **קֹדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים**). A shielding curtain was then hung before the ark of the covenant to shield it from the Israelites who were not permitted by God to be in its presence (Alexander, 2016:167).

The importance of the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus and the reason why the Israelites protected and respected it so much is an important discussion point. The ark was the most important aspect of the whole tabernacle, since the very centre of God's presence could be found with the ark (Ryken, 2005:815). It was believed that the ark of the covenant functioned as the 'footstool' of God's heavenly throne, thereby linking together heaven and earth. The tablets would then be placed safely underneath His feet, in the ark of the covenant itself. The lid of the ark, together with the 'atonement cover' or 'mercy seat' and the two cherubim, functioned as the most sacred part of the ark. As the ark was considered to be the 'footstool' of God's throne, the space between the cherubim was considered as God's throne itself. Thereby, God's holy presence was located between the space of the two cherubim on top of the ark, as we find written in Exodus 25:22. This was the place where God would meet with Moses to give His instructions and commands to the people of Israel (Alexander, 2017:572). The 'atonement cover' or 'mercy seat' had another important function. The 'atonement cover' was used only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. It would be used by the high priest to not only make atonement

for his own sins, but for the nation of Israel's as well²⁴. The sprinkling of blood on the 'atonement cover' would symbolize that sin was forgiven and atonement had been made. It was also hoped that the sacrificial blood would protect the Israelites from the wrath of God (Ryken, 2005:820). Additionally, as the ark functioned as a container for the covenant obligations, it would seem an appropriate place where atonement could be made for the Israelites' failure to adhere to these very obligations (Alexander, 2017:573). The construction of the ark of the covenant and the establishment of the covenant between God and Israel is highly significant. It not only shows God's willingness to come down to earth and to dwell among the Israelites, thereby providing a representation of His presence through the ark, but it signals a new development in the relationship between God and His people. What we witness as well is a partial restoration of the intimacy that was experienced by humanity as they dwelled with God in the garden of Eden. Essentially, a broken bond was being mended by both God and the Israelites through the covenant placed in the ark of the covenant (Alexander, 2017:574-575). Finally, the presence of the Ten Commandments in the ark of the covenant, placed underneath God's feet, would serve as a reminder to the Israelites that God's divine law was present with His presence in and surrounding the ark (Youngblood *et al.*, 2004:58).

2.3. Conclusion:

This chapter discusses the portrayal of the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus, so that the reader understands when the ark of the covenant is first encountered in the Hebrew Bible, and how the Book of Exodus illustrates the ark of the covenant, so that the reader has a visual idea of how the ark of the covenant was depicted. This chapter also discusses the functions of the ark of the covenant as expressed in the Book of Exodus. The ark of the covenant is mostly known today for its famous contents, referring to the Ten Commandments, yet the most important function of the ark of the covenant was to serve as a representation of God's presence with His people, especially during their wilderness wanderings and their conquest of the promised land. This specific function of the ark of the covenant is emphasized throughout the study. A discussion of the depiction and functions of the ark of the covenant, especially in the Book of Exodus, aids in

²⁴ See especially the regulations concerning the sin offering in Leviticus 4:1-35.

determining and understanding the unique ways employed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to portray the ark as a representation of God's presence. The following chapter is concerned with the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6.

CHAPTER 3 – THE NARRATIVE BACKGROUND OF 2 SAMUEL 6:

3.1. Introduction:

This chapter provides a discussion of the narrative background of 2 Samuel 6, which is necessary to discuss in order to contextualise the text within its larger literary and cultural setting. Emphasis is placed on the function of 2 Samuel 6 within the so-called “Ark Narrative”, which provides a discussion of the ark of the covenant as it is encountered throughout the Hebrew Bible. The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with information on what came before and after the events set out in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, so that these very events can be better understood and interpreted when analysing the text of 2 Samuel 6 in Chapter 5. A discussion of the function of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 is important when analysing and interpreting the text of 2 Samuel 6 in order to determine how the text supports the argument that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of God’s presence.

3.2. The narrative background of 2 Samuel 6:

The narrative of 2 Samuel 6 forms part of what is known as the “Ark Narrative” (Campbell, 1979:39), which basically forms part of the discussion of the ark of the covenant throughout the Hebrew Bible, from where we first encounter the ark in Exodus 25:10-22 when the ark was constructed, until its last mention in 2 Chronicles 35:3 when the ark was placed in its final resting place in the temple of Solomon. The events mentioned in 2 Samuel 6 are particularly noteworthy and of importance within the so-called “Ark Narrative”, as it reaffirms three key elements encountered previously and continuously within the “Ark Narrative”: (1) The death of Uzzah in verses 6 and 7 serves as a powerful reminder of the ark’s sacredness and the dangers associated with the ark, as the ark represented the presence of God. Unfortunately, Uzzah had to pay the ultimate price with his life to serve as a reminder to David and the Israelites of the prescribed manner in which the ark should have been transported, and most importantly, that the ark was not to be touched²⁵ as this physical act would violate the holiness of the ark (Tsumura, 2019:109). The death of Uzzah and the ultimate punishment for not respecting the ark as

²⁵ Legislation concerning the correct handling and transportation of the ark of the covenant is mentioned several times in the Books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The legislation states that the ark should always be transported by its poles, carried on the shoulders of Levitical priests, and no one is permitted to touch the ark itself. If one should touch the ark, the punishment will result in death.

a representation of God's presence can be compared to the events mentioned in an earlier account set out in 1 Samuel 5-6, where the Philistines were harshly punished by God²⁶ after they took the ark from the Israelites and placed it alongside a statue of their god Dagon in Dagon's temple²⁷. The Philistines returned the ark to the people of Beth-Shemesh²⁸ after they observed the chaos and destruction that the ark caused in their possession, but even the people of Beth-Shemesh were punished with death after they looked unto the ark out of curiosity, causing 70 of their people to die²⁹ (Lelièvre, 1958:24). These events, together with the death of Uzzah in the 2 Samuel 6 narrative, confirm not only the holiness of the ark, as it is a representation of God's presence, but also the dangers that may come from not respecting the ark for what it represents, namely the presence of God Himself; (2) Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the ark as a representation of God's presence is mentioned several times. One example comes from Joshua 3 and 6, where the ark symbolized God's presence with Israel as the ark led the Israelites across the Jordan river³⁰ (Walton *et al.*, 2000:215) and around the city of Jericho³¹, leading them to their ultimate victory into the promised land (Lawrence, 2012:42). The narrative of 2 Samuel 6 also provides an excellent example of how the ark serves as a representation of God's presence, expressed especially through the acts of the lead character of the narrative, King David. A full discussion of this last point will be provided below in Chapter 4 as this forms part of the main topic of the study; (3) An important contrast between the kingship of Saul and the kingship of David is introduced and highlighted in the 2 Samuel 6 narrative, especially in verses 20-23. Under Saul's reign, the ark of the covenant was left abandoned for some 20 years in the house of Abinadab³². The abandonment, and ultimate rejection, of the ark of the covenant and the presence of God it represented would result in the decline of Saul's kingship, and his rejection by God as king of Israel (Shin, 2012:89). David's actions, especially his desire to restore the ark of the covenant to a place of recognition and prominence among the Israelites in his city of Jerusalem, stand in a strong contrast to the actions of Saul. Ultimately, David's actions and his recognition

²⁶ See 1 Samuel 5:6-12.

²⁷ See 1 Samuel 5:1-2.

²⁸ See 1 Samuel 6:9-12.

²⁹ See 1 Samuel 6:19.

³⁰ See Joshua 3:14-17.

³¹ See Joshua 6:8-15.

³² See, for example, 1 Chronicles 13:3.

of his place as king before God would lead to David's success as king of Israel, making him one of the most powerful and famous kings in the Hebrew Bible and in Israelite history.

The main event discussed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 involves the campaign³³ by David to bring up the ark of the covenant from Kiriath Jearim to his city of Jerusalem, thereby establishing Jerusalem as the political and religious centre of all Israel. This event takes place after David is appointed as king of Israel after Saul, and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and also as David's place of residence, as described in the previous chapter of 2 Samuel 5³⁴ (Auld, 2010:120-121). The purpose of the main event that forms the focal point of 2 Samuel 6 can be explained as: (1) Establishing David not only as the king of Israel, but as king of Israel before God, on God's terms, and establishing Jerusalem not only as the political and religious centre of Israel (Rezetko, 2010:259), but also establishing Jerusalem as the city where God took up His permanent residence; (2) However, and more importantly, the events set out in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 express and exalt the kingship of God over Israel. More specifically, through David's recognition of the importance of the ark of the covenant as it represents the presence of God, David not only acknowledged his standing as king of Israel before God, but he also acknowledged God as the solemn and true sovereign ruler of all Israel (Vannoy, 2009:304); (3) Lastly, the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem enables the permanent installation of the ark among its people to take place. As mentioned, in the following chapter in 2 Samuel 7, after David brought the ark to its final resting place, he expressed the desire³⁵ to build the new and final home for the ark and the presence of God in the form of a temple. However, it would be the privilege of David's son, Solomon, to build the temple³⁶ and to install the ark in the most sacred area of the temple, namely in the inner sanctuary, also referred to as the 'Most Holy Place'³⁷ (Sommer, 2009:65). Therefore, the main event discussed in 2 Samuel 6, the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, is essential for the installation of the ark of the covenant and the presence of God it represents in its permanent and final home to take place.

³³ This includes David's first failed attempt, mentioned in verses 1-4, and his successful second attempt, mentioned in verse 12.

³⁴ See 2 Samuel 5:6-9.

³⁵ See 2 Samuel 7:1-2.

³⁶ See 2 Samuel 7:12-13; 1 Kings 6:1-38.

³⁷ See 1 Kings 6:16-22; 1 Kings 8:1-21.

It is of importance to be reminded of the chief purpose of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, and that is to express how the ark represented the presence of God.

3.3. Conclusion:

This chapter provides an examination of the narrative/literary background of 2 Samuel 6, with focus on the function of the text within the “Ark Narrative”, to provide context and significance to the events set to take place within the narrative of 2 Samuel 6. This discussion aids in determining and understanding the unique ways that are employed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence. The following chapter will discuss David as the key character of 2 Samuel 6.

CHAPTER 4 – DAVID AS KEY CHARACTER OF 2 SAMUEL 6:

4.1. Introduction:

A discussion of David (דָּוִד) as the key character in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 will be provided in this chapter. From a literary point of view, a discussion of main characters such as David are especially important if the goal is to effectively and efficiently analyse the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 as a whole. Firstly, a short overview of the life of David will be provided so that the reader has some understanding of who this character was and why he is significant to the narrative of 2 Samuel 6. Secondly, some of David's actions and emotions expressed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 will be examined, as these very emotions and actions are employed in the text of 2 Samuel 6 to add to the argument that the ark of the covenant served as a representation of God's holy presence.

4.2. Discussion of David as key character of 2 Samuel 6:

The story of David can be found in several books in the Hebrew Bible, especially in 1 Samuel 16 - 2 Samuel 24, 1 Kings 1-2, 1 Chronicles, and Psalms. David is said to have been the youngest of eight sons of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from the city of Bethlehem in Judah³⁸. David is first mentioned in 1 Samuel 16:13, when, while still a young shepherd boy, the prophet Samuel was sent by God to anoint David as the future king of Israel³⁹ (McKenzie, 2000:31). David is most well-known for his epic and victorious battle against the giant Goliath, who was a Philistine warrior, where he was able to overcome and kill the giant with a single stone slung against his forehead⁴⁰ (Alter, 1999:109-110). Even though David was victorious in this event and recognized for his courage and bravery, David's victories and growing popularity soon enflamed the jealousy of the first king of Israel, known as Saul. As a result of growing concerns that David might overthrow him as king, Saul made several attempts to kill David⁴¹, though he was never successful (Borgman, 2008:62). After Saul died in battle⁴², David was firstly anointed as king over the southern tribe of Judah, reigning for seven and a half years

³⁸ See especially 1 Samuel 17:12-14.

³⁹ The full account can be found in 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

⁴⁰ The full account can be found 1 Samuel 17:1-58.

⁴¹ See 1 Samuel 19-23.

⁴² See 1 Samuel 31.

from the city of Hebron⁴³ (Van Seters, 2009:211-212). After David was made king of Judah, he was able to conquer the Jebusite city of Jerusalem⁴⁴, after which he was anointed as king over Israel⁴⁵ at the age of 37 years⁴⁶. David ruled successfully from Jerusalem over Israel and Judah for 33 years⁴⁷. It would be during this period that David established the fortress of Zion as his city, naming it 'the city of David'⁴⁸. He took up residence in the fortress of Zion⁴⁹, to be identified with Jerusalem (Wright, 1960:72). It would also be during this period that the central events in the main topic of this study takes place, in 2 Samuel 6:1-23, where David attempted and succeeded in bringing the ark of the covenant and the presence of God it represented to Jerusalem, thereby establishing Jerusalem as the political and spiritual centre of all Israel. To conclude the story of David, we learn of his death in 1 Kings 2:10-11 and 1 Chronicles 29:27-28, which mentions that David died in old age, having lived a long and successful life filled with wealth, honour, wisdom, and family. It would be his son, Solomon, who succeeded his father as king of Israel⁵⁰, later to build the temple that would house the ark of the covenant and God's presence (McKenzie, 2000:183).

David's role as the central figure in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, as well as his significant actions within the narrative, are vital to the story of the ark of the covenant, and further stresses the ark as a representation of God's presence. The inclusion of David in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 is not only important for understanding the history and legacy of the nation of Israel, but by bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, David sets forth the process of installing the ark and the presence of God in its final resting place within the temple of Solomon, providing the ark with its eternal permanent home after having been housed mostly in a tent since its construction by Moses in Exodus 25 (Buber, 1968:69). Were it not for David's initial desire and attempt to bring the ark of the covenant and the presence of God to Jerusalem, and back to a place of recognition, admiration,

⁴³ See 2 Samuel 2:11.

⁴⁴ See 2 Samuel 5:6-7.

⁴⁵ See 2 Samuel 5:3.

⁴⁶ Even though the account in 2 Samuel 5:4 mentions that David was 30 years old when he became king, it should be understood that David was 37 years old when he became king of *all* Israel. David was anointed king three times. Firstly, he was anointed privately by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13). Secondly, he was anointed as king over the tribe of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4). Thirdly, he was crowned as king over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:4). By the time David was anointed as king of all Israel, he was 37 years old (Morrison, 2013:77).

⁴⁷ See 2 Samuel 5:5.

⁴⁸ See 2 Samuel 5:7.

⁴⁹ See 2 Samuel 5:9.

⁵⁰ See 1 Kings 2:12 and 1 Chronicles 29:28.

and worship among the Israelites, the ark may have been neglected and forgotten for many more years, left in obscurity in the house of Abinadab in Kiriath Jearim, as was the case during the reign of Saul (Van Der Toorn & Houtman, 1994:228). The emotions and actions expressed by David throughout 2 Samuel 6 are noteworthy, as the text employs these very emotions and actions as a way to highlight the ark as a representation of God's presence. Firstly, David's desire to bring the ark to his city to form the centre of Israelite life and worship indicates David's recognition of the ark as something more than a simple box or container. He understood the ark as a physical representation of the presence of God (Davis, 1970:134). Secondly, David's joyful expressions, coupled with the sacrifices, music, and dance that accompanied the ark on its journey to Jerusalem, together with the large number of people that formed part of the ark's procession, further stresses David's acknowledgement of the importance of the ark of the covenant, and what it symbolized or represented. His joy over the ark and the presence of God making its way into his city was so great that he danced enthusiastically with all his might before God and the ark, much to the dissatisfaction of his wife, Michal (Wright, 2002:223). Yet, his heartfelt worship and appreciation towards God for allowing him to bring His very presence to be housed in the city of David could not even have been interrupted or stopped by the negative response from Michal, much less her disapproval over David's joyful dancing or his conduct as king. Thirdly, the significance of the ark as a representation of God's presence is concluded with the last verses of 2 Samuel 6, where David reminds Michal that he was not dancing for the amusement of the people, but for the worship of God, and that he would humiliate himself again and again in the eyes of those who observed him if he could continue to worship God (Cartledge, 2001:441). The joy in David's heart was so immense and great because he recognized the blessing of God over him and his kingdom, and, more importantly, God's blessing and approval for David to provide His permanent dwelling place within the walls of his city. Thus, the author of 2 Samuel 6 was able to express the ark as a representation of God's presence in such a unique and satisfactory way by employing David as the lead character of the narrative.

4.3. Conclusion:

This chapter offers a discussion of David as the protagonist of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 by providing a short overview of the history or background of the life of David and examining some of his more significant actions and emotions expressed in the narrative

of 2 Samuel 6. An examination of the characterization of David, especially as it pertains to the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, aids in determining and understanding the unique ways employed within the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence. The following chapter will provide a detailed text analysis and in-depth discussion of 2 Samuel 6, by examining the text according to the chosen methodology of an exegetical analysis or close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6:1-23.

CHAPTER 5 – GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS AND TEXTUAL DISCUSSION OF 2 SAMUEL 6:

5.1. Introduction:

This chapter provides an overview of the structure of 2 Samuel 6, followed by a verse-by-verse close reading of the text to offer an examination and discussion of the following aspects of the text: translation, grammar, literary features, and some cultural information with reference to other relevant biblical passages. Then, an in-depth textual discussion of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 as a whole will be provided, with an examination of some of the key events mentioned in the narrative to determine how these events add to the argument that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of God's presence. As already stated, the chosen methodology of a close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6 will be used in order to determine and understand the unique ways that are employed in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to strengthen the argument that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of the presence of God.

5.2. Grammatical Analysis of 2 Samuel 6:

In order to adequately discuss the theme of the divine presence of God associated with the ark of the covenant in the key text of 2 Samuel 6, I propose arranging the text according to the following structure⁵¹ or layout⁵²:

A. David's first and unsuccessful attempt to bring up the ark from Baalah Judah/Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem (v. 1-4);

B. Celebrations (v. 5);

C. Interruption – Uzzah's irreverent act towards the ark and his ultimate death; David's unwillingness to take the ark with him to Jerusalem (v. 6-11);

A. David's second and successful attempt to bring up the ark to Jerusalem (v. 12);

⁵¹ This structure is based on the structure proposed by Morrison (2013:81-82).

⁵² The proposed outline of this structure or layout focuses on the actions of the characters as well as the dialogue present in the narrative, which are two methods employed by the author of 2 Samuel 6 to characterize its main characters and events, especially the ark as a representation of God's presence. Also, this outline highlights the theme of this study since the actions of the characters and the dialogue that is employed revolve around the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem by David, as well as the events surrounding and accompanying it.

B. Sacrifices and celebrations (v. 13-15);

C. Interruption – Michal’s resentment towards David (v. 16);

B. Sacrifices and offerings (v. 17-19);

**C. Interruption – Michal’s disapproval of David’s conduct as king;
Argument between David and Michal; Result of Michal’s demeanour
and response to David (v. 20-23).**

It is, in my opinion, that the above arrangement is most suitable when analysing and understanding the text of 2 Samuel 6 in an attempt to determine how the text demonstrates and highlights the ark as a representation of God’s presence. However, to effectively analyse certain elements of the text, like the translation, grammatical components, etc., I will analyse the text verse-by-verse, providing a grammatical analysis of certain key words or phrases, together with a discussion of the verse on its own. At the end, a discussion of 2 Samuel 6 as a whole will be provided to show how the text portrayed the ark as a representation of God’s presence.

Verse 1:

וַיִּסַּף עוֹד דָּוִד אֶת-כָּל-בָּחוּר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשִׁים אֶלֶף:⁵³

¹ And David assembled again every chosen man of Israel, thirty thousand⁵⁴.

Discussion:

וַיִּסַּף – A discussion of the correct stem formation and root of the verb employed here is needed for a suitable translation and effective interpretation of the verb, especially when the context of the verse in which this form of the verb is used is taken into consideration. This verb form appears elsewhere in Samuel⁵⁵ as a Hiphil wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of יסַף meaning “to add to, increase, do again, continue, go on to do” (*DCH*, 4:236), which will usually take as a verbal complement the infinitive construct⁵⁶.

⁵³ Throughout this study, the *BHS* is consulted for the Masoretic text of 2 Samuel 6:1-23.

⁵⁴ The translations presented throughout this study are my own, and are not based on any current English translations of the text.

⁵⁵ See 1 Samuel 3:6, 8, 21; 9:8; 19:21; 2 Samuel 2:22; 18:22; 24:1.

⁵⁶ See *BHRG* §20.1.3.(2) for a discussion on the infinitive construct acting as a verbal complement.

However, the form encountered here is proposed to be a Qal wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of **אסף** meaning “to gather, assemble” (*DCH*, 1:346). In this instance, the aleph as first root consonant has been omitted due to its nature as a weak consonant (*BHRG* §4.2.5.2). The use of the Qal stem formation of **אסף** can be further argued by the absence of an infinitive construct to act as a possible verbal complement for the verb, along with the use of the Qal of **אסף** elsewhere in Samuel⁵⁷ in the same sense of “gathering” troops for battle or to act together as an army, as is possibly being demonstrated here in verse 1 (Steinmann, 2017:101). The proposed translation can be strengthened even further by the employment of **וַיִּקְהַל** (“and he gathered, assembled”) in the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:5, where the root of this verb, **קהל**, when employed in the Hiphil stem formation also has the translation of “to assemble, summon”⁵⁸ (Vannoy, 2009:298).

בְּחֹרִי – This verb is a Qal passive participle of **בחר** meaning “to choose, elect” (BDB, 103). This participle is often used when referring to young men ready to take up military service⁵⁹ or already partaking in military service (Steinmann, 2017:101), and is employed as a noun in this verse⁶⁰. The use of the root **בחר** is significant as it highlights the status of the men chosen to accompany David on this very important mission of bringing the ark to Jerusalem. What can be concluded from this usage is that David specifically chose a select few to act as accompaniment or a possible military escort for the ark’s pilgrimage to its new and permanent abode.

⁵⁷ See 1 Samuel 14:52; 17:1; 2 Samuel 10:17; 12:28, 29.

⁵⁸ See Holladay (1971:314).

⁵⁹ See 1 Samuel 24:3; 26:2; 2 Samuel 10:9.

⁶⁰ The participle functioning as a noun is very common in Biblical Hebrew, for a discussion see *BHRG* §20.3.2.3.

בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל – Some Masoretic manuscripts lack the preposition בְּ, reading יִשְׂרָאֵל in the sense of a possessive relationship with the preceding phrase אֶת־כָּל־בְּחֹר, therefore providing a translation of “every chosen man *of* Israel”⁶¹. Other scholars⁶² argue that the phrase אֶת־כָּל־בְּחֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל should alternatively be read as “every chosen man *in* Israel”, with the preposition בְּ not indicating a possessive relationship with the preceding phrase אֶת־כָּל־בְּחֹר, but rather to specify location⁶³. I agree with the former translation, given the events set out in the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:1-5. Not only does this account mention that David conferred with the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, representing all of the leaders who were heads of their families and households, to bring up the ark of the covenant, but especially 1 Chronicles 13:5 gives an indication of the true expansion of all Israel, expanding from the Shihor river in Egypt to Lebo Hamath. David wished for all *of* Israel, stretching from Egypt to Lebo Hamath, to bring up the ark of the covenant with him. What can be concluded, when taking 1 Chronicles 13:5 into consideration to explain the context of 2 Samuel 6:1, is that David wished to include members of Israel who stretched well beyond the borders of Israel itself to form part of this important occasion, and to celebrate alongside him.

שְׁלֹשִׁים אֲלֶף – Some scholars regard this phrase as referring to “thirty units” instead of the more literal translation of “thirty thousand”, especially when using אֲלֶף in a military context (Firth, 2009:372). However, I argue that, considering the overall theme of 2 Samuel 6, this phrase should be taken in a literal sense meaning “thirty thousand” to emphasize the grand scale and seriousness, and especially the show of force, with which this operation was undertaken. Thus, the translation of “thirty thousand” will emphasize the great number of people that were present to accompany David on this journey.

⁶¹ This translation is supported by authors such as Arnold (2003:448), Hertzberg (1964:275), Morrison (2013:82), Smith (1977:291), and Youngblood (2009:364).

⁶² Authors such as Firth (2009:371), Steinmann (2017:100), and Vannoy (2009:297) are in favour of this translation.

⁶³ See *BHRG* §36.9.(1), where this preposition is referred to as a *beth locale* when indicating spatial localization.

The narrative of 2 Samuel 6 begins with David assembling a grandiose amount of thirty thousand ‘chosen’ men from Israel “again”. Two concepts here are worth discussion: (1) The chosen men⁶⁴ most probably consisted of some of the best warriors from David’s army, functioning as protection for the ark’s procession to Jerusalem, or representatives from the tribes of Israel, meant to provide solemnity to the procession that is about to take place, or possibly a combination of both. Either way, the role of the chosen men in the procession is noteworthy as it contributes to David’s efforts in establishing Jerusalem as both the political and religious centre of all Israel, and for this, he needed an impressive number of men. What is also significant is that this impressive number of men emphasizes with what seriousness David undertook this procession, and that he wished to make the procession of the ark to Jerusalem as splendid as possible, as it was not only a holy object being transported to Jerusalem, but the very presence of God Himself (Arnold, 2003:458); (2) The use of the Hebrew עִדָּה “again” is not insignificant in this verse, as it is incorporated to link the chapter with 2 Samuel 5 where David assembled an army twice to lay battle against the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:17-25). However, this third undertaking by David and his best warriors was not for the purpose of waging war against the enemy, but it rather highlights a magnificent attempt by all Israel to bring up the most venerated and sacred object of their faith – the ark of the covenant, and more importantly, the presence of God. Thus, the troops were not gathered for a third time in the name of war, but rather to serve as a peaceful escort for the ark of the covenant to the city of David⁶⁵.

This spectacular display underlines not only David’s desire to establish Jerusalem as the religious centre of all Israel by bringing the ark to his city, but also to emphasize the glory and honour with which the ark was associated by all. Such a large group accompanying David suggests that the removal of the ark was intended as a national proclamation of David’s faithfulness and devotion towards God, as well as a proclamation

⁶⁴ It is also possible that the chosen men represented an army of God, and not necessarily an army of David, to symbolize the might and power of God Himself. See, for example, Anderson (1989:101), Andrews & Bergen (2009:230), Firth (2009:375), Morrison (2013:82-83), Smith (1977:291-292), Steinmann (2017:12), Youngblood (2009:366).

⁶⁵ The procession of the ark with a military escort may also be seen as an attempt by David to legitimize himself as the rightful king of Jerusalem after the death of Saul.

of public worship. David wished to include a large number of the nation in this liturgical and symbolic procession of the ark to Jerusalem (Firth, 2009:375).⁶⁶

Verse 2:

וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ מִבְּעָלֵי יְהוּדָה לְהַעֲלוֹת מִשָּׁם אֶת אֲרוֹן
הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שֵׁם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְרִבִּים עָלָיו:

² And David arose and went, along with all the people who accompanied him, from Baalah Judah to bring up from there the ark of God that is called by (the) name, the name of the Lord of armies who dwells (between) the cherubim on it.

Discussion:

וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ דָּוִד וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ – The two wayyiqtol verbs used in this verse work together in meaning, with וַיָּקָם (“and he arose”) indicating the starting point of the journey set to take place, and וַיֵּלֶךְ (“and he went”) indicating the action of movement within that journey, i.e. to show the actual initiation of the journey. These verbs stand in grammatical agreement with the singular noun (דָּוִד) that follows, although וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ is also used in conjunction with these two verbs and form part of the subject clause. The separate identification of David shows that the author stresses the role of David as key character or head subject, with וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ “and all the people who were with him” functioning as sub-ordinate and secondary characters or subjects in the verse.

⁶⁶ There are various scholars who suggest that the large amount of people accompanying David did indeed serve as a military escort for the ark of the covenant. It has been suggested that since David was victorious in his military campaigns against the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:17-25) that the Philistines would retaliate by targeting the ark that was currently in the village of Baalah Judah (Kiriath Jearim). Thus, David would have needed a large military force to safely bring the ark up from its current location to inside the protective walls of Jerusalem (Andrews & Bergen, 2009:229-230). However, this suggestion seems rather improbable given the account in 1 Samuel 5-6, where the Philistines were severely punished after taking the ark from the Israelites and placing it alongside an image of Dagon in their temple. Following these events, the Philistines would most likely have been very unwilling to attempt to bring the ark into their midst again.

מִבְּעַלְיִי יְהוּדָה – Some have proposed a translation of מִבְּעַלְיִי יְהוּדָה as “from the citizens of Judah” (Campbell, 1975:171), although here it is most likely employed as a place name meaning “from Baalah Judah”. It should be understood that David and his entourage were going *to* this location, and not coming *from* it. The inclusion of the preposition מִן may be an indication that the author meant to explain that the ark was taken up *from* this location (Keil & Delitzsch, 1876:329). According to Smith (1977:293), an explanation of the yodh (י) at the end of מִבְּעַלְיִי may be a duplication of the initial yodh (י) of יְהוּדָה that occurred due to a possible scribal error. Another theory is introduced by Driver (1913:266) where he argues that בַּעַל יְהוּדָה was miswritten as בְּעַלְיִי יְהוּדָה, after which the preposition מִן was prefixed to the phrase in an attempt to link it with the preceding clause. 1 Samuel 7:1 and 1 Chronicles 13:6 gives some indication of a more specific identification of Baalah Judah⁶⁷, linking it with Kiriath Jearim⁶⁸, which was one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:17). The ark would remain at Kiriath Jearim for some twenty years after being returned by the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:2).

שֵׁם יְהוָה – The first instance of the noun שֵׁם is expected to have a definite article as it refers to the name of the Lord. According to Steinmann (2017:102), this may be an example in Biblical Hebrew where a definite article is omitted to place emphasis on a specific noun following, the noun in this case being the second instance of שֵׁם. The second instance of שֵׁם is definite as it stands in a construct relationship with the proper name יְהוָה.⁶⁹ It is argued by GKC (§117q) that the verbal idea may be supplemented or strengthened by means of an indeterminate substantive (in this case the first occurrence

⁶⁷ The description יְהוּדָה “Judah” was most likely added by the author to distinguish this Baalah from others. See, for example, בֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה

which is attested in several verses in the Hebrew Bible.

⁶⁸ It may be probable that “Baalah Judah” and “Kiriath Jearim” were initially identified as two distinct neighbouring cities or communities, later becoming associated with one location (Anderson, 1989:101).

⁶⁹ Proper names are characteristically definite in Biblical Hebrew, see BHRG §24.4.1.(2).

of **שֵׁם**), which is referred to by Arab grammarians as ‘indeterminateness for the sake of amplification’. It is therefore possible that the author intended to highlight the verbal idea with a repetition of **שֵׁם**, thereby placing special significance on the name of the Lord.

However, authors such as Vannoy (2009:298) suggest that the repetition of **שֵׁם** occurred due to dittography, where the author may have repeated it by mistake, especially since the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 13:6 only mentions one instance of **שֵׁם**. However, I argue that the repetition of **שֵׁם** is significant here as it places the attention of the reader on the ‘name’ of the Lord, thereby stressing it, and therefore the duplication is expressed in the proposed translation.

שֵׁם יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְרֻבִּים עָלָיו – The use of the participle of the verb **יָשַׁב** “to sit, sit enthroned, dwell” (Holladay, 1971:146) indicates a continuous action (Seow, 1995:81), stressing God’s continuous and ever-lasting presence and enthronement between the cherubim that were placed on the ark of the covenant. The prepositional phrase (**עָלָיו**) clarifies that the cherubim are “on” the ark, a description occurring frequently in the Hebrew Bible where the cherubim are attached on top of the ark so that their wings can overshadow it, thereby protecting it⁷⁰. Here the third person, masculine, singular personal pronoun is used with the preposition to refer back to the noun **אֲרוֹן** (“ark”), encountered earlier in the verse.⁷¹

The care with which the author of 2 Samuel 6 identifies the ark within this verse is immediately apparent. The incredible importance and power of the ark of the covenant and the presence of God that it represented is expressed by the use of the prolonged title

⁷⁰ See Exodus 25:18-22.

⁷¹ A similar name for the ark appears in 1 Samuel 4:4: **אֶת אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְרֻבִּים** “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of armies who dwells (between) the cherubim”.

of the ark: שֵׁם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֹשֵׁב הַכְרֻבִּים עָלָיו (the) name, the name of the Lord of armies who dwells (between) the cherubim on it". This sacred epithet of God was regularly used by the Israelites in worship, and was held in the highest of status among them (Arnold, 2003:459). What can be concluded from the use of this title or epithet is that the author intended to identify God as both a warrior and a king. The epithet יְהוָה

צְבָאוֹת "Lord of armies"⁷² is commonly employed when referring to some military event or battle⁷³, such as the battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 4-6) or the holy war against the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:2), where God is especially represented as a divine warrior of sorts fighting in a holy war⁷⁴ on Israel's behalf (Seow, 1992:391). Thus, the military significance of the events mentioned in verses 1 and 2 are further highlighted by the employment of this epithet, as well as the function of the ark as a war palladium. The use of this epithet may further strengthen the idea that the group accompanying David formed part of his military, and that the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem may have been a part of a military campaign to highlight the "show of might, strength" with which David undertook this journey. This title can also be linked to the presence of God and the theme of this study, since it can be assumed that the "Lord of armies"⁷⁵ would be present with David's army, and therefore the ark of the covenant as well. Also, when incorporating יֹשֵׁב

הַכְרֻבִּים עָלָיו "who dwells (between) the cherubim on it" into the title, the image created by the author is of God as a victorious warrior who sits enthroned as king of both heavenly and earthly armies and nations (Woudstra, 1965:68). Concerning הַכְרֻבִּים "the cherubim" that form part of this elaborate title, early Israelite tradition held that the cherubim formed the divine throne of God, where God sat invisibly enthroned between the outstretched

⁷² See Woudstra (1965:64-68) where he discusses the close association between this epithet and the ark of the covenant.

⁷³ Ross (1967:84) is of the opinion that this epithet did not serve as a military title, but rather as a cultic and royal title closely associated with the kingship of יְהוָה "Yahweh" as it found expression in the Jerusalem cults.

⁷⁴ The use of the ark specifically in battle can be found in passages such as 1 Samuel 4:1-9, 2 Samuel 11:11 and Numbers 14:44-45.

⁷⁵ For a discussion on the significance of the title יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת "Lord of armies", see Parke-Taylor (1975:64-67).

wings of the cherubim⁷⁶ that covered the ark.⁷⁷ Thereby, the ark functioned as the “footstool” of God.⁷⁸

In this verse, emphasis is placed on the name (שֵׁם) of God by means of repetition.

The name of God was closely connected to His presence⁷⁹, therefore it could be concluded that the author may have intended to closely associate the name of God and His presence with the ark in this verse. The use of שֵׁם also denotes ownership, implicating that the ark is the property of God, and His alone (Youngblood, 2009:366).

Concluding the idea presented in this verse, it would appear as if David sought to return the ark to its rightful place of honour and glory after being hidden away for so many years in solitude. David might have assumed that God’s favour was with him since he was able to defeat his enemies in battle, thereby perhaps choosing David and his city of Jerusalem as His new and permanent abode (Steinmann, 2017:112-113).

Verses 3-4:

וַיִּרְכְּבוּ אֶת־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל־עֲגֹלָה חֲדָשָׁה וַיִּשְׂאֻהוּ מִבֵּית אַבִּינָדָב אֲשֶׁר בְּגִבְעָה
וַעֲזָא וְאַחִיו בְּנֵי אַבִּינָדָב נְהָגִים אֶת־הָעֲגֹלָה חֲדָשָׁה:
וַיִּשְׂאֻהוּ מִבֵּית אַבִּינָדָב אֲשֶׁר בְּגִבְעָה עַם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וְאַחִיו הִלְךְ לִפְנֵי הָאֲרוֹן:

³ And they placed the ark of God upon a new cart, and they took it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, they were leading the new cart. ⁴ And they took it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, with the ark of God. Now Ahio was walking before the ark.

⁷⁶ The cherubim forming part of the divine throne may be a reflection of Canaanite royal thrones where sphinxes were used instead of cherubim (Arnold, 2003:459).

⁷⁷ Passages such as 1 Samuel 4:4; Psalm 80:1 and Psalm 99:1 also refer to God as “enthroned” between the cherubim.

⁷⁸ See 1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 99:5 and Psalm 132:7, where the ark is described as the “footstool” of God.

⁷⁹ See Exodus 23:21, Leviticus 24:11, 16.

Discussion:

וַיִּשָּׂאֵהוּ... וַיַּרְכֵּבּוּ – The Qal of the verb רָכַב can be translated as “to mount, ride” an animal or a chariot. The Hiphil of the verb used in verse 3 has a causative meaning, translated as “to cause to ride” (*DCH*, 7:487). Therefore, the verb וַיַּרְכֵּבּוּ has a literal meaning of “and they caused (the ark) to ride” (Steinmann, 2017:102), however a more idiomatic translation of “and they placed (the ark)” is proposed here according to the discussion in Keil & Delitzsch (1876:330), where they argue in favour of a translation of the verb as “to put, place, set”⁸⁰. The use of plural verbs in both verses 3 and 4 suggests that instead of David being the focal point of the actions taking place (as is suggested in his role as key character or head subject in verses 1 and 2), all of the people with him are now partaking in these activities alongside him and are held at the same level as David. On the other hand, the subtle shift in David’s position as the leading character in the events leading up to and surrounding the failed first attempt of the ark’s procession to Jerusalem may serve as an indication of the author’s intention to express David’s inactive role in the failed first attempt, possibly alluding to David’s innocence in the situation about to unfold.

אֶל-עֲגֹלָה חֲדָשָׁה – Normally the preposition אֶל is translated as “to” (BDB, 39), yet in verse 3 it is better translated as “upon”⁸¹. According to Steinmann (2017:103), אֶל is used in some cases instead of עַל and its inherent meaning or translation in the Books of Samuel in the Hebrew Bible, but the preposition should be translated as “upon” for a clearer reading of the text, so that the reader understands that the ark was placed *upon* the cart, not *to* it.

⁸⁰ See also Holladay (1971:339).

⁸¹ A few Masoretic manuscripts and 4QSam^a use the preposition עַל instead of אֶל, which is supported by the LXX version.

וְאַחִיו – The exact translation of אַחִיו has been highly debated. Most scholars take it as a proper name meaning “Ahio”⁸². However, scholars such as Campbell (1975:129) suggest that the noun אָח (translated as “brother”) together with a third person, masculine, singular pronominal suffix is used here, thus translated as “his brother”. It is most likely, in my opinion, that we are dealing with a proper name here since it would seem unusual for the author to provide the identity of Uzzah, but not of “his brother”. Thus, a translation of אַחִיו as “Ahio” is used in the proposed translation.

בְּנֵי אֲבִינָדָב – Literally, this phrase can be translated as “the sons of Abinadab”. Yet, some scholars argue that a translation of “the descendants/grandsons of Abinadab” seems more appropriate as it would be highly implausible for Ahio and Uzzah to be the sons of Abinadab. Most likely, they were rather grandsons or even great-grandsons of Abinadab.⁸³ However, since most scholars⁸⁴ are in agreement with the translation of “the sons of Abinadab”, I employ it as well in the proposed translation.

וַיִּשְׁאוּהוּ מִבֵּית אֲבִינָדָב אֲשֶׁר בַּגִּבְעָה – This phrase, occurring at the beginning of verse 4, is an exact duplication in the Masoretic text of what has already been stated at the end of verse 3. It seems that the author erroneously repeated this phrase, as the duplication would have no apparent or reasonable function at the beginning of verse 4. This is referred to as tautology, where a phrase occurs in which the same word(s) or idea(s) have been repeated, generally considered an error on the side of the author (Vannoy, 2009:298). Another possible explanation for the repetition may be that the third person, masculine, singular pronominal suffix (“it”) of וַיִּשְׁאוּהוּ (“and they took it”) refers back to אֶת־הָעֲגֹלָה הַחֲדָשָׁה (“the new cart”) appearing at the end of verse 3⁸⁵, thereby placing

⁸² The use of אַחִיו as a proper name can be attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, specifically in 1 Chronicles 8:31 and 9:37.

⁸³ Keil & Delitzsch (1876:331) agree that the phrase rather refers to the grandsons of Abinadab.

⁸⁴ Scholars such as Evans (2018:351), Phillips (2018:110), and Vannoy (2009:300) use the translation “the sons of Abinadab”.

⁸⁵ It is possible in Biblical Hebrew for a masculine suffix to refer back to a feminine noun, as has been attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, including in the Books of Samuel (GKC §135o).

the reader's attention again on the way the ark was being transported, i.e. on a new cart. The repetition of this phrase may also be meaningful to once again emphasize that the journey of the ark began on a hill, representing the first high point of the ark's journey. The author may also have intended to repeat בִּגְבֻעָה "on a hill" in verses 3 and 4 purposefully to emphasize that the ark was being transported on uneven ground (from a high position to a low position), possibly already providing a reason for the unexpected events set to take place in verses 6 and 7.

עַם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים – This phrase also seems erroneous, as it makes no sense when taken with what precedes or follows it. Smith (1977:294) proposes that in the scribe's apparent confusion over his possible erroneous duplication mentioned previously, he may have omitted something from the narrative by mistake. He proposes a simple clarification of this phrase as referring to "Uzzah walked by the side of the ark of God". The phrase עַם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים could originally have been preceded by וַעֲזָא הֵלֵךְ. If so, this correction may explain how the cart was being led correctly: Uzzah was walking beside the ark while Ahio went out before it (Driver, 1913:266). However, it may also be probable that the author repeated this phrase once again on purpose, in order to emphasize that Uzzah and Ahio were travelling with the ark of God, and in an attempt to remind the reader that the procession was travelling with this holy object as a representation of the presence of God, again as preparation for what is about to unfold in verses 6 and 7.

In verses 3 and 4, emphasis is placed on how the ark was intended to be transported from the house of Abinadab⁸⁶ in Baalah Judah to Jerusalem by the Israelites, namely on a "new cart" (עֲגֹלָה חֲדָשָׁה). It is evident that David recognized the holiness of the ark by using a new cart that had not been defiled by prior use or had been in contact with impure items. David might have acted respectfully towards the ark and the presence of God, and his attempt may have come from a place of sincerity. However, by

⁸⁶ The text states that the house of Abinadab was "on the hill", which may implicate that this location served as a holy place or a shrine of some sorts (Barron, 2015:54).

transporting the ark on a new cart, David followed the Philistine method of transport rather than the procedures for transporting the ark laid out in Numbers 4:4-6, 15. When the Philistines returned the ark to the Israelites after it wreaked havoc in their possession, they did so by transporting the ark on a new cart pulled by oxen (1 Samuel 6:7). David might have thought that a new cart was an acceptable vehicle to transport such a holy object⁸⁷ since the Philistines were able to transport the ark in this manner without any apparent negative consequences (1 Samuel 6:7-16) (Chisholm, 2013:212). This however, was only a successful attempt because it was a means to an end – the end being the safe deliverance of the ark back to the Israelites. Yet, David should have known better as he violates the instructions given by God for the appropriate manner in transporting the ark, namely to be carried by its poles on the shoulders of Levitical priests⁸⁸.

Scholars such as Blaikie (1888:88) theorize that David did not intentionally set aside the authority and presence of God as represented by the ark by not transporting it in the aforementioned manner, but rather that he may not have been made aware of this law. However, it would seem highly unlikely for the king of Israel not to know how to properly transport the most important and sacred object of his religion, especially if the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 13 is taken into consideration. In 1 Chronicles 13:2, David states that especially the Levites should be brought up to form part of this procession, indicating that David must have had some prior knowledge concerning the role of the Levites in regards to the transportation of the ark of the covenant if he would have taken time to mention them specifically, and also in his wishes for the Levites in general to join him on his journey. Therefore, if we take the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:2 into consideration, David was indeed aware of the correct manner in which the ark of God should be transported, and as David was in command of this procession, the error can therefore be attributed to him.

In these verses, we also encounter two new characters in the narrative – Ahio and Uzzah. As the son of Abinadab, Eleazar was the guardian of the ark (1 Samuel 7:1), now

⁸⁷ Objects also associated with the tabernacle could be carried on carts, as evident in Numbers 7:6-8. However, as mentioned in Numbers 7:9, the priests responsible for carrying the ark did not receive any carts as they were always meant to carry the holy objects they were responsible for on their shoulders.

⁸⁸ This law is laid out in Exodus 25:12-14 and Numbers 4:15.

Ahio and Uzzah appear in his place by leading the ark on its journey, with Ahio in the lead and Uzzah guiding the ark from the rear (Firth, 2009:375).

Verse 5:

וְדָוִד וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מְשַׁחֲקִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה בְּכָל עֵצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים וּבְכִנּוֹרוֹת וּבְנִבְלִים
וּבְתַפִּים וּבְמִנְעֻנְעִים וּבַצִּלְצְלִים:

⁵ And David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord with all instruments of cypress wood, and with lyres, and with harps, and with timbrels, and with sistrums, and with cymbals.

Discussion:

מְשַׁחֲקִים – This Piel masculine plural participle of שָׁחַק (BDB, 965-966) can also refer to singing, dancing, and the playing of musical instruments. The use of this verb adds to the atmosphere of celebrations and joy taking place in verse 5, especially emphasizing the action of dancing and playing in the form of celebration before God.

בְּכָל עֵצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים – Scholars such as Youngblood (2009:376) argue that this phrase is a scribal error, and that it should rather be read as בְּכָל־עֹז וּבְשִׁירִים “with all (their) might and with songs”, especially since בְּכָל־עֹז “with all (his) might” in verse 14 will then echo and agree with this phrase, as well as the use of בְּכָל־עֹז וּבְשִׁירִים in the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:8. The use of בְּכָל־עֹז וּבְשִׁירִים would then also complement the use of the plural participle מְשַׁחֲקִים encountered earlier in the verse, translated as “they were celebrating”.

וּבְכִנּוֹרוֹת וּבְנִבְלִים וּבְתַפִּים וּבְמִנְעֻנְעִים וּבַצִּלְצְלִים – It is common in Biblical Hebrew, when encountering a list of nouns that share the same syntactical relationship, for the

preposition of the first noun (preposition ב of בָּכַל in this case) to be repeated in the following nouns that form part of that relationship (JM §132g). Hence, all the nouns encountered here are headed by the preposition ב.

וּבְצִלְצָלִים וּבְמִנְעִנְעִים – The participle form of וּבְמִנְעִנְעִים encountered here is closely related to the root נָנַע, meaning “to shake, wave” (*DCH*, 5:644), while the participle form of וּבְצִלְצָלִים is associated with the root צָלַל, meaning “to tingle, quiver” (*BDB*, 852).

The repetition of the consonants in both וּבְמִנְעִנְעִים and וּבְצִלְצָלִים may have been employed by the author in an attempt to mimic the repetitious sounds of sistrums and cymbals when they are shaken to create a sound. This phenomenon of a word that mimics the sound or noise of the object it describes is known as onomatopoeia in several grammars, such as Reymond (2018:52) and GKC (§30h).

The first set of celebrations in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 is introduced in verse 5. What is apparent from this verse is that the transfer of the ark from Baalah Judah (Kiriath Jearim) to Jerusalem was truly a joyous occasion for David and all of Israel⁸⁹. The scene set here by the author is one of great festivities taking place as several musical instruments and song accompany the ark and its entourage on their journey. The greatest of delight would have been felt by all as they knew that not only was the holiest object of their faith on its way to the city of David, but also the very presence of God Himself as represented by the ark of the covenant⁹⁰. This was truly an occasion worth celebrating, and once again, David is mentioned as the key character or subject in the narrative of

⁸⁹ וְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל “house” is used here in a sense of family, community. Thus, from וְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל we can conclude that all of Israel were united by the procession of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, and that all shared with David in the festivities and celebrations.

⁹⁰ לְפָנֵי יְהוָה “before the Lord” is equivalent to “before the ark”, as by now we have established that the ark and the presence of the Lord are virtually synonymous.

verse 5, taking the lead in the festivities, as is appropriate for the king of Israel (Firth, 2009:376).

Verses 6-7:

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-גֶּרֶן נָכוֹן וַיִּשְׁלַח עֲזָא אֶל-אָרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאחֲז בּוֹ בִּי שְׁמָטוֹ הַבָּקָר:
וַיַּחַר אֵף יְהוָה בְּעֲזָה וַיַּכֶּהוּ שָׁם הָאֱלֹהִים עַל-הַשָּׁל וַיָּמָת שָׁם עִם אָרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים:

⁶ And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah stretched out (his hand) toward the ark of God, and he took hold of it for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ And the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of the irreverent act, and he died there with the ark of God.

Discussion:

נָכוֹן – This proper name varies greatly among several textual versions. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 13:9 reads כִּידֹן (Kidon), while the Dead Sea Scroll text of 4QSam^a reads either נֹדֹן or נִידֹן (Nodon), and the LXX's version reads $\nu\omega\delta\alpha\beta$ (Nodab).

As it is impossible to say what instance of נָכוֹן is the original and more accurate version, for the purposes of this study it will be used as a proper name referring to a certain threshing floor known as Nacon. Keil & Delitzsch (1876:332) translate the phrase גֶּרֶן נָכוֹן as “the threshing floor of the stroke”, naming the threshing floor not after its owner, but after the significant event that has taken place there.

וַיִּשְׁלַח עֲזָא אֶל-אָרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים – This phrase can literally be translated as “and Uzzah sent to the ark of God”, which in itself appears awkward and incoherent. It is apparent that the transitive verb וַיִּשְׁלַח lacks a direct object in this instance. The root of this verb (שלח) is commonly used with the noun יָד (“hand”) and is most likely the direct object that is missing in this phrase. The phenomenon that is encountered here, known as an

elliptical expression (GKC §117g) does not occur in the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:9, where the verb is used with אֶת־יָדוֹ (“his hand”). Thus, it is likely that the omission of אֶת־יָדוֹ occurred due to scribal error, or that the author assumed the reader would read this verb automatically with אֶת־יָדוֹ given the context of the verse (Youngblood, 2009:376).

וַיֹּאחֲזֵ בּוֹ – The verb encountered here is a Qal wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of אָחַז meaning “to take hold of, grab, seize” (*DCH*, 1:186), and is used in conjunction with the preposition בְּ that acts as a complement to the verb (Gibson §89e)⁹¹.

The third person, masculine, singular pronominal suffix attached to the preposition refers to the ark, which will function as the direct object of the verb. The use of this phrase as a whole is meant to ensure that the reader understands that Uzzah actually took hold of the ark and did not only merely intend to do so, that the act was indeed physical. This is to give reason to the harsh act of God against Uzzah in the following verses.

שָׁמְטוּ הַבָּקָר – The verb שָׁמְטוּ appears to have an intransitive meaning in this verse, as supported by the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 13:9. Yet, scholars such as Firth (2009:373) and Driver (1913:267) argue that the verb has a transitive meaning, translated as “to let something fall”, with the ark being the implied direct object of the verb. Therefore, the translation could be read as “the oxen let (the ark) fall”. Either translation is possible, yet the translation preferred here⁹² is “they stumbled”, as there is no explicit direct object mentioned or supposed. This translation will then complement the use of הַבָּקָר as the subject of the verb. Also, we notice that a singular noun is used with a plural verb. This is

⁹¹ Gibson (§89e) explains that the preposition is used in conjunction with the verb to assist in referring to the direct object, and therefore the preposition essentially becomes an adverb that modifies the verb.

⁹² This translation is further supported by authors such as Andrews & Bergen (2009:230), Arnold (2003:447), Hertzberg (1964:276), Smith (1977:292), Steinmann (2017:100), and Youngblood (2009:364).

because the noun בִּקְרָ is mostly used as a collective noun⁹³ referring to a group of cattle or oxen. Therefore, the noun is best translated in a plural sense as “oxen”.

הַשֵּׁל – The only occurrence of this noun appears in 2 Samuel 6, and the exact meaning of this word has baffled both ancient and modern translators. Youngblood (2009:376) hypothesizes that שֵׁל may be equivalent to the Aramaic word שֵׁלוּ, referring to “negligence” (Holladay, 1971:422). He argues that the word should be read as שֵׁלוּ, with the waw (ו) of the following word (וַיִּמָּת) acting as both the final waw of שֵׁלוּ and the initial waw of וַיִּמָּת.⁹⁴ Keil (1956:332) suggests that הַשֵּׁל is derived from the word שָׁלָה, and therefore translates עַל-הַשֵּׁל as “on account of the offence”. However, a translation of עַל-הַשֵּׁל as “because of the irreverent act” is preferred in the proposed translation.

עִם אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים – This phrase is literally translated as “with the ark of God”. An opposing translation comes from the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 13:10, where it states that Uzzah died “before God” (לְפָנֵי אֱלֹהִים). As either translation seems acceptable, what should ultimately be understood from this phrase is that Uzzah died in the presence of the ark of God, and thereby in the presence of God Himself.

The first interruption in the narrative takes place in verses 6 and 7. As the joyous procession make their way to Jerusalem with the ark of the covenant, the oxen transporting the ark suddenly stumble at the threshing floor of Nacon⁹⁵, the cause of their stumble unknown. As it seemed as though the ark was in danger of falling off the cart,

⁹³ See *BHRG* §24.3.2.(2) for a discussion of the so-called collective singular, as demonstrated in verse 6.

⁹⁴ See also Carlson (1964:79).

⁹⁵ This threshing floor of Nacon may have been a holy site since threshing floors were often a place of sanctity (threshing floors are mentioned several times in the Old Testament, see for example: Genesis 50:10; 2 Samuel 24:16, 18, 21, 24-25; 1 Kings 22:10; Hosea 9:1). Thus, this location seems appropriate for the initiation of God's plan. The name Nacon may also have been given to this location by those who witnessed this unfortunate event to memorialize the disaster and to warn future travellers (Baldwin, 1988:207-208).

Uzzah reached for the ark and physically took hold of it. Yet, this seemingly innocent act was met with an unexpected response – the wrath of divine judgment burned against Uzzah⁹⁶ and God struck him dead on the spot. The celebrations would have come to a sudden and grim stop.

The death of Uzzah seemed to result as a consequence of failing to respect the instructions from God on how to properly transport the ark. More importantly, however, by touching the ark, Uzzah broke not only one of the most important laws concerning the ark (Numbers 4:15), but as the ark represented the presence of God, he breached its holiness⁹⁷ (Cartledge, 2001:434-435). Since part of Uzzah's family served as the keepers of the ark during its stay in Baalah Judah (Kiriath Jearim), he would have been aware of the laws prohibiting anyone from touching the ark. Like David, his intentions may have been sincere in trying to protect the ark, but his actions were deliberate, disrespectful, and without reverence for the ark and its holiness. Thus, he received the gravest of punishments – death.

Emphasizing the location of Uzzah's death, the author mentions twice that God struck him down **וְשָׁם** "there" and that he died **וְשָׁם** "there". An additional irony is that Uzzah died **וְשָׁם** "with/beside" the ark, the very object he had been attempting to rescue from possible disaster or damage (Morrison, 2013:84-86).

This event served as a much-needed warning and reminder to David and the rest of the Israelites, namely the holiness of the ark was not to be taken lightly, as the holiness of God Himself was present with the ark. To quote Bruggemann (1990:249): "To touch the ark is to impinge on God's holiness, to draw too close and presume too much". Uzzah indeed presumed too much. He dared to intervene in the plans of God. God was already displeased with how the Israelites were transporting the ark, using a Philistine method of transport, and if the ark should have fallen off the cart, it would have served as a sign of

⁹⁶ This is one of only two instances in 1 and 2 Samuel where it is stated that the anger of the Lord burned against someone specific. Elsewhere, it is said that His anger burned against Israel as a nation (see Joshua 7:1, 23:16; Judges 2:14, 20, 3:8, 10:7; 2 Samuel 24:1; 2 Kings 13:3). This instance of God's anger directed to one individual is extremely unique and is meant to emphasize the grave and rare nature of the situation at hand.

⁹⁷ The act of raising one's hand towards something, in this instance the ark, can also be interpreted as an act of violence (*DCH*, 8:381). Thus, the text may have intended to portray two important concepts here: (1) to illustrate and stress that Uzzah physically touched the ark, and that this physical touch violated its sacredness; (2) to illustrate that Uzzah not only lifted his hand towards the ark, but towards the presence of God as well. Therefore, this act of raising his hand can be seen as an act of violence towards the ark and ultimately towards God as well.

God's disapproval. Even if David was at fault since the ark was being transported in this manner under his command, God's anger was directed at Uzzah who committed the ultimate unforgivable act of touching the holy ark of God (Arnold, 2003:460). Uzzah's act of violence towards the ark and the presence of God that it represented thus resulted with an act of violence against him from God Himself.

Verses 8-9:

וַיַּחַר לְדָוִד עַל אֲשֶׁר פָּרַץ יְהוָה בְּעֻזָּה וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא פָּרַץ עֻזָּה עַד הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה:

וַיֵּרָא דָוִד אֶת־יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵיךְ יָבוֹא אֵלַי אֲרוֹן יְהוָה:

⁸ Then David was angry because of the wrath of the Lord that burst out against Uzzah. So, he called that place Perez Uzzah, to this day. ⁹ And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and he said: "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?"

Discussion:

עַל אֲשֶׁר פָּרַץ יְהוָה בְּעֻזָּה – The form of the verb encountered here is a Qal qatal, third person, masculine, singular of פָּרַץ meaning "to break through, burst out" (*HALOT*, 3:971-972), and is used with the preposition בְּ (of the word בְּעֻזָּה) that complements the verb and introduces the direct object⁹⁸, the direct object being עֻזָּה. In this phrase, פָּרַץ ... פָּרַץ forms a cognate accusative construction (GKC §117p) where the verb and the direct object of the verb share the same root (פָּרַץ). The use of the verb with the related direct object is meant to emphasize how destructively God's wrath burst out against Uzzah, and to highlight the seriousness of the event that has now taken place.

⁹⁸ See Gibson (§89e).

וַיִּרָא – A discussion of וַיִּרָא is needed in order to determine the correct translation and meaning of the verb employed in verse 9, as this verb holds some significance to the narrative at hand. The verb is a defective spelling of וַיִּירָא, which is a Qal wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of ירא meaning “to fear, be afraid” (Holladay, 1971:142).

This defective spelling occurred most probably due to a scribal error. The verb should therefore be translated as “and he was afraid”, introducing the second set of emotions David experienced after witnessing the death of Uzzah, and the implications of his death, taking place⁹⁹.

אֵיךְ יָבוֹא אֵלַי אֲרוֹן יְהוָה – The use of the imperfect or yiqtol form of the root בוא, meaning “to come, go” (Holladay, 1971:34), highlights the doubt expressed by David in this phrase, as the action is yet to be completed. This uncertainty is further stressed by the use of the particle אֵיךְ, which turns this phrase into a rhetorical expression (Gibson §64c), highlighting this statement of David that the ark cannot come to him.

Focus shifts from Uzzah to David in verses 8 and 9 after Uzzah’s unexpected death in verse 7. Emphasis is now placed on David’s reaction to the situation at hand – he is filled with anger and then fear. Many scholars argue that David’s anger was directed towards God¹⁰⁰, even though the text does not explicitly state this. In my opinion, for David to be angry towards God’s outburst¹⁰¹ against Uzzah, he should have been angry towards God as well. The two cannot be separated¹⁰². Yet, David may have been angrier at himself for allowing the chain of events leading to Uzzah’s death to take place. He may also have been angry that his initial plan to bring the ark of God to his city failed, because it was done on *his* terms, not on God’s terms.

⁹⁹ For a discussion on the verb ירא, see van der Merwe (1992:177-183).

¹⁰⁰ See Ackroyd (1977:66-67) and Baldwin (1988:208).

¹⁰¹ The language used here is reminiscent of the language used in 2 Samuel 5:20. The same verb is used when describing God’s outburst against the Philistines. The same root is also used in the place name ‘Baal Perazim’. As the Philistines stood in the role of God’s enemy in 2 Samuel 5:20, here Uzzah fills that role in 2 Samuel 6:8 (Chisholm, 2013:213).

¹⁰² Other scholars argue the opposite, that David was not angry with God. See, for an example, Anderson (1989:104) and Bergen (1996:330).

Due to these violations against the laws of God, David might have feared¹⁰³ that God rejected him as king of Israel and his city of Jerusalem as His permanent abode, and that the ark would never come to rest in Jerusalem. This is evident in David's question: "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" David and Israel did not show the proper respect for God by transporting the ark properly, and with the death of Uzzah, David realized the severity of his mistakes.

The location of Uzzah's death is also memorialized in verse 9, possibly by David, naming the location פֶּרֶץ עֲזָה "Perez Uzzah", and would have served as a permanent reminder and warning for all not violate the laws of God in any way (Firth, 2009:376).

As a last note, it is also important to mention that in verse 9, the ark is referred to as the ark of "the Lord" (יְהוָה), and not the ark of "God" (אֱלֹהִים). As the name of the Lord can be associated with the presence of God, the phrase "the ark of the Lord" (אֲרוֹן יְהוָה) could have been employed by the author to place more emphasis on the idea that the Lord's presence was associated with the ark.

Verses 10-11:

וְלֹא־אָבָה דָּוִד לְהָסִיר אֵלָיו אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה עַל־עֵיר דָּוִד וַיֵּטֶהוּ דָּוִד בֵּית עֲבֹד־אֲדֹם

הַגִּתִּי:

וַיָּשָׁב אֲרוֹן יְהוָה בֵּית עֲבֹד אֲדֹם הַגִּתִּי שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֶת־עֲבֹד אֲדֹם

וְאֶת־כָּל־בֵּיתוֹ:

¹⁰ So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord with him to the city of David. Instead, David diverted it (to) the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ And the ark remained (in) the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite (for) three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household.

¹⁰³ This is one of two instances in 1 and 2 Samuel where David's fear is mentioned. The other instance occurs in 1 Samuel 21:12, where he feared Achish, king of Gath.

Discussion:

לְהַסִּיר אֵלָיו – The verb encountered here is a Hiphil infinitive construct with the preposition ¹⁰⁴לְ, of the root סור meaning “to turn aside” (Holladay, 1971:254) when employed in the Qal stem formation. Usually, the verb is translated as “to remove” (Holladay, 1971:254) in the Hiphil stem formation, as is the case here. However, since the verb is used in this phrase with the prepositional phrase אֵלָיו (literally “to himself”), a translation of “to move, take” (BDB, 694) seems more appropriate.

עַל־עִיר דָּוִד – This phrase is literally translated as “upon the city of David”, but as Driver (1913:268) argues, the preposition עַל “upon” should be read as the preposition אֶל “to”, as is the case in the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:13. Therefore, an idiomatic translation of “to the city of David” is suggested, so that the reader understands that the ark was not taken *upon* the city of David, but that it was not taken *to* the city of David.

וַיִּטְהוּ – This verb is a Hiphil wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of טהה meaning “to turn aside” (DCH, 5:673). When employed in the Hiphil stem formation, this verb can have the transitive meaning of “to turn (something) aside” or “to direct, divert, lead (something) away” (DCH, 5:673). The latter is used in the proposed translation. Also, attached to the verb is a third person, masculine, singular pronominal suffix, referring to the ark, and thus making the ark the implied direct object of the verb.

In verses 10 and 11, we learn that David was now unwilling to continue with the procession of the ark to his city after the unexpected events in verse 7 took place. Aside from his anger, he might have feared that a further mishap towards the ark and the presence of God might have fatal consequences for himself and his city (Anderson, 1989:104-105). Rather, he aborted his plans and the ark is given a momentary resting place just outside Jerusalem. The identity of the new, albeit temporary, guardian of the

¹⁰⁴ The preposition לְ is often used in Biblical Hebrew with the infinitive to indicate purpose or result. See Fuller & Choi (§53Coog).

ark is mentioned twice in these verses, introducing him as Obed-Edom the Gittite¹⁰⁵ (עֲבֵד־עֲדֹם הַגִּתִּי

אָדָם הַגִּתִּי). This is done in an effort to place special attention on this individual, probably

due to his mysterious identity and heritage, as well as the trust David must have had in this individual to leave such a precious object with him for a period of three months. David must have viewed Obed-Edom as an appropriate guardian for the ark while his plans for bringing the ark with him to Jerusalem were put on hold.

The blessings bestowed on Obed-Edom and his family in verse 11 are particularly significant. What we can conclude from these blessings is that God can bless a household that properly cares for Him just as easily as He can unleash the most destructive punishment when He is not respected. The determining factor between His blessing and His punishment is established as how well humans are prepared to conform to and obey His divinely regulated laws (Cartledge, 2001:436). Thus, the presence of God should be obeyed and revered, but it can also result in blessings when respected properly, as is the case here with Obed-Edom and his family.

Verse 12:

וַיִּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ דָּוִד לֵאמֹר בָּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת־בֵּית עֲבֵד אָדָם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בַּעֲבוּר אֲרוֹן

הָאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּלֶךְ דָּוִד וַיַּעַל אֶת־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית עֲבֵד אָדָם עִיר דָּוִד בְּשִׂמְחָה:

¹² Now it was told to King David, saying: “The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that (belongs) to him because of the ark of God. So, David went and he brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom (to) the city of David with joy.

¹⁰⁵ A Gittite was normally identified as a resident of any city named Gath. Several such cities in Israel are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, for example: Gath Hepher (2 Kings 14:25); Gittaim (2 Samuel 4:3; Nehemia 11:33); Gath Rimmon (Joshua 19:45; 21:24; 1 Chronicles 6:69). Some scholars such as Hertzberg (1964:279) and McCarter (1984:170) take the second part of the name Obed-Edom as the name of a god and assume that he was a Philistine originating from the city of Gath (1 Samuel 5:8-10) that formed part of the Philistine pentapolis (1 Samuel 6:17). Scholars such as Budde (1902:230) hypothesize even further by suggesting that an Israelite would not be willing to take in the ark after the events mentioned in verse 7, and therefore the ark was deposited with a trusted Philistine instead. I do not agree with this hypothesis since no Philistine would have wanted to be associated with the ark given the disastrous events mentioned in 1 Samuel. Neither would David have trusted any Philistine to safeguard the ark and show it the proper respect it deserved. Rather, I suggest that Obed-Edom was not of the Philistines but of the Levitical priestly clan. The parallel text in 1 Chronicles (specifically 1 Chronicles 15:17-25; 16:5,38) indicates that he was a Kohathite, possibly from the Israelite town of Gath Rimmon (Keil & Delitzsch, 1975:262), described as a musician, singer, caretaker of the ark of the covenant, and later gatekeeper of the temple. Thus, for David to have placed the ark of the covenant in his care seems appropriate since the Kohathite clan were appointed as the caretakers of the ark (Numbers 4:1-15; Deuteronomy 10:8).

Discussion:

בִּרְךָ – This verb is a Piel qatal, third person, masculine, singular of בֵּרַךְ meaning “to bless” (Holladay, 1971:49). Through the repetition of בֵּרַךְ, the author reminds the reader that God had already blessed Obed-Edom and his household in verse 11. Furthermore, the employment of בֵּרַךְ in this sentence signifies that the blessings bestowed took on a visual form, and due to this visualisation, the people could observe the blessings of God upon Obed-Edom and his household, and thus report to David what was taking place in his absence. Through these acts, David was encouraged to continue with his intention to bring the ark of the covenant to his city.

וַיַּעַל אֶת־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים – The verb in this phrase can either grammatically be a Qal wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of עָלָה meaning “to go up” (Holladay, 1971:273), or a Hiphil wayyiqtol, third person, masculine, singular of עָלָה meaning “to bring up” (Holladay, 1971:273). Since this verb is used in conjunction with a direct object (אֶת־אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים), it is proposed that the Hiphil stem formation is employed here, so that the phrase may read “and he brought up the ark of God”. The use of the verb וַיַּעַל is very significant as it is used to express the final “station” or resting place for the ark of the covenant on its journey. The first station was represented by the house of Abinadab, on a hill (verse 3), which suggests that the journey of the ark of the covenant began on a high point. The ark was then moved to its second station, namely the threshing floor of Nacon (verse 6), which would have served as a low point in the journey. The third station would have been represented by the house of Obed-Edom (verse 10), where the side-movements (neither up nor down) employed suggests that the ark would not remain there for an extended period of time. Its fourth and final station, being brought up from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem (verse 12), implies that the journey of the ark also ended on a high point, as is appropriate for such a revered and sacred object. Thus, by linking the initiation (start) and the finalization (end) of the ark’s procession to Jerusalem

with both high points and the expression of joy, the author is able to bring the ark's final journey to a satisfactory and full-circle end.

David's second attempt to bring up the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem is introduced in verse 12. After receiving word that God had blessed the house of Obed-Edom due to the presence of the ark and God Himself in his home, David decided to continue with his initial plan to bring the ark to his city. The blessings bestowed on Obed-Edom and his household may have signalled to David that God's anger had subsided, and that now was an appropriate time to continue with the procession to Jerusalem, according to the prescribed manner. No mention is made of the almost thirty thousand men who accompanied David on his first attempt (verse 1). Rather, the author places focus once again on David alone, making him the focus of this scene (Morrison, 2013:88).

An important royal motif is introduced in this verse as well. For the first time in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, David is titled as "king" (מֶלֶךְ). This title introduces a key theme in the chapter, namely the adequate understanding of what it means to be king, but most importantly, what it means to be God's appointed king, and how the king should conduct himself before God. This change in terminology indicates that David is now beginning to properly conduct his role as king of Israel in the eyes of God, hence he is now worthy of being introduced and acknowledged as king (Firth, 2009:377).

The verse ends significantly with בְּשִׂמְחָה "with joy", indicating that joy is at hand once again and the primary emotion of the event. Now joy has replaced the fear, anger and uncertainty encountered in verses 8-11. The joyous procession and festivities can continue once more, yet this time according to God's divine laws and regulations.

Verses 13-15:

וַיְהִי כִּי צָעְדוּ נְשָׂאֵי אָרוֹן־יְהוָה שִׁשָּׁה צָעָדִים וַיִּזְבַּח שׁוֹר וּמְרִיא:

וַיְדֹד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל־עֹז לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיְדֹד חֲגֹר אֶפֹּד בָּד:

וַיְדֹד וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַלִּים אֶת־אָרוֹן יְהוָה בַּתְּרוּעָה וּבְקוֹל שׁוֹפָר:

¹³ And it was when those carrying the ark of the Lord had stepped six steps, that he sacrificed bulls and fattened calves. ¹⁴ And David was dancing with all (his) might before

the Lord. And David was wearing a linen ephod.¹⁵ And David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and with the sound of a ram's horn.

Discussion:

וַיְהִי כִּי צָעְדוּ – The combination of the verb וַיְהִי (“and it was”) together with the temporal expression כִּי צָעְדוּ (“when they had stepped”) following the verb¹⁰⁶ is significant as this combination is employed to update the reference time of the scene (*BHRG* §40.25.(2)(b)). The new, updated reference time then provides the temporal frame of the succeeding event, referring to the event of David sacrificing bulls and fattened calves. Therefore, the combination of וַיְהִי plus the temporal expression כִּי צָעְדוּ (“and it was when they had stepped”) serves as an introduction for the following event, David sacrificing bulls and calves, to take place. This event is then translated as “that he sacrificed bulls and fattened calves”.

כִּי צָעְדוּ... שֵׁשָׁה צָעָדִים – The verb in this phrase is a Qal qatal, third person, masculine, plural of צָעַד meaning “to step, march” (*DCH*, 7:139), and is used with the cognate plural noun צָעָדִים (“steps”) encountered later in the verse. Thus, when considering the phrase together, it can be translated as “when they stepped six steps”.

שׁוֹר וּמִרְיָא – Again, here we encounter two singular nouns that are used as collective nouns to refer to a number of bulls or calves. The use of the plural is supported by the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 15:26, where plural nouns are employed (שִׁבְעָה-פָּרִים) (וּשְׁבַע אֵילִים). Therefore, the reader should understand that not *only* one bull and one calf were sacrificed, but a number of them.

¹⁰⁶ See also van der Merwe (1999:83-114).

מְכַרְכֵּר - This verb is a Pilpel participle, masculine, singular of כָּרַר meaning “to dance”

(BDB, 502-503). As the noun כִּכָּר, which shares the same root as the verb, refers to round objects¹⁰⁷, it is possible that this verb refers to dancing that involved a circular spinning motion of sorts (Steinmann, 2017:17).

חָגַר אֶפֻּד בֶּד - The verb¹⁰⁸ here is a Qal participle, masculine, singular of חָגַר meaning “to wear, gird” (BDB, 291). Even though the verb is passive, אֶפֻּד בֶּד (“a linen ephod”) is employed as the direct object of the verb. This phrase should therefore be understood as “he wore a linen ephod”.

בְּתִרְעָה וּבִקּוּל שׁוֹפָר - The use of these three Hebrew nouns together in verse 15 is noteworthy. Often when these nouns are used together, it is either in a liturgical¹⁰⁹ context or a military¹¹⁰ context. Both of these contexts are attested in the 2 Samuel 6 narrative.

In verses 13-15, emphasis is placed on a number of elements, each discussed separately below:

(1) The text takes care in mentioning that the ark was being transported correctly this time with stating נִשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן־יְהוָה “those who were carrying the ark of the Lord...”. This implies that the ark was now being carried by its poles, most possibly by Levitical priests, as was set out in the law¹¹¹. This is also verified in the parallel text of 1 Chronicles 15:15. What is evident from verse 13 is that David learned from his previous mistake in transporting the ark according to the Philistine mode of transport, and has shifted to a mode of travel consistent with the instructions laid out in the law¹¹² (Morrison, 2013:88-89).

¹⁰⁷ This noun refers to a “loaf of bread” in 1 Samuel 2:36; 10:3, and “plain” in 2 Samuel 18:23.

¹⁰⁸ The verb is often used when referring to something being worn around the waist, like a sword (1 Samuel 17:39; 25:13), or sackcloth (2 Samuel 3:31). In verse 14 of 2 Samuel, it is used specifically with a linen ephod (also encountered in 1 Samuel 2:18).

¹⁰⁹ See Psalm 47:6; Leviticus 25:9.

¹¹⁰ See Joshua 6:5, 20; Jeremiah 4:19; Amos 2:2; Zephaniah 1:16; Job 39:25.

¹¹¹ See Exodus 25:14, 37:5.

¹¹² David’s realization of his mistake is recorded in 1 Chronicles 15:13, where he connects the tragedy of Uzzah’s death with the failure of the Levites in carrying the ark according to the prescribed manner.

(2) The second attempt of the ark's procession is marked with the sacrificing of bulls and oxen after those carrying the ark had gone six steps. There is much debate regarding whether these sacrifices took place only once after the first six steps¹¹³ or whether sacrifices were offered after every six steps. In my opinion, it would seem highly improbable for them to have offered sacrifices after *every* six steps, given the enormous number of sacrifices that would have been needed. Yet, the exact number of sacrifices mentioned in verse 13 is not important for the purpose of this study. What is of importance is realizing what these six steps represented – namely God's approval of the manner in which the ark was now being transported by the Israelites. This acted as a sign of God's permission to carry on with the procession to Jerusalem, and also God's permission for His presence as represented by the ark to be present in the city of David. The sacrifices¹¹⁴ made also represented David's humility, his new-found respect for the power of the ark and the presence of God it represented, as well as the relief and gratitude he experienced with receiving God's blessing to bring the ark to his city (Andrews & Bergen, 2009:231).

(3) A comparison can be made between the oxen mentioned in verse 6, and the bulls and calves mentioned in verse 13. The animals play two opposing roles in the two attempts made to transport the ark to Jerusalem. During the first attempt, the oxen were employed to draw the cart on which the ark was being transported. However, as has previously been stated, the oxen stumbled when the procession came to the threshing floor of Nacon, because the ark was being transported incorrectly. Thus, the oxen played a part in bringing the wrong mode of transportation of the ark to an end. During the second, this time successful, attempt, it is mentioned that bulls and calves were sacrificed, thereby paving the way for the successful transportation of the ark to Jerusalem. Thus, in the second attempt, the bulls and calves played a positive and productive role in the procession of the ark, as opposed to their negative and more sombre role during the first failed attempt.

(4) Verse 14 mentions that David wears a linen ephod during the procession, which has some significance. A linen ephod was typically worn by priests¹¹⁵ when performing their official duties but could also be worn by an individual leading or participating in the

¹¹³ Scholars such as Anderson (1989:106) and Smith (1977:295-296) are in favour of this theory.

¹¹⁴ Steinmann (2017:116) argues that the bulls were sacrificed as a sin offering (Leviticus 4) for Uzzah's sin of touching the ark, and the fattened calves were sacrificed as a fellowship offering (Leviticus 3:1-5, 7:11-21), meant to function as a sign of thanks.

¹¹⁵ The linen ephod is mentioned in several biblical texts. See Exodus 28:4; Leviticus 8:7; 1 Samuel 2:28, 22:18.

worship of God, as David does in this scene. David not only functions as the leader of Israel in worship but regards himself as a priest of God by wearing attire set aside for priests (Chisholm, 2013:213-214). The main function of the ephod in this text, however, is most effectively expressed by Meyers (1992:550): "The ephod functioned symbolically to bring a human representative of the Israelite community into contact with the unseen God".¹¹⁶

(5) Rejoicing was not simply expressed by sacrifice alone, but by dance, shouts, and the sound of a trumpet as well¹¹⁷ (verses 14 and 15). The journey of the ark to Jerusalem was now marked with celebrative sacred dance by David, mentioned as dancing with all his might, symbolizing his immense joy. This was accompanied with shouts and the sounds of sacred trumpets¹¹⁸ possibly blown by priests (Cartledge, 2001:437-439).

(6) Another contrast identified between the first and second attempts in bringing the ark to Jerusalem is the active role that David played during the second attempt. David is mentioned very little during the first attempt, emphasizing his inactive role in the events leading up to and including the failed first attempt, while in verses 14 and 15 he is explicitly mentioned by name three times, emphasizing the active and more positive role he took on with the second and successful attempt of the ark's transportation to his city.

Verse 16:

וְהָיָה אֲרוֹן יְהוָה בָּא עִיר דָּוִד וּמִיכָל בַּת-שָׁאוּל נִשְׁקָפָה בְּעֵד הַחֲלוֹן וַתֵּרָא אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ

דָּוִד מִפִּזּוֹ וּמִכְרִכָּהּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַתִּבֹּז לוֹ בְּלִבָּהּ:

¹⁶ And it was as the ark of the Lord was coming into the city of David that Michal, daughter of Saul, looked down through the window and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord. And she despised him in her heart.

¹¹⁶ The linen ephod is mentioned only twice in 1 and 2 Samuel, in both cases being worn by those performing some priestly duty. This further supports David's act as that of a priest in verse 14.

¹¹⁷ The use of a trumpet is reminiscent of the scene at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16, 18, 20:18). Shouting in conjunction with the blast of a trumpet can also be found in the story of the march of the ark around Jericho (Joshua 6:5, 20).

¹¹⁸ The trumpet was often incorporated in royal coronation ceremonies, alluding to the possibility that the procession of the ark to Jerusalem was intended to serve as the enthronement of God over all Israel (Chisholm, 2013:213-214).

Discussion:

וְהָיָה אֲרוֹן יְהוָה בָּא – A conjunctive waw with a Qal qatal, third person, masculine, singular of הָיָה meaning “to be, become, happen” (Holladay, 1971:78) is used with a Qal participle, masculine, singular of בָּא meaning “to come, go” (Holladay, 1971:34) to form a temporal circumstantial clause. Some¹¹⁹ argue that the form of בָּא encountered here is rather a Qal qatal, third person, masculine, singular of בָּא, then with the translation of “it came, had come”. However, I propose that the Qal participle is employed here, given that Michal saw the ark as it was coming into the city of David, and not when it had already come into the city. This would suggest that the ark had already arrived in the city by the time that Michal saw it, which is not the case. Michal saw the ark as it was making its way into Jerusalem. Moreover, some scholars such as Driver (1913:270) and GKC (§112uu) argue that וְהָיָה should be read as וַיְהִי. However, as the use of וְהָיָה is attested in several verses in the Hebrew Bible with the translation “and it was, came to pass”, it suggests that this was the form intended by the text, and therefore no correction is necessary in the proposed translation (Steinmann, 2017:108). The phrase וְהָיָה אֲרוֹן יְהוָה בָּא can thus be considered as a periphrastic construction (JM §121f) that indicates and highlights the idea of continuous action taking place, stressing that the ark “was coming”, and not that the ark “came” in verse 16.

וַתִּבֹּז לוֹ בְּלִבָּהּ – It is common for the verb בִּזָּה meaning “to despise” (*DCH*, 2:132-133) to take a direct object. In this case it takes the preposition לְ that is prefixed to the direct object ה' (literally meaning “to him”), so that the reader understands that Michal despised “him”, referring back to David.

¹¹⁹ As does Keil & Delitzsch (1876:336).

Reminiscent of verses 6-11, the second set of celebrations are interrupted once again in verse 16. As the festive and joyous procession are finally entering the city of David with the ark of God, and thereby the presence of God, the author interrupts this scene to introduce the antagonist of the narrative – Michal. Two important remarks deserve further discussion:

(1) Michal is introduced as the daughter of Saul (בֵּית־שָׁאֹל), not the wife of David¹²⁰. By placing emphasis on her parentage, the author implies that Michal behaved like a “true daughter of Saul”, and that she represented the dying house¹²¹ of the former king of Israel (Anderson, 1989:106). Saul was not accepted by God as an adequate or worthy ruler of Israel since he did not understand his position as king before God. Almost as a stark reminder of her father’s failures, Michal now has to observe the most important relic of the Israelite faith finding its permanent abode in the city of her father’s opponent, thereby granting David the permission and acceptance as king of God that Saul never deserved nor received (Firth, 2009:377).¹²²

(2) David is once again referred to as King David (אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ דָּוִד) in verse 16. This title may offer some additional clarification of Michal’s displeasure towards David. David is referred to as leaping and dancing before God¹²³, thereby before the ark, and Michal may have viewed this as behaviour not acceptable or fit for a king. However, Michal fails to realise why David wished to express his joy by dancing before the ark in the manner

¹²⁰ In passages such as 1 Samuel 19:11 and 1 Samuel 25:44, Michal is referred to as the wife of David.

¹²¹ With these actions, Michal followed her father Saul’s disposition rather than David’s. During the reign of Saul, the worship of the ark of the covenant as a representation of God’s presence was neglected, and no worth was placed on the significance of the ark and what it represented. Therefore, Michal acted as her father acted. All that she saw from the ark’s procession into Jerusalem was how David behaved himself, deeming his actions as unfit behaviour for the king, and not that the ark and thereby the presence of God was making its way into the city of her husband (Keil & Delitzsch, 1876:336-337).

¹²² Michal also had to witness the death of her father and brother, as well as the decline of her father’s kingdom. Her second husband was taken away from her by David, and David had gone on to marry several more women who could provide children for him, while Michal remained childless (verse 23). All of these events may have contributed to the severe ill feelings and crude expressions Michal directed towards David.

¹²³ When employing the phrase לִפְנֵי יְהוָה “before the Lord”, the presence of God is implied, especially when the name of the Lord (יְהוָה) is involved.

This serves as another indication that the phrase אֶת־אָרוֹן יְהוָה “the ark of the Lord” evokes the ark’s association with the presence of God.

expressed in verse 16 – his city of Jerusalem would now be the permanent abode of the presence of God (Andrews & Bergen, 2009:231-232).¹²⁴

Verses 17-19:

וַיָּבֵאוּ אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה וַיַּצִּגּוּ אֹתוֹ בַּמָּקוֹמוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הָאֹהֶל אֲשֶׁר נָטָה־לּוֹ דָּוִד וַיַּעַל דָּוִד
עֹלֹת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וּשְׁלָמִים:

וַיִּכַּל דָּוִד מִהַעֲלֹת הָעוֹלָה וְהַשְּׁלָמִים וַיִּבְרֹךְ אֶת־הָעָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
וַיַּחֲלֵק לְכָל־הָעָם לְכָל־הַמִּזְוָן יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה לְאִישׁ חֶלֶת לֶחֶם אַחַת
וְאַשְׁפֹּר אֶחָד וְאַשִּׁישָׁה אַחַת וַיִּלֶּךְ כָּל־הָעָם אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ:

¹⁷ And they brought the ark of the Lord, and they set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord. ¹⁸ And when David had finished from offering the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of armies. ¹⁹ Then he distributed to all the people, to all the crowd of Israel, from man to woman, to (all) man, a loaf of bread, a portion of date-cake, and a portion of raisin-cake. Then all the people, everyone, departed to his house.

Discussion:

לִפְנֵי יְהוָה – As has been established by now, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה (“before the Lord”) is synonymous with לִפְנֵי הָאֲרוֹן (“before the ark”), as the ark was a representation of God’s presence. Therefore, the prepositional phrase לִפְנֵי (literally “before the face of”) functions as a locative (*BHRG* §39.13.(1)(b)) in a physical sense to not only refer to the ark, but to

¹²⁴ As an additional irony in this scene, the author states that Michal viewed the events taking place through a window (הַחֲלוֹן), and that the emotions accompanied with this event was displeasure, disdain. In 1 Samuel 19:12 it is mentioned that Michal once lovingly helped David escape, also, through a window (Youngblood, 2009:371). Clearly, the author intends to use the window in a metaphor of sorts to highlight how Michal’s feelings and attitude towards David had changed over time.

the presence of God as well, thereby establishing the ark as the location of God's presence.

הַעֹלָה – Even though the singular form of the noun is employed in verse 18, this noun should be understood as a collective noun meaning “burnt offerings”, especially given the use of the plural form (עֹלוֹת) in verse 17.

לְמִאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה לְאִישׁ – The first occurrence of the singular noun אִישׁ meaning “man” refers to males specifically in contrast to females, making a distinction between man and woman, while the meaning of the second occurrence of אִישׁ is inclusive and distributive, in a sense of “each” individual, where no distinction between man and woman is made (JM §137u).

וְאִשְׁפָּר אֶחָד וְאִשְׁשֵׁה אֶחָת – Steinmann (2017:110) argues that אֶשְׁפָּר and אִשְׁשֵׁה do not refer to cakes in the sense of a sweet, dessert-like food, but rather to pressed lumps of dried fruit. As the exact meaning of אֶשְׁפָּר¹²⁵ and אִשְׁשֵׁה are difficult to distinguish from the context, the traditional translations of “date-cake” and “raisin-cake” are suggested here.

וַיֵּלֶךְ כָּל־הָעָם אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ – The singular collective noun עָם meaning “people” functions as the subject of the singular verb¹²⁶ וַיֵּלֶךְ meaning “and he went”, yet again this phrase should be understood in a collective sense, where the singular noun אִישׁ once more has an inclusive meaning of “each” individual, referring to man and woman (JM §137u). Therefore, this phrase is then best translated as “then all the people, everyone (i.e. every man and every woman), departed to his house”.

¹²⁵ Keil & Delitzsch (1876:337) suggest a translation of “a measure of wine”.

¹²⁶ See JM (§150e) for a discussion of the collective noun used in conjunction with a singular verb.

The episode between David and Michal is briefly interrupted with the conclusion of the ark's procession in verses 17-19. The procession of the ark to Jerusalem is finally and successfully concluded as the author mentions that they set the ark in its place inside the tent¹²⁷ that David had pitched for it¹²⁸. What is clear from this is that David anticipated and hoped for the ark coming to rest in his city, and that he prepared for this event by preparing a special place for the ark of God inside his city (Firth, 2009:377-378).

After the ark is placed in its new home, David is mentioned offering sacrifices before the Lord as an act of gratitude and respect. What is significant to note is just as sacrifices began the ark's journey to Jerusalem, now it is concluded with sacrifices as well. Two types of offerings are specified: burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, each serving a noteworthy and distinctive role in the rites of sacrifice that are observed in verse 17. Burnt offerings, also translated as "holocaust offerings", consisted of offerings of animals where the entire animal, with the exception of its skin¹²⁹, was consumed by fire on an altar. These offerings were made as a sign of atonement¹³⁰ and to ask for God's blessing upon the entire endeavour¹³¹ (Youngblood, 2009:372-373). On the other hand, fellowship offerings, also translated as "well-being offerings" or "communion offerings", consisted of offerings where only certain parts of the animal were consumed by fire. Most of the offering, instead, was distributed as food amongst the priests and worshippers¹³², and would have been incorporated in the series of offerings to establish and maintain good relations with God¹³³, as well as to consecrate the new house of God in the city of David (Cartledge, 2001:439-441).

¹²⁷ From context alone, it is difficult to establish whether this tent acted as a replacement for the tabernacle or the tent of meeting (see Numbers 7:89), or whether it functioned as temporary housing for the ark in anticipation of the construction of the first temple. Scholars such as Morrison (2013:90) are of the opinion that this tent indeed served as a substitute for the tent of meeting. However, many scholars, including Anderson (1989:106-107) and Hertzberg (1964:280), strongly hypothesize that this tent should not be compared to either the tabernacle or the tent of meeting. What we can conclude with certainty is that the tent would have resembled the structure mentioned in Exodus 26:1-37, and that the ark was treated very similarly as during the period when it was housed in the tabernacle (See, for example, Exodus 25:10-22; 26:33-34; 30:6, 26; 40:1-5, 20-21).

¹²⁸ A difference to note is that the ark was temporarily housed with Abinadab and Obed-Edom in houses, permanent structures. Yet, as concluded from the discussion, the ark did not remain permanently at either of these locations. Now, as the ark found its way to its permanent abode in Jerusalem, David places it in a tent, a temporary structure. This may serve as a foreshadow to what God says to David in 2 Samuel 7, that David will not build the permanent house for the ark of the covenant, which would have been the first temple. This honour was given to David's son, Solomon.

¹²⁹ See Leviticus 7:8.

¹³⁰ See Leviticus 1:3-9.

¹³¹ Burnt offerings also played a role in rites of purification (Leviticus 12:6, 8; 16:24), petitions (1 Samuel 13:12), votive or voluntary offerings (Leviticus 22:18), and public worship (Numbers 28-29).

¹³² See Leviticus 3:1-17; 7:11-18.

¹³³ Youngblood (2009:372-373) notes: "In particular, the fellowship offerings signified the desire of the worshippers to (re)dedicate themselves to God in covenantal allegiance and to (re)affirm their king as God's covenanted temporal ruler. It is therefore possible that the present ritual procedures also imply David's formal (re)investiture as king over Israel in Jerusalem".

Along with his role in the sacrifices that were offered, David performs the role of a priest once again by blessing the people of Israel in the name of the Lord of armies. The name of God used here, the Lord of armies (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), is the same name used in verse 2.

The divine name was identified in verse 2 to serve as an initiation of the journey from Kiriath-Jearim, and the journey is concluded with the calling out of the same divine name with blessings over all Israel. With the sacrifices and the reference to the divine name, the author is able to complete the story and journey of the ark in 2 Samuel 6, the full circle achieved in verse 18¹³⁴.

Lastly, David distributes some additional portions of food¹³⁵, mostly consisting of bread, dates, and raisins, and finally sends every person¹³⁶ to return to their homes. The general festivities are now concluded. As the ark has found its permanent resting place in Jerusalem, Jerusalem is not only the political centre of all Israel but also serves as the centre of worship and religion as it houses the presence of God (Hertzberg, 1964:280). All of these rituals mentioned in verses 17-19 may have been a part of an enthronement ceremony, celebrating God's enthronement over Jerusalem and Israel, although from context alone this is difficult to establish as accurate¹³⁷. What is evident, however, is that these rituals echo the account in Leviticus 9:22-23, where the same set of events took place¹³⁸, with David's actions echoing the procedures of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, whereby God and Israel are reconciled once again (Barron, 2015:63).

¹³⁴ See Watson (1995:284-286) for a discussion of this phenomenon of repetition as an "envelope figure".

¹³⁵ David distributing food, including staple food, may serve as an indication that with the presence of God in the city, the people will always be fed, cared for, and live a prosperous life. Everyone will prosper because of the presence of God in Jerusalem. The distributed food may thus serve as a symbol for life.

¹³⁶ The author takes care to emphasize that these rations were distributed to both men and women. As there were differences in gender roles in ancient Israelite culture, all were seen as equal in this instance. Therefore, women were allowed to partake in these festivities at the same level as the men were allowed (Steinmann, 2017:117).

¹³⁷ Anderson (1989:106-107) is of the opinion that there is no evidence to indicate that this event served as the enthronement of God over Jerusalem and Israel.

¹³⁸ In Leviticus 9:22-23, sacrifices were offered before the tent of meeting, Aaron blessed the people present, offered a burnt as well as a fellowship offering, entered the tent of meeting, and upon exiting the tent of meeting, he blessed the people again.

Verses 20-23:

וַיָּשָׁב דָּוִד לְבָרֶךְ אֶת-בֵּיתוֹ וַתֵּצֵא מִיכַל בַּת-שָׁאוּל לְקִרְאֵת דָּוִד וַתֹּאמֶר מַה-נִּכְבָּד

הַיּוֹם מִלֶּדְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר נִגְלָה הַיּוֹם לְעֵינַי אֲמָהוּת עֲבָדָיו כְּהַגְלוֹת נְגִלוֹת אֶחָד

הָרָקִים:

וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-מִיכַל לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר-בִּי מֵאֲבִיךָ וּמִכָּל-בֵּיתוֹ לְצֹוֹת אֹתִי

נִגִּיד עַל-עַם יְהוָה עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשַׁחֲקֵתִי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

וְנִקְלַתִּי עוֹד מִזֹּאת וְהָיִיתִי שָׁפֵל בְּעֵינַי וְעַם-הָאֲמָהוּת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ עִמָּם אֲכַבְּדָהּ:

וּלְמִיכַל בַּת-שָׁאוּל לֹא-הָיָה לָהּ יֶלֶד עַד יוֹם מוֹתָהּ:

²⁰ When David returned to bless his house, Michal, daughter of Saul, came out to meet David, and she said: "How the king of Israel behaved with dignity today, who exposed himself today to the eyes of the maid-servants of his servants, like one of the vulgar ones exposes himself!" ²¹ So David said to Michal: "(It was) before the Lord, who chose me instead of your father and from all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people¹³⁹ of the Lord, over Israel. Therefore, I will celebrate before the Lord. ²² And I will humble myself more than this! I may be humiliated in my eyes, but with the maidservants of whom you spoke – with them I will be honoured!" ²³ And there was no child for Michal, daughter of Saul, to the day of her death.

Discussion:

נִגְלָה... מַה-נִּכְבָּד – Authors such as GKC (§148b) argue that the interrogative particle¹⁴⁰

מַה is employed in a mocking sense, not to introduce a rhetorical question or express an

¹³⁹ The same wording used by David in verse 21 is employed in 1 Samuel 13:14, where Samuel informed Saul that the Lord had chosen someone else as king in Saul's place: בִּקֵּשׁ יְהוָה לוֹ אִישׁ כָּל־בְּבוֹ וַיִּצְוֵהוּ יְהוָה לְנִגִּיד עַל-עַמּוֹ

¹⁴⁰ This interrogative particle is commonly employed to introduce a rhetorical question. It can also be used to express exclamation, in the sense of astonishment, admiration, wonder, indignation, contempt, and so forth (Fuller & Choi §62a).

exclamation, but rather to introduce a statement. The interrogative particle is placed before the Niphal verbs, which further highlights the mocking manner with which Michal spoke to David. The Niphal verbs both have a reflexive sense, referring to an action done upon oneself (*BHRG* §16.3.2.(b)). The first verb נִכְבֵּד, of which the root is כבד, is usually employed in the Piel stem formation with a meaning of “to honour, to glorify” (BDB, 457). Yet the Niphal form of the verb is employed sarcastically in this instance, meant to refer to David as “glorifying” *himself*, which he did not do. The same can be said of the second verb נִגְלָה, of which the root is גלה. In the Qal stem formation, this verb can be translated as “to reveal, to uncover” (BDB, 162-163), but again the use of the Niphal form of the verb is meant to place attention on how Michal uses it in an indecent sense, referring to David as “exposing” *himself* to others, which again he did not do.

כְּהִגְלוֹת נִגְלוֹת – Some discussion is needed of the infinitive absolute (נִגְלוֹת) that follows an infinitive construct (כְּהִגְלוֹת) of the same root in verse 20. The Niphal infinitive construct, employed with the preposition כִּי, of the root גלה, meaning “to reveal, uncover”, is followed by the Niphal infinitive absolute of the same root גלה. Driver (1913:272) hypothesizes that the infinitive absolute functions as a complement to the cognate verb (being the infinitive construct) and is therefore utilized for “the sake of assonance” with the cognate verb, thereby the meaning of the verb is strengthened with the use of the infinitive absolute. Gibson (§101) and Fuller & Choi (§13j) are in agreement that the infinite absolute is employed as a subject complement (since it appears after the cognate verb), thus placing attention on David as the subject and on his actions. It should be noted that this construction has been theorized by some scholars as a scribal error. GKC (§75y) is of the opinion that it would be improbable for the infinitive absolute to emphasize or add significance to the infinitive construct, and that the infinitive absolute is the result of a correction of an erroneous repetition of the infinitive construct (כְּהִגְלוֹת). In my opinion, the infinitive absolute does add meaning to the infinitive construct and the overall significance of the employment of these verbs in verse 20, as it would further highlight

the action of “revealing, uncovering” oneself in a manner that may seem indecent to some, as well as to place attention on David’s significant actions in this scene.

הָרֵקִים (רִיק) - The noun הָרֵקִים deserves some discussion. Its adjectival use

literally means “empty” (Holladay, 1971:339). When referring to people, as is the case in verse 20, it refers to an individual short of strong principles of right and wrong¹⁴¹. The use of this construction places the attention of the reader on Michal’s insult, disgust and criticism of David’s actions and attitude, further emphasizing Michal’s mockery and belittlement of David.

לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר-בִּי – The use of בִּי, translated here as “me”, in this phrase,

translated as “it was before the Lord who chose me” is extremely significant as it reflects one of the many attempts made by the text to place the attention of the reader on the fact that the Lord choose David above his predecessor Saul, to be ruler of Israel. The incorporation of בִּי in this phrase clearly emphasizes the choice made by the Lord between these two kings, a choice reflecting which king was more worthy to reign over *His* land as *His* representative (Gilmour, 2011:85).

מֵאֲבִיךָ וּמִכָּל-בֵּיתוֹ – The repetition of the preposition מֵן is significant as it places focus

on the distinction made between David and his predecessor Saul. What is of significance here is the fact that God chose David “*instead of, rather than*” Saul and his entire line, and furthermore that God rejected Saul and his line, thereby making possible David’s ultimate succession to the throne and God’s approval of him as king of all Israel, an approval Saul would never receive. Thus, the preposition מֵן is employed here to further

highlight the distinction made by God Himself between David and Saul. Furthermore, it is important to pay attention to the second person pronominal suffix present in the word

מֵאֲבִיךָ “and instead of *your* father”. The usage of the pronominal suffix stresses David’s statement to Michal and reminds her that it is *her* father that was replaced by David as

¹⁴¹ See Judges 9:4; 11:3; 2 Chronicles 13:7.

king. If מֵאֲבִידָּךְ is considered with וּמִכָּל־בֵּיתוֹ “and from all his house”, this would further highlight David’s reminder to Michal of her parentage, and that the Lord rejected not only Saul, but all of “his house”, which would include Michal. The connection between Michal and her father is further strengthened by the similarity of sound between the word מִכָּל (“from all”) and Michal’s name מִיכָל (Gilmour, 2011:85).

עַל־עַם – The word עַם, here translated as “people”, should be considered and understood as a term referring to Israel as a whole nation, in conjunction with its typical usage and expected translation (Trebolle, 2010:276).

אֶכְבֹּדָּה – The form of the verb encountered here is a cohortative (with the characteristic הָ suffix), but within the context of verse 22 it may be translated as an imperfect. The meaning of the Niphal use of the verb is the passive of its usual Piel form meaning “to honour” (BDB, 457). Thus, this verb is best translated here in a passive sense as “to be honoured”. Driver (1913:273) argues that the cohortative is out of place in the verse, and that it should rather be replaced with its imperfect form אֶכְבֶּר, since it is not a wish or request¹⁴² being expressed, but rather a belief or conviction.

יָלֵד – This noun comes from the verb יָלַד meaning “to bear” (Holladay, 1971:134), which makes reference to the birth of David’s children by his other wives in 2 Samuel 3:2, 5; 5:13. Thereby, Michal’s barrenness is highlighted by this distinction made between the wives who could bear David’s children, and Michal who could bear no children. As Evans (2018:353) states, Michal’s inability to produce children may have acted as God’s final step in the judgement and ultimate rejection of Saul and his house. Because Michal, just as her father Saul, would not bow to the kingship and authority of God, God punished her

¹⁴² The cohortative often expresses directives in the first person, such as propositions or requests (BHRG §19.5.1.2.(1)).

by her remaining childless until her death. As a result, the royal line of Saul ended with Michal's barrenness (Vannoy, 2009:301).

An important phenomenon that occurs in verses 21 and 23, known as left dislocation¹⁴³ or *status pendens* (BHRG §48), is worth discussion. Left dislocation occurs when a construction with a word (normally a noun or pronoun) that describes the main or chief subject is isolated or deliberately placed at the beginning of a clause. This sub-clause is normally followed by the main clause, in which the subject is resumed by a pronoun or a pronominal suffix, known as the resumptive (GKC §143c). For an example, in verse 21 the dislocated constituent forms part of the following phrase:

לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרָבִי מֵאֲבִיךָ וּמִכָּל־בֵּיתוֹ לְצֹת אֶתִּי נָגִיד עַל־עַם יְהוָה עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל

The resumptive element in verse 21 is then לִפְנֵי יְהוָה. In verse 23, the dislocated constituent is וּלְמִיכָל בַּת־שָׁאוּל and the resumptive element is לָהּ. The importance of these dislocated constructions is apparent, as it is meant to place special focus on the subject or topic that is resumed in the main or matrix clause, essentially emphasizing the subject or topic through repetition (BHRG §48.2.1). Therefore, in verse 21, the topic of where David was celebrating is highlighted, namely he was celebrating לִפְנֵי יְהוָה “before the Lord”, thereby also before the ark. The presence of God is thereby made topic by the left dislocation in verse 21, reminding the reader that it was before God and the ark that David was celebrating. In verse 23, the left dislocation emphasizes the topic again, the topic being the identification of Michal as the daughter of Saul, reminding the reader of Michal's parentage and introducing one of the probable reasons why Michal was left childless by God.

The closing scene of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 involves the confrontation episode between David and Michal. As David sent all those who attended the festivities on their way home, he returned to his own house with the desire to bless it as he had blessed the people in verse 18. What can be determined is that David wished for his house, his family, to rejoice with him and to take part in this joyous occasion. However, the response he

¹⁴³ Gibson (§150) and GKC (§143c) refer to this phenomenon as extraposition or *casus pendens*.

had hoped for was not the response he received. Michal mockingly refers to David's actions as those not acceptable for a king, even accusing him of exposing himself to the crowd as he was leaping and dancing with all his might. It may be possible that she implied that her father Saul, the previous king of Israel, would not have acted in such a manner as David had (Cartledge, 2001:441). David reacts to Michal's accusations by reminding her that her father was rejected by God, and that David himself was chosen as king of Israel instead of her father. David's display was not to honour¹⁴⁴ anyone other than God, and he would "humble" himself once more if it meant that he could continue to rejoice knowing that the presence of God was now housed with him in his city. Michal's ultimate punishment for her pride and reluctance to acknowledge the significance and importance of this event is expressed in verse 23 with the statement that Michal died childless¹⁴⁵. Her childlessness formed part of the judgement of God upon Saul and his entire house¹⁴⁶. With Michal the line of Saul died, as the house of Saul did not even continue through his other daughters (Andrews & Bergen, 2009:232). What is to be concluded from these final verses is that David acknowledged the true significance of the ark coming to its final rest in his city, as now he not only housed the most important and holiest object of the Israelite faith, but with it the presence of God. In my opinion, David did not indecently expose himself before others while rejoicing and dancing before the ark, he 'exposed' and expressed his utter joy and happiness knowing that the presence of God was now present and remaining with him in his city. No greater blessing could be bestowed upon a king, and therefore David leaped and danced with all his might with this knowledge.

5.3. Textual Discussion of 2 Samuel 6:

In order to conclude the discussion of the topic of this study, let us review the more noteworthy events mentioned in the above analysis, as well as their significance. I will

¹⁴⁴ Gilmour (2011:84) attempts to make a distinction between how Michal and David viewed honour differently. For Michal, honour was expressed or reflected in outward behaviour, which explains why she criticized David's outward expressions of joy as dishonourable behaviour for a king. On the other hand, David expressed his honour by inward behaviour or expression, i.e. through his faith and his joy expressed, as we can see clearly reflected in the last verses of 2 Samuel 6.

¹⁴⁵ The absence of children was one of the most severe punishments, as it was ultimately seen as a divine punishment. Psalm 127:3 especially states that children are a reward from God. Thus, for a woman to remain childless would have been a sign of divine retribution.

¹⁴⁶ Others argue that Michal remained childless due to her reluctance to have conjugal relations with David. However, her childlessness resulted so that the line of Saul could essentially die with her, so that no heir of Saul could ever ascend the throne. See, for example, Anderson (1989:107), Arnold (2003:461), Barron (2015:6), Cartledge (2001:442), Steinmann (2017:18), Youngblood (2009:375).

pay special attention to these noteworthy events as the author incorporated these events in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to highlight the ark as a representation of God's presence. The aim of this discussion is for the reader to be able to better interpret and understand the topic at hand in light of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6.

After David conquered Jerusalem and established it as his new capital city, and after replacing Saul as Israel's king, he intended to bring up the most important and sacred object of the Israelite religion – the ark of the covenant – from where it was housed in Baalah Judah (Kiriath Jearim) in the house of Abinadab. The ark was left in Baalah Judah with Abinadab for some twenty years (1 Samuel 7:1) after it was placed there by the people of Beth-Shemesh, who were severely punished by God with death after seventy people looked unto the ark and therefore violated its holiness (1 Samuel 6:19-21). David's choice here is extremely significant, as it shows one of David's many attempts to distinguish himself from Israel's first king, Saul. During the reign of Saul, the ark was left in obscurity in the house of Abinadab, the worship of the ark as a representation of God's presence completely neglected¹⁴⁷. The significance of the ark as a divine representation of God's presence among His people was also not recognized or appreciated under Saul's reign. This would ultimately lead to Saul's failure as king, and his ultimate rejection by God, as he did not recognize the importance of the ark of the covenant, or its God as sovereign and true ruler of the land (Vannoy, 2009:300). David's attempt to return the ark of God to its rightful place of glory, honour and appreciation among him and his people shows his intention to re-establish a renewed recognition of God as Israel's king, and therefore a renewed recognition of the ark as it represented God's presence. It was thus David's wish to return God's presence to dwell among His people once again (Thomas & Greear, 2016:178). The journey of the ark from Baalah Judah to Jerusalem began with an impressive procession. David chose thirty thousand of Israel's best men to accompany him (verse 1). The ark's massive accompaniment highlights David's enthusiasm over this endeavour and also stresses the idea that David acknowledged the ark's significance, as he would have realized that he was not only bringing this sacred object to his city, but with it the presence of God. Therefore, if he was successful, God would be present and remaining with him and his newly established kingdom. The reader is reminded of this concept in verse 2, where an elaborate and remarkable title of God is introduced: "the

¹⁴⁷ In the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13:3, it is stated that Israel did not seek the ark during the reign of Saul.

name of the Lord of armies who dwells (between) the cherubim on it". This title not only reminds us that God and His Name were closely associated with the ark, but that the author intended to express God's role as a warrior king, again emphasizing that God is the one and only true king of Israel. This elaborate title also expressed and stressed the holiness of God as represented by the ark (Phillips, 2018:97). However, one of the greatest's mistakes and possibly David's biggest lesson is expressed in verses 3 and 4. The author mentions that the ark was intended to be transported on a 'new cart', led by oxen and driven by Abinadab's sons, Uzzah and Ahio. This method of transport violated three of the instructions given by God as it pertained to the transportation of the ark: (1) firstly, the account gives no indication if God was consulted on whether and how the ark could be moved and transported¹⁴⁸; (2) secondly, the account makes no mention if the ark was covered with a curtain of sorts¹⁴⁹, shielding it from curious eyes, as even to look upon the ark could have deadly consequences; (3) thirdly and most importantly, the account makes no mention that the ark was carried by Levitical (Kohathite) priests¹⁵⁰, using the poles that were provided with the ark¹⁵¹. Rather, David followed a Philistine mode of transport. As a quick reminder, the ark was returned to the Israelites by the Philistines after it caused chaos and disaster in their possession, and they did so by sending the ark back on a cart (1 Samuel 6). Yet, according to verse 5, the parade with the ark of God moved forward with this sort of transportation, accompanying the ark with the sounds of several musical instruments. It is clear from verse 5 that David and all with him were celebrating as they moved with the ark, as the ark of God and His presence were with them on their way to Jerusalem, truly an occasion worth celebrating. Yet again, another vital mistake and very important lesson is introduced in verses 6 and 7. As the procession was making its way to the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen leading the cart suddenly stumbled, and in an attempt to stop the ark from falling off the cart, Uzzah reached out his hand and physically touched the ark. He was immediately struck dead. Here, our attention is brought to the sacredness of the ark, for the very reason that it is a representation of God's presence: Uzzah touched the ark, thereby invading the sanctity of the ark, as the law stated that the ark was not to be touched, not even by the priests

¹⁴⁸ See 1 Chronicles 15:13.

¹⁴⁹ See Numbers 4:5.

¹⁵⁰ See Numbers 4:15.

¹⁵¹ See Exodus 25:14; 37:5.

who were supposed to carry it¹⁵², or they will die. This may seem like a harsh punishment, as Uzzah's intentions may have been to honour God by protecting the ark, but nonetheless his act remained a transgression as he did not fear or respect the holiness of the ark, and thereby he disrespected the presence of God as represented by the ark (Keddie, 2015:52). David responded to this unexpected and tragic event with anger (verse 8), possibly because he felt that God acted harshly upon Uzzah since they both seemed to have good intentions in honouring God by bringing His ark to a special place of recognition, and that his initial attempt to restore the worship of God in his city had failed. This event was commemorated when David named the location "Perez Uzzah". This name is similar to the name "Baal Perazim" (2 Samuel 5:20), which was given to the location where God's anger and power broke out against the Philistines. Thus, the name "Perez Uzzah" not only links this chapter with the previous chapter (chapter 5) but serves as a stark reminder that when God's holiness is not respected, His wrath will be as equally destructive against His own people, just as it is against His enemies (Phillips, 2018:103). David then responded with fear (verse 9), as he asks how the ark of God can now come to him. He possibly could have seen this event as God withdrawing His blessing, and this could have made David question the future for himself and his kingdom if he could not house the ark, and thereby the presence of God (Vannoy, 2009:301). David could also have seen God, and thereby His ark, as too dangerous to deal with, since one transgression against the ark already resulted in death. As a result, David abandoned his initial attempt to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem, and he placed the ark in the home of Obed-Edom¹⁵³ (verse 10). In my opinion, this action of David is reminiscent of how Saul acted towards the ark, leaving it in the house of a possible foreigner as if he wanted to forget the ark and the events that had taken place under his command. However, rather unexpectedly, it is reported to David that within the three months that the ark remained in the house of Obed-Edom, God blessed Obed-Edom and his entire household, *because* of the ark of God (verse 12). As an irony, the same hand that dealt so harshly with Uzzah, now blessed Obed-Edom. What can be concluded from this is that Obed-Edom and his family treated the ark of God with the reverence that it deserved, and because of this

¹⁵² See Numbers 4:15.

¹⁵³ According to Evans (2018:352), David may have left the ark of God with a Gittite because no Israelite would house it after these terrible events took place.

recognition, God blessed them. This may also have served as a reminder to David that the God he thought was so dangerous and difficult to deal with, can also bless those who recognize His holiness (Thomas & Greear, 2016:186). When David received word of these blessings, he decided to initiate a second attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, now reminded that His God is also a loving and forgiving God (verse 12). This time it seems that David and those with him transported the ark in the correct manner, as verse 13 states that the ark was being carried, most probably by Levitical (Kohathite) priests, as is mentioned in the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 15:15. The author takes care in mentioning that after the procession had gone six steps, several sacrifices were made to God (verse 13). The implication of this event is significant, as the six steps shows that the procession of the ark and the manner in which it was being transported now had God's approval, and David responded to this approval with many sacrifices. The sacrifices offered are also noteworthy, as the first¹⁵⁴ were made as an atonement for sins, and the second¹⁵⁵ as an expression of gratitude. These offerings not only expressed David and Israel's atonement for their sins in transporting the ark in a manner that was opposed to God's Word, and Uzzah's sin in touching the ark and thereby violating God's presence and holiness, but also the immense gratitude and joy David and all of Israel would have experienced knowing that they were now transporting the ark of God according to His Will, with His permission (Phillips, 2018:111-112). What is also significant is how much David and all with him once again celebrated in verses 14 and 15. It is noted that David celebrated so much that he celebrated "with all his might", and that this celebrating was accompanied with shouts and the sound of a ram's horn. The atmosphere depicted here is reminiscent of the atmosphere of celebrations taking place in verse 5. This celebration by David and all of Israel is extremely noteworthy, as it expresses the immense joy and appreciation felt by everyone that the ark of God, and the presence of God, is on a successful journey to the city of Jerusalem, and with the knowledge that soon God's presence will be housed in their city. The celebrations not only emphasize David's joy, but also his humility as king before God, as the text mentions that David put aside his royal attire to put on a linen ephod (verse 14), mostly seen as apparel for priests or worshippers. Therefore, David did not celebrate before the ark of God as a king, but as a

¹⁵⁴ These offerings were normally used in sin offerings. See Leviticus 4:3; 5:15.

¹⁵⁵ These offerings were normally used in thank offerings. See Leviticus 4:10; 9:4.

common worshipper who was humbled by the holiness of God and His presence represented by the ark of the covenant. However, the author interrupts the narrative once again by an introduction of the story's antagonist, David's wife Michal. She is depicted as looking down on the procession of the ark into the city through a window, not partaking herself in the procession or in the celebrations of David and all of Israel, and as she sees David dancing and leaping before the ark of God, she despised him in her heart (verse 16). We will return to Michal's actions and offer an explanation for her behaviour in a moment. In verses 17-19, the author continues the celebrations taking place before the ark of God, stating that once David placed the ark inside the tent he had intended for it, he once again offered several offerings¹⁵⁶, which is reminiscent of the offerings mentioned in verse 13, blessed the people in the name of the Lord of armies, linking this verse with verse 2, and distributed among them several food items. It is obvious that David wanted to share the blessing he received from God with all his people, and therefore he blessed the people with a generous amount of food. He then concluded the festivities, and therefore the successful transfer of the ark of God to Jerusalem, and then he sent everyone home (verse 19). Now let us return to Michal. After David returned to his own home with the intention of sharing his joy with his family by offering similar blessings as those mentioned in verse 18, he is confronted by Michal who criticizes David's enthusiastic leaping and dancing before the ark of God, even accusing him of exposing himself to the audience. Michal might not have been offended by David exposing himself as such, but she viewed his dancing and conduct as undignified for a king. She did not see David's exuberant expression of his joy as befitting a king, and she even accuses him of making himself look foolish in front of his people (Evans, 2018:353). However, in verse 21, David reminds her that he was dancing before the ark, and therefore before God, who choose him as ruler over Israel, instead of her father, Saul. Michal might have compared David's actions to those that her father would have done. Her parentage is emphasized by the author, referring to her as the 'daughter of Saul' (in verses 16, 20 and 23), not as the 'wife of David', stressing that she acted much like her father with pride, who also did not appreciate or respect the ark of God or the presence of God that it

¹⁵⁶ These offerings were again in the form of sin offerings and thank offerings. The employment of these offerings again in verse 17 reminds the reader that it was the intention of David and Israel to atone for their sins once more, and again to express their immense joy and gratitude towards God for allowing them to bring His presence to their city.

represented. David reminds Michal that he was not dancing for her or the people, he was dancing for God, and if he could continue to dance before God to express his joy and the glory of God, he would continue to do so. What Michal failed to realize or appreciate was why David was celebrating as much as he were – he had the honour to house the ark of God in his city, and thereby the presence of God with him. As a result of Michal's arrogant and ignorant behaviour towards David, and ultimately towards God, God punished her with barrenness, as the narrative ends in verse 23 with stating that Michal died childless. It is clear what the author intended to express with ending the narrative in such a way – by stressing the contrast between doing God's will and receiving His blessing, as with Obed-Edom and later David, and not doing God's will and receiving His divine judgement, as in Michal's case (Keddie, 2015:60).

5.4 Conclusion:

Using the chosen methodology, namely a close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6, more specifically a verse-by-verse analysis, this chapter provides an examination and discussion on the structure, translation, grammar, and literary features of the text, as well as cultural information with reference to relevant biblical passages to aid in providing some context to the text encountered. Such an analysis aids in examining the text more effectively so that an accurate interpretation of the meaning and significance of the text can be made. Also provided in this chapter is an in-depth textual discussion of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 as a whole, where some of the more noteworthy events of the narrative are mentioned and discussed. These significant events have been incorporated into the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to portray some of the unique ways that are employed within the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to add to the idea or argument that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of God's presence. The following chapter will conclude the study with some concluding remarks, as well as some suggestions for further research and studies on this topic.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION:

The main research question dealt with in this study is how the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 incorporates unique ways in the narrative to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of the divine and holy presence of God. To this end, the aim of the study was to determine and explain, through a close reading of the text, how the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 uniquely employs the idea or argument that the ark of the covenant represented God's presence. To aid in answering the main research question, and to achieve the aim of this study, a discussion of the following was presented: (1) the description of the ark of the covenant in the Book of Exodus, especially focusing on its description in Exodus 25 and 37, to provide the reader with a visual description of how the ark of the covenant was illustrated in the Book of Exodus, and to provide the reader with an understanding of the importance of its contents. The functions of the ark of the covenant as expressed in the Book of Exodus were also provided, so that the reader can better understand and appreciate the function of the ark of the covenant in 2 Samuel 6; (2) the narrative/literary background of 2 Samuel 6, to help the reader understand the narrative within its larger cultural and literary context. Emphasis was placed on the function of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 within the larger "Ark Narrative", to help the reader understand the background of the narrative and the significance of the events set out in 2 Samuel 6; (3) the characterization of David as the main character of the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, to place significance on his emotions, actions, and dialogue presented within the narrative, as the text employs David as its main character to help portray the idea that the ark of the covenant functioned as a representation of God's presence. The largest part of the discussion was presented in Chapter 5, where the text of 2 Samuel 6 was examined and discussed with particular focus on its structure, translation, grammar, and literary features by incorporating a close reading of the text as the chosen methodology. A textual discussion on the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 as a whole was also presented, so that the unique ways incorporated within the narrative to portray the ark of the covenant as the representation of God's presence could be brought to light. Some of these unique ways included the following: (1) the text refers to the ark of the covenant in verse 2 as "the ark of God that is called by the name, the name of the Lord of armies who dwells between the cherubim on it". This special epithet is incorporated in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 to reinforce and strengthen the idea that the ark of the covenant represented God's presence; (2) the divine judgement against Uzzah for physically touching the ark of the

covenant in verses 6 and 7. This incident portrays and stresses the deadly consequences for not respecting the holiness of the ark of the covenant as it represented God's holy presence. Uzzah's transgressions against the ark of the covenant was thus a transgression against God Himself. Also, in verse 23, the reader is informed of the divine judgement against Michal, wife of David and daughter of Saul, by stating that she was left childless until the day of her death after she failed to realize and understand the importance of the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence, and for ridiculing David for his exuberant and expressive behaviour; (3) divine blessing that stands in a strong contrast to divine judgement. For his reverence of the ark of the covenant as a sacred object representing the presence of God, the text states in verse 12 that Obed-Edom and his household were abundantly blessed by God. This blessing is significant to the narrative as it prompted David to continue with his intention and campaign to bring the ark of the covenant to his city of Jerusalem; (4) joy and worship over the presence of the ark of the covenant as it represented God's presence is particularly noteworthy, especially in verses 5 and 12-15. The significance of the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence is expressed by David's joy and gratitude, emphasized by his exuberant dancing before the ark of the covenant and the various sacrifices and blessings that he made. The significance of the ark of the covenant can also be seen in the contrast made between David's spontaneous and lively worship, against the disdain and disrespect of the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence displayed by Michal; (5) the narrative of 2 Samuel 6 employs within its structure two attempts made by David to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, with the first failed attempt serving as a warning and lesson against the disregard of God's presence as represented by the ark of the covenant, and the second successful attempt showing the abundant blessings received by God for respecting His holiness and adhering to His laws and instructions. To conclude this study, therefore, the main research question can be answered as follows: A close reading of the text of 2 Samuel 6 can aid in determining the unique ways employed within the narrative to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence.

As a final note, I wish to end this study with the words of David himself, to express the worship of God during ancient times, so that it can serve as a constant reminder for us today, that with every word we read and write, we should worship God with all of our hearts, minds, and souls. Quoting Psalm 24:7-10¹⁵⁷:

⁷ Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory?
The Lord Almighty –
He is the King of glory.

¹⁵⁷ Quote taken from the NIV Life Application Study Bible (2019:870).

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

- What is the significance of the title אֲרוֹן יְהוָה when dealing with studies on the ark as a representation of God's presence?
- What is the significance of the epithet אֶת אֲרוֹן הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא שֵׁם יְהוָה when dealing with studies on the ark as a representation of God's presence? How should this title be interpreted in light of such studies?
- Is there a difference in significance to be noted between the titles אֲרוֹן אֱלֹהִים and יְהוָה אֲרוֹן when dealing with studies on the ark as a representation of God's presence?
- Should the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13-16 be consulted when examining the text of 2 Samuel 6 to portray the ark of the covenant as a representation of God's presence?
- Can an interpretation of the parallel account of 1 Chronicles 13-16 lead to different outcomes than stated in this study?

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