

**‘Sweet Psalmist of Israel’:
The Kinnôr and Royal Ideology in the United Monarchy**

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I am very happy to offer this paper in tribute to Anne Kilmer—the Fairy Godmother of Ancient Near Eastern music. Her work on the cuneiform musical texts—a brilliant series of philological insights, which she once referred to (both modestly and exactly) as ‘almost uncanny’¹—led to the resurrection of a classical Mesopotamian tonal system, and a complete reorientation of ancient musicology. Music has remained central to her own research, and she has encouraged many others in this direction. I will always be grateful to her for promptly responding to my somewhat groping inquiry about the Akkadian word *pitnu*; inviting me to visit Berkeley, she patiently helped me ponder a possible semantic connection with Greek *harmonia* (both are carpentry terms applied metaphorically to ‘tonal construction’: Franklin 2002, 67). From then on she offered endless personal and professional encouragement and support—too many occasions to list here. I am proud to call her my friend, and hope she will enjoy seeing her influence in this paper.

The Bible and Josephus offer detailed descriptions of musical organization under David (c.1005–965) and Solomon (c.968–28).² These have been considered anachronistic, a retrojection of the Second Temple’s sophisticated musical arrangements back into the golden age of the First Temple.³ Certainly some statements in the Chronicler and Josephus are likely to be mythologized exaggeration. Yet comparative material for the royal management of official music making in the Near East strongly suggests that traditions about the First Temple were built upon a solid historical core.⁴ The pre-biblical evidence for the *knr* within the West Semitic world and its periphery confirms the Bible’s own representation of the instrument as very ancient and widespread, with the figure of Jubal implying that it was cultivated by professional groups dedicated to temple service—and other musicians too, of course—from time out of mind.⁵ The Ugaritic material especially prompts several biblical parallels. The organization of that city’s ‘guilds’ exhibits structural sympathies with those of David (discussed further below). The semi-titular *n’m*, applied to royal and cultic singers in the Ugaritic texts, appears in connection with David himself⁶—an appropriate designation both for Saul’s lyre-playing favorite, and for David’s later role, when king, of praise-singer for Yahweh himself (see further below). The tradition of women’s victory singing, well attested in the Bible, probably also reflects a more widespread practice in the region.⁷

¹ Kilmer 1971.

² I Chron. 6:1–32, and 25:1–31; cf. Josephus *AJ* 8.94, 176. See generally Engel 1870, 277–365; Behn 1954, 53–62; Kraeling/Mowry 1957; Wegner 1950, 38–44; North 1964; Sendrey 1969; Sendrey 1974, 77–278; Polin 1974, 49–76 *passim*; Braun 2002.

³ Kraeling/Mowry 1957; Weitzman 1997, 101 f.

⁴ Franklin 2007.

⁵ Jubal: Gen. 4:21; cf. Franklin 2007, 36.

⁶ See Koitabashi 1996, 223 f.; cf. Tsumura 1973, 189 f.

⁷ Exod. 15:20; Judg. 5 (Song of Deborah) and 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6; Jer. 31:4. See Poethig 1985 *passim*; Meyers 1991, esp. 21–7, elucidating a Canaanite tradition of terracotta figurines of women frame-drum players, well represented on Cyprus following the period of Phoenician colonization (cf. Poethig *op. cit.*, 33–5). One may also note the ‘*tympanon*’ which is a regular attribute of the Anatolian goddess Cybele. Its presence in the iconography of Atargatis, ‘the

These points alone already justify the view that the United Monarchy's musical apparatus grew organically out of a larger cultural matrix, rooted in the palace-temple complexes of the Late Bronze Age.⁸ Indeed it is at just this time that Jewish society—at least the higher tier conspicuous in the biblical narrative—most closely resembles that of other Near Eastern states. The matter is put expressly thus when the Israelites are portrayed as importuning Samuel for a king, 'That we also may be like other nations'.⁹ A king who aspired to be a respected player on the international scene required a royal apparatus equal to that of his rivals, complete with palace, temple, and all the specialized artisans and functionaries needed to build and staff them. Conversely, the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 meant the dismantling of these same institutions.¹⁰ The cosmopolitan standards of royal ideology and cultural attainment which David, Solomon, and their successors strove to emulate can be traced back in part ultimately to the last centuries of the third millennium, when the dynasties of Akkad and Ur III established perennial models of kingship and empire. It is symptomatic that the Hebrew words for 'palace'/'temple', 'throne', and 'scribe' are all ultimately Sumerian in origin.¹¹

Solomon especially appears as a typical Near Eastern monarch. The wide array of precious gifts he gave and received indicates his full membership in a Club of Powers.¹² It was largely through such exchanges that he built the First Temple in Jerusalem. Hiram of Tyre gave both materials and labor for the time-consuming project, which lasted a conventional seven years; in return Solomon sent annual consignments of grain and oil, payment for the workers, and 'twenty cities in the land of Galilee'.¹³ At this point in history, the use of Lebanese cedars must have been *de rigueur*, their acquisition by conquest or exchange virtually a royal rite-of-passage.¹⁴ Clearly the temple was a cosmopolitan construction to rival other royal cult centers.

Solomon's splendid qualities, enumerated in 1 Kings 4, are strikingly reminiscent of Shulgi's self-portraits.¹⁵ The passage is effectively a completed checklist in the application for Great Kingship. A roster of subordinate kings and princes demonstrates his imperial status, while his occupation of an 'imperial' center of the world is established by the claim that all the world's kings came to hear his wisdom, which excelled that of 'all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt'.¹⁶ He was indeed 'wiser than all men'. *And more musical*. Like Shulgi, he is said to have exceeded his own seers, *singers*, and priests. He coined three thousand proverbs, *composed fifteen hundred songs*, and discoursed endlessly on botanical, zoological and

'Syrian Goddess' of Hierapolis, is due, according to Lightfoot 2003 (19, 21, 29 f., 32), to the influence of Cybele in her Hellenized representation.

⁸ Albright 1956, 125–9; Levine 1963b, 211 f.; Tsumura 1973, 176–8.

⁹ 1 Sam. 8:20, cf. 5.

¹⁰ 2 Kings 24:13–25:21.

¹¹ See Ellenbogen 1962, 67, 78 f., 89; Metzger/Coogan 1993, s.v. Temple; Dalley, et al. 1998, 61.

¹² 1 Kings 10:11–25. For the dynamics of royal gift exchange, see generally Liverani 1990.

¹³ 1 Kings 6:37–38, 9:11.

¹⁴ 1 Kings 5, with cedars at 6–10, 18 (acquired through gift exchange), 6:15–16, 7:2, 9:10–14, cf. 2 Sam. 7:7, 1 Chron. 17:6, 22:4 (David's provision for 'cedar logs without number' acquired from the Sidonians and Tyrians). Cedars in the palace of David: 2 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chron. 17:1; palace of Solomon: 1 Kings 7: 2–3, 11–12. Cedars from Lebanon, paid for by Cyrus the Great, were also used for the Second Temple: Ezra 3:7, 6:4.

¹⁵ Kramer 1991.

¹⁶ 1 Kings 4:30; cf. 10:23.

geographical matters, answering the ‘hard questions’ of the Queen of Sheba.¹⁷ His range of learning, as S. Dalley has noted, ‘echoes mainstream Babylonian texts studied by scribes in Mesopotamia and beyond’.¹⁸ The catalogue of Solomon’s achievements, though incredible for a single man, becomes perfectly believable as symbolizing the combined cultural achievements of his reign. In this especially Solomon follows closely in Shulgi’s footsteps, and provides an important parallel for the similar achievements of Kinyras.¹⁹

Solomon’s ‘harem’ is also very revealing.²⁰ His seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines must be inflated. But they are not unthinkably gross. The reported origins of these women—Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and Hatti—seem a quite realistic reflection of Solomon’s political and diplomatic reach: extensive, but not unlimited. As we have seen, the evidence from Mari, Nuzi, and elsewhere confirms that such ‘collections’ were actively developed.²¹ Moreover the harem was an important locus of cosmopolitan musicality.²² The cultural influence of such royal women also extended to the religious sphere when they imported native deities to their new home. One may compare the Hittite kings’ wholesale adoption of Hurrian and other gods, both from foreign wives and conquered peoples. This phenomenon has potential musical importance, because these deities may have been accompanied by the appropriate cult personnel and ritual repertoire. Solomon is said to have built cult-places for all (!) his wives’ gods including, famously, the Astarte (Ashtoreth) of Sidon.²³ It was this datum which prompted S. N. Kramer’s hypothesis that the Song of Songs was in fact a sort of sacred marriage text deriving from this cult.²⁴

A major state needed a system for the training and management of musicians. Traditionally this was inaugurated by David to accompany the Ark’s removal to Jerusalem, and was perpetuated in service before the Tabernacle at its new home.²⁵ The ‘singers’ were divided into families, which specialized in specific instruments: the major groups were strings (*kinnôr*, *nēbel*), cymbals (*m^ešiltayīm*) and trumpets (*shofar*).²⁶ One recalls the designation of Ugaritic guilds, including perhaps singers, as ‘sons of’ (*bn*), and the Bible’s representation of Jubal as an ultimate musical ancestor of *kinnôr*-players.²⁷

¹⁷ 1 Kings 4:31–3; 10:1–3. In later tradition the Song of Songs, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and many psalms were attributed to Solomon: cf. Kramer 1991, 193.

¹⁸ Dalley, et al. 1998, 74.

¹⁹ See for now Franklin 2006.

²⁰ 1 Kings 11:1–3.

²¹ For the ideology, see esp. Ziegler 1999b.

²² See p. Ziegler 1999a passim; Franklin 2007, 31–3.

²³ 1 Kings 11:4–8.

²⁴ Kramer 1963; against this see recently Westenholz 1995.

²⁵ 2 Sam. 6:5, 15; 1 Chron. 6:1–32, 15:16–24, 28, 25:1–31; 2 Chron. 7:6; cf. Josephus *AJ* 8.94, 176; Zonar. *Epit. Histor.* 1.116.3. The whole matter is well discussed by Kleinig 1993. David’s original organization is also invoked by the Chronicler in the context of Hezekiah’s reign, as well as Ezra and Nehemiah in describing the reorganization of music in the Second Temple, after the restoration from exile: 2 Chron. 29:25; Neh. 12:27–47; cf. Ezra 2:41, 64, 3:10–13.

²⁶ For the *nēbel*, Bayer 1968; Braun 2001, 528 f. A *nbl* may be attested at Ugarit in CAT 1.101:13 (Koitabashi 1998, 374), and now probably appears in the phrase ‘by the sound of the *nbl*’ in the new Astarte song RIH 98/02: see Pardee 2007, 31 f.

²⁷ At Ugarit actual heredity must often have been operative, but a metaphorical sense of ‘sons’ was probably equally common. Levine 1963b, 211 f. The possible attestation of ‘sons of the singers’ (*bn šrm*) at Ugarit is in RS 2.002 = *KTU* 1.23: 2. See Tsumura 1973, 24 f., 174 f.; Koitabashi 1998, 367.

The managerial structure of the First Temple along quasi-hereditary lines is reflected in the traditional attribution of certain psalms to the ‘Sons of Korah’, where Korah’s relative obscurity in the Bible itself tends to support the attribution.²⁸ The later belief that the psalms were produced during the monarchic period is doubtless true for individual songs, if not the whole corpus. The attribution of some to David himself, as well as to Solomon and Asaph, cannot be verified of course. But it has at least important symbolic value.

David was also remembered as building instruments and instructing the Levites in their use.²⁹ One recalls the royal order for instruments, including the *kinnāru*, at Mari.³⁰ Solomon too is called an instrument-builder: Josephus preserves an extra-biblical tradition in his vivid portrait of forty thousand lyres (*knr* and *nbl*) made of precious woods, stones and electrum, commissioned for the Levites to sing the Lord’s praises.³¹

The singers chosen by David, some of whose names indicate an authentically early date,³² were apparently under the management of a certain Chenaniah (Kenaniah; Chonaniah in the Septuagint), who ‘was to direct the music, for he understood it’.³³ The exact interpretation of his position vis-à-vis the Levitical guilds remains controversial; but some definite musical function seems guaranteed by the Septuagint, where he is called ‘Leader of the Singers’.³⁴ While it is elsewhere stated that he and his sons were ‘officials and judges’ *outside* the Temple, this actually resembles the Chief Musician of such states as Mari, whose duties were not limited to the strictly musical, but comprised important civic functions.³⁵ David himself, in the court of Saul (c.1025–05), had occupied an analogous position. There was not yet an elaborate musical bureaucracy for him to preside over, but he was evidently a royal singer and favorite confidant of the king, at least initially. And his catharses of Saul’s ‘evil spirit’ suggest something not unlike the purification-priests of Mesopotamian tradition.³⁶

Although David is treated in the biblical narratives as a musical pioneer, his actions only make sense against an older Canaanite tradition of temple music. This explains, first, the very concept of musicians organized notionally and/or literally by families. But even the Bible’s own narratological scheme implies the existence of musical resources on which David could have drawn for the training and outfitting of the Jerusalem clergy. It may be that some Levites had themselves already cultivated such traditions within ‘family’ groups, which were simply redeployed in the new cultic environment. The same Canaanite musical background is also assumed in Saul’s earlier performance with the musical prophets. Samuel foretells that the young king-elect will have a remarkable encounter at Gibeath-elohim (‘Hill of God’):

²⁸ ‘Sons of Korah’: 2 Chronicles 20:19; Ps. 42, 44–9, 84 f., 87 f. Cf. West 1997, 92. Their Levitical descent: Num. 16:1–11 (but cf. 31–3); 1 Chron. 6:22, 9:19, 9:31.

²⁹ 1 Chron. 23:5; 2 Chron. 7:6; 29:26; Neh. 12:36; Amos 6:5; Joseph. *AJ* 7.305.

³⁰ *ARM* 13 no. 20, lines 5, 7, 11, 16 = J. Bottéro in Dossin, et al. 1964, p. 39, with brief comment on 162; cf. Ellermeier 1970, 77; Schuol 2004, 97 and n. 196; Dalley 1984, 58. *ARM* 23 no. 180.12 = Bardet, et al. 1984, 174 f.; *ARM* 25, no. 547 r.9 = Limet 1986, 169 f.

³¹ *AJ* 8.94, 176, cf. 7.305. Cf. 1 Kings 10:12, Solomon’s lyres from the exotic, still-unidentified *almug* wood: see Burgh 2006, 24.

³² Albright 1956, 125–9; cf. Levine 1963b, 208, 211 f.

³³ 1 Chron. 15:22, cf. 27.

³⁴ Septuagint: ἄρχων τῶν ψαλμῶν. The musical function is accepted by the editors of the *New Revised Standard Version*. For the controversy see recently, with further literature, Kleinig 1993, 44–51; Leithart 2003, 59–62.

³⁵ 1 Chron. 26:29.

³⁶ 1 Sam. 16:23.

You will meet a band of prophets coming down from the shrine with *nēbel*, frame-drum (*tof*), pipes (*halil*),³⁷ and *kinnôr* playing in front of them; they will be in a prophetic frenzy. Then the spirit of the Lord will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person.³⁸

Elsewhere I have discussed this and other biblical evidence for musical prophecy, and its special connection with the *kinnôr*.³⁹ Important here is that the ensemble's make-up, built around the *kinnôr* and *nēbel*, is not dissimilar to what David's musical 'guilds' will offer,⁴⁰ and which one may comfortably posit for the Ugaritic 'singers' on the basis of the Rāpīu text and the economic documents.⁴¹ This array has been called a 'Canaanite (temple) orchestra',⁴² although the Ugaritic material shows that the broader 'Levantine' would be a better term. The famous cult-stand with musicians from Ashdod is a happy parallel here, given the Bible's statement that there was a Philistine garrison at Gibeath-elohim.⁴³ The players match 1 Samuel closely: lyre, double-pipes, frame-drum, and perhaps cymbals. Similar ensembles are often represented, with minor variations, in the corpus of Cypro-Phoenician bowls (*paterai*), ranging from the tenth century to the sixth.⁴⁴ So there is plenty of comparative material to show the inherent plausibility in the musical organization credited to the First Temple by tradition. Given the royal ambitions of David and Solomon, it is hard to believe that Yahweh would have lacked such honors.

Against this backdrop we may consider several aspects of the Jewish *kinnôr*, and its possible connections with an older phenomenon of divinized lyres, explicitly attested at Ugarit by the god Kinnaru, and by the multiform figure of Kinyras, legendary king of pre-Greek Cyprus, whose mythological portfolio includes a number of mainland connections too.⁴⁵ Naturally a Lyre God cannot be seen directly. Already in the Davidic period the Jews had begun to distinguish themselves sharply from their neighbors, despite a shared religious heritage. And the narratives relating to the United Monarchy were shaped by the concerns of the later theologians who reworked traditional materials into the forms we now possess. Most familiar perhaps is the anti-monarchic bias of the post-exile period, when the earlier defeat of Israel and Judah, and the destruction of the First Temple, had to be explained; this had a major impact on the redaction of traditional

³⁷ For this instrument, see Braun 2001, 525. It may be significant, as noted by Sellers 1941, 41, that this its first biblical attestation.

³⁸ 1 Sam. 10.5–6.

³⁹ Franklin 2006, 64–6.

⁴⁰ Note that this is the same ensemble which Isaiah 5.11–12 attributes to the drinking parties of Jerusalem's dissolute inhabitants, 'who do not regard the deeds of the Lord' (12). The prophet offers a musical illustration of the moral condition: an 'orchestra' which would be proper to sacral performance is being used profanely.

⁴¹ See generally Koitabashi 1996, Koitabashi 1998.

⁴² Bayer 1982, 32; Poethig 1985, 19, 23–7.

⁴³ 1 Sam. 10.5. Cult-stand: Bayer 1982, 32; Poethig 1985, 23–7.

⁴⁴ Cypro-Phoenician bowls: Markoe 1985; Matthäus 1985.

⁴⁵ See for now Franklin 2006, 44–7 and Franklin forthcoming with further references. I must cite here the stunning material in Stephen of Lusignan, who, in his *Chorographia*, refers several times to 'il dio Cinara' whom he distinguishes from a later king of the same name (8a, 17, 19a–21: see Papadopoulos 2004, vol. 1). This is the only source for Kinyras which explicitly calls him a god. But it must reflect a genuine tradition; the spelling Cinara is presumably due somehow to mainland Syrian influence. I have never seen this material cited in discussions of Kinyras. I shall give it detailed discussion in a book on Kinyras, provisionally entitled *Kinyras: The Divine Lyre*.

materials and consolidation of a canon.⁴⁶ Even so, there are many cases where an older Canaanite environment is more or less evident.⁴⁷ It is perfectly conceivable therefore that beliefs and practices, which in the Late Bronze Age would have been connected to the cult of a Lyre God, should have found their way into the Bible, surviving in altered form and contexts.

Soon after Kinnaru was discovered at Ugarit, A. Jirku hypothesized that the various ‘magical’ effects attributed to the biblical *kinnôr*—for example David’s purification of Saul’s ‘evil spirit’—would have been seen as the ‘Einwirkung des Gottes Kinaru’ (*sic*).⁴⁸ A. Cooper later objected that ‘the case for relating the use of the lyre to any purported function of [the Divine Knr] is tenuous’.⁴⁹ More recently, however, N. Wyatt has given some credence to the idea that the prophetic and exorcistic uses of the biblical *kinnôr* ‘may faintly echo the old theology, albeit long reinterpreted’.⁵⁰ Wyatt notes the direct invocation of the *kinnôr* in Psalm 57:

Awake, my soul!
Awake, *kinnôr* and *nebel*!
I will awake the dawn.
I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing unto thee among the nations (57:8 f.).

This, he suggests, may echo ‘an older usage when minor gods of the pantheon were called upon to glorify their overlord’. Wyatt is careful to note that this passage could be explained away as a simple poetic apostrophe.⁵¹ Yet given that a Divine Knr is known to have existed, within an institutional framework which predicts many features of the First Temple, how can one really distinguish between ‘simply poetic’—if such an idea is even valid for this period—and a more potent ‘ritual-poetic’? A final vestige suggested by Wyatt is that ‘the instrument appears to be credited in the tradition with the ability to enable communication between the spiritual and natural worlds’.⁵² This power is much like that possessed by the Sumerian *ba la ĝ*-gods.⁵³

So a more detailed exploration of how this communication was conceived and executed on the *kinnôr* itself will be useful here, both generally and for understanding the potency of David as a symbolic figure in his own right, and a royal performer in his own historical drama.

Music and prophecy are frequently linked in the Bible. Some of the Davidic musical groups were appointed expressly to prophesy variously to the music of *kinnôr*, *nebel*, cymbals and trumpets, recalling the diversity of the band of prophets met by Saul.⁵⁴ Yet

⁴⁶ An accessible introduction is Friedman 1987.

⁴⁷ See *inter alios* Albright 1968; Smith 1990.

⁴⁸ Jirku 1963.

⁴⁹ Cooper 1981, 385.

⁵⁰ Wyatt 1995, col. 912.

⁵¹ Wyatt loc. cit., adducing the Rāpū text as a parallel.

⁵² Wyatt loc. cit.

⁵³ Franklin 2006, Heimpel 1998; Gabbay forthcoming; 42–4; Gabbay forthcoming.

⁵⁴ Cf. Exod. 15:20 f.; Deuter. 31:19–22 (of Moses); 1 Sam. 19:20–24; 1 Chron. 25:1 (‘David and the officers of the army also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with *kinnôr*, *nēbel* and with cymbals’), with 1 Chron. 15:16–24 (David’s appointment of musicians from the Levites) and 25:3–6; 2 Chron. 5:12, 20:21–23.

other passages show that the *kinnôr* was the prophetic instrument *par excellence*. The Saul episode is important here for attesting the practice of musical prophecy by (soon-to-be) royalty. This ability, apparently in a quasi-ecstatic state, is taken as a sign of divine favor, a power given to a rightful king, who is possessed by the ‘spirit of the Lord’. Importantly, however, this is carried out in conjunction with a musical ensemble, apparently instrumental in establishing the appropriate ecstatic state. One may compare the situation at Ugarit, where divinatory inquiries were made by the king in conjunction with the performance of cult officials.⁵⁵

As Saul falls from grace, his increasing affliction by an ‘evil spirit’ is balanced by the passage of ‘the spirit of the Lord’ to David, whose ascent to kingship then becomes inevitable.⁵⁶ It is remarkable that this transfer of divine favor is effected precisely through the *kinnôr*. It is because Saul suffers from the ‘evil spirit’—having lost God’s favor—that he is advised to summon a *kinnôr*-player. And because David can play the *kinnôr* so well, he is summoned.⁵⁷ It is crucial that the advice to Saul is generic:

Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre: and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will feel better.⁵⁸

Here the ‘old theology’ shines through. For while, on the ideological surface, David has already been chosen by God, from Saul’s perspective it is a certain *type* that is needed. So evidently the desired cathartic power resided in the *kinnôr* itself.⁵⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, archbishop of Constantinople in the later fourth-century CE, in listing David’s youthful virtues, refers to ‘the power of his *kinura*’—where Greek *dunamis* has connotations of ‘capacity’ and ‘potential’—and describes *the lyre itself* as ‘even overcoming the Evil Spirit’ with its enchantment (*katēpaidousa*).⁶⁰ But this power existed only as ‘potential energy’ (to adapt Jirku’s *Einwirkung*) because it could only be released by a ‘skillful player’ in performance. David is nominated because ‘the Lord is with him’.⁶¹ This is a brilliant ambiguity, for while the phrase clearly alludes to the transfer of divine favor which marks the promotion of David as chosen king, from Saul’s perspective it means only that here was a qualified, that is ‘inspired’, *kinnôr*-healer. But this ambiguity may have a deeper, more essential force than would appear on the narratological surface here. For the two planes of meaning would neatly intersect if one may suppose that a ‘qualified king’ is precisely an ‘inspired kinyrist’ (this is apparently the essence of Kinyras). In any event, the episode of David’s selection clearly presents the idea that a ritual lyrist is only effective when divinely empowered. The Bible of course recognizes a single legitimate god. But one may reverse the terms of the relationship: a lyrist is effective only when

Musical prophecy may be implicit at 1 Sam 19:20–24; Ps. 49:2–5 (where the *kinnôr* is probably assumed); Ezek. 40:44–46. See generally Sendrey 1969, 481–9, 507–15; Shiloah 1993, 58 f.

⁵⁵ See Wyatt 2007, *passim*.

⁵⁶ Cf. 1 Sam. 16:14: ‘Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him’.

⁵⁷ 1 Sam. 16:14–23.

⁵⁸ 1 Sam. 16:16.

⁵⁹ Lyre catharses are well-attested in the Greek tradition with Orpheus, Pythagoras, etc.: cf. Franklin 2006, 59 f.; Provenza Forthcoming 2010.

⁶⁰ Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Funebris oratio in lauden Masilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopi* 73.2.7 (Boulenger 1908, p. 216): πρὸ τῆς βασιλείας ἢ τῆς κινύρας δύναμις, καὶ πονηροῦ πνεύματος κατεπάδουσα.

⁶¹ 1 Sam. 16:18.

empowered by his god: in the old theology, this was the god of lyrists. Here then Yahweh appears to have absorbed the powers of a Lyre God, and David is the ‘kinyrist’ who instantiates him.

Certainly the biblical narratives present music, and in particular the *kinnôr*, as a kingly virtue. But whereas merely Saul prophesies *among* the musicians, David himself wields the lyre, as though this put him ‘in closer touch’ with Yahweh. David himself of course was regarded as prophetic. Interesting here are the last words attributed to him in 2 Samuel: ‘The Spirit of the Lord speaks through me, his word is upon my tongue’.⁶² The *kinnôr* is close at hand here. Yet David’s own agency is eclipsed by the epiphanies which his inspired performances effect.

We are now in a better position to consider the most magnificent *kinnôr* performance on record. David’s establishment of a new capital, and his centralization of political and religious control, was acutely symbolized by the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem—‘a brilliant maneuver that effectively galvanized the loose confederation of Israelite tribes into a monarchical state’.⁶³ To be epoch-making, this needed to be a stunning public event, a massive display of solidarity unifying the divided tribes behind a new king. The accounts of 2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and Josephus, though closely related, are not identical. 2 Samuel is considered basic to the others.⁶⁴ But the event clearly left a deep and somewhat varied impression on the written and oral traditions, so that unique details from the Chronicler and Josephus may indeed have equal claim to consideration.⁶⁵ The shared narrative structure for all three is as follows.

After David had consulted with the country’s leading men⁶⁶ and drawn up the new musical groups of string-players, cymbalists, frame-drummers, and trumpeters, it was arranged for ‘the whole people’ to assemble.⁶⁷ The Ark was borne out on a river of sound. Yet not all was clockwork: there was a three-month delay *en route* after a driver tried to stabilize the Ark but was struck dead for touching it. After the Lord’s anger seemed to abate, David offered appropriate sacrifices, and the whole troupe, now reassembled, set out again with the same pomp and circumambulation. There follows the curious incident of Saul’s daughter Michal, David’s wife, who saw the king ‘leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart’.⁶⁸ The ritual closed with sacrifices once the Ark was positioned in the Tabernacle, where David’s musical groups would continue to observe the cult.⁶⁹ When Michal confronts David for his full or partial nudity before his maidservants, and the general indignity of his musical performance, she is afflicted with barrenness.

The direction of any deeper interpretation will depend on one’s own relationship with these sources. I see an obvious element of propaganda and media staging, and probably the narrative of David’s divine favor, which structures our accounts, was already being formulated on the ground.⁷⁰ How far this cynicism should extend, however, is not clear.

⁶² 2 Sam. 23:2.

⁶³ Seow 1989, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁵ Full account: 2 Sam. 6; 1 Chron. 15–16; Joseph. *AJ* 78–89. For the probable allusion in Ps. 132, see Seow 1989, 145–203.

⁶⁶ Joseph. *AJ* 7.78.

⁶⁷ Joseph. *AJ* 7.79: συνελθόντος οὖν τοῦ λαοῦ παντός, καθὼς ἐβουλεύσαντο. The expression is ambiguous, equally supporting the idea of a staged event and/or spontaneous popular movement.

⁶⁸ 2 Sam. 6:16 (quotation), 20-3; 1 Chron. 15:29; 7.86–9; Joseph. *AJ* 7.85–9.

⁶⁹ 2 Sam. 6:13–17.

⁷⁰ Cf. Seow 1989, 97–104, who also detects a ‘blatantly clear . . . propagandistic intent’ (102).

The massive musical procession, with its jubilant atmosphere, is clearly a sort of victory march. C. L. Seow convincingly reads it as a ritual drama in which David enacts Yahweh as the triumphant divine warrior; the basic structure reflects (he argues) the influence of the mythology of Baal on that of Yahweh, Baal's cult having made this impression while the Ark was housed at Qiryat-Ye'arim for about twenty years.⁷¹ Equally, however, this elaborate ritual display seems an apotropaic gesture, intended to forestall divine wrath at an intervention in the cultic *status quo*. It seems very likely that David and his advisors felt a very real sense of apprehension. The incident of the driver, however, is suspicious: it seems designed to demonstrate Yahweh's presence at the dangerous and enormous undertaking, and ultimately, when no further disaster befalls, to confirm the divine approval of David's actions.⁷²

Regardless, the traditions about the musical nature of the ritual are of considerable interest. The three accounts basically agree on its guildic nature, with massed ranks of lyrists, frame-drummers, cymbalists, and horn-players. Apparently the song and dance was executed by these same performers (at least those whose mouths were free), with the gathered host joining at least in the song. The Chronicler is of interest for specifying the involvement of Chenaniah, the 'Chief Singer' (see above). But Josephus paints the most vivid picture of David's own participation:

The king led the way, and with him was the whole multitude, hymning God, and singing every kind of local song, and leading the Ark into Jerusalem with a complex din of instrumental playing and dances and psalms and even of trumpets and cymbals.⁷³

More interesting still are the details he adds when describing the parade's resumption:

He brought the Ark to his own house, with the priests carrying it, and seven choruses which the king had drawn up leading the way, and himself playing on the *kinura*.⁷⁴

Note first this very striking example of seven-magic in a practical musical context. Indeed the whole event was apparently buttressed by sevens. A sacrifice of seven bulls and seven rams mentioned by the Chronicler presumably corresponds to the oxen and fatlings which, according to 2 Samuel, David offers before taking his seventh step after resuming the procession.⁷⁵ Seven-numerology is of course ubiquitous in the literature of the Ancient Near East and Egypt. Yet it is not merely a literary convention, a 'convenient number' signifying totality. Many ritual texts from throughout the entire region, from all periods, show that sevens were an important structuring device for ritual and magic. Besides many examples in the Ugaritic texts,⁷⁶ we possess a detailed prescriptive ritual

⁷¹ Seow 1989, esp. 207–9, with review of earlier interpretations on 2–8.

⁷² Seow 1989, 97–104 connects Yahweh's wrath and the killing of 'Uzzah with a 'dramatization of . . . mythological combat', comparing 'reenactments of cosmogonic battles . . . in state-sponsored rituals in Mesopotamia' (99).

⁷³ Joseph. *AJ* 7.80–1. 2 Sam. 6:5 states only that 'David played', but is more specific as to orchestration.

⁷⁴ Joseph. 7.85: τὴν κιβωτὸν πρὸς αὐτὸν μετακομίζει, τῶν μὲν ἱερέων βασταζόντων αὐτήν, ἑπτὰ δὲ χορῶν οὐδὲ διεκόσμησεν ὁ βασιλεὺς προαγόντων, αὐτοῦ δ' ἐν κινύρᾳ παίζοντος.

⁷⁵ 2 Sam. 6:13; I Chron. 15:26.

⁷⁶ Cf. Wyatt 2001, 92–4; Wyatt 2007, 54 vis-à-vis the Ugaritic ritual texts: 'evidently the number seven was of symbolic significance . . . no doubt with broad cosmological and ontological echoes'.

from Emar, governing the ‘enthronement’ of the high priestess of Baal, which contains numerous instructions based on the number seven.⁷⁷ The Emar text is also important for specifying ritual actions to be executed by a group of liturgical singers (*zammārū*), notably heading processions every time the scene of action had to change.⁷⁸ Similarly in Babylonia a corps of singers led a procession during the Akitu-festival.⁷⁹ This was doubtless a regular function of temple-singers throughout the whole region.

As I have argued for Sumerian material, seven numerology takes on a special interest in musical contexts, especially those involving stringed-instruments.⁸⁰ It is especially suggestive outside of Mesopotamia, where it furthers the likelihood that the heptatonic-diatonic tone-system was locally known—as indeed it was at Ugarit—and was endowed with the same magical properties implied by several Sumerian texts. Many marginal examples are best not pressed.⁸¹ But tending in the right direction is Solomon’s transfer of the Ark into the Temple during Ethanim, the seventh month of the year, and that the ritual involved massed musical praise to induce God to enter his new home. Much clearer, however, are the pious measures taken by Hezekiah (715–687) to restore the Temple from its neglect during the reign of his father Ahaz.⁸² The ritual included sacrifice of seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats. Cult musicians were present ‘with cymbals, *nebel*-lyres, and *kinnôr*-lyres’, and the music is carefully coordinated with the sacrifices: ‘When the burnt offering began, the song to the Lord began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of King David . . . all this continued until the burnt offering was finished’.⁸³ The music was surely seen as bathing the proceedings in wave upon wave of magical sevenness. This last case especially, with its invocation of Davidic precedent, encourages a similar interpretation for the less explicit examples of David and Solomon.

The parallels from Emar, Ugarit, and elsewhere for musical parades and the ritual use of sevens indicate not only that David’s procession to Jerusalem is perfectly plausible as an historical event, but that the surviving accounts may well preserve actual details from the occasion.⁸⁴ They amount to, and/or derive from, what in Ugaritic studies has been

⁷⁷ While other numbers are naturally also present, the intentional concentration of sevens is obvious. There is an offering of one ox and six sheep (11, 36 f.); ‘seven dinner-loaves, seven dried cakes’ (11); seven and seven *ḥamša’u*-men eating (12 f.); an unknown action lasts seven days (26); seven-fold wine and beer offerings (and some other non-seven offerings) are to be consumed by the seven *qidašu* and *hussu*-men (27 f., 38); the priestess is given a ‘seven-shekel silver *tudittu*-pin as her gift’ when enthroned (44); a sacred axe is placed on a statue for seven days (46); various offerings are made over a seven-day period; some are consumed by the ‘seven and seven *ḥamša’u*-men’ (49–59, cf. 54); each singer receives a share of sacrifice, sheepsins, and a dinner-load and jug of beer for seven days (79–83). Text and analysis: Fleming 1992.

⁷⁸ Processions: 8, 29–36, 45, 62–4. Additionally, two hymns were specified (33A, 73); and the singers’ share of offerings and their payment were stipulated (79–84). For singers at Emar generally, see Fleming 1992, 92–4. The ritual also involved lamentation, probably for the death of the old priestess (ibid. 173). There are other references at Emar to singers leading processions, as well as mention of female singers, *zammirātū* (93).

⁷⁹ Ibid. 93 n. 81.

⁸⁰ See Franklin 2006, 58.

⁸¹ For example, that David was selected for kingship after his seven older brothers had been rejected (1 Sam 16:10) is most simply explained as a narratological device and folklore motif; while it does derive special interest from David’s training as a lyrist, the two details are not connected in the text itself. See also e.g. 2 Chron. 5:3, 11; cf. 1 Kings 8:2.

⁸² 2 Chron. 29:21–8.

⁸³ 2 Chron. 29:27–8.

⁸⁴ For the same conclusion on other grounds, see Seow 1989, 209.

called a ‘descriptive ritual’, an account of ‘what transpired on special cultic occasions’.⁸⁵ One may compare the detailed ritual actions which are incorporated into a text like *Aqhat*.⁸⁶ By contrast the Emar ritual is strictly prescriptive.⁸⁷ Yet descriptive rituals are not mere literary productions. They were also functional, ‘quasi-canonical models, or manuals for the operation of the temple cults’.⁸⁸ That some such account of the Davidic ritual was composed at an early date would explain both the existence of the Bible’s more literary narratives, for which it could have been a source at however many removes, and their incorporation of divergent yet compatible details. It would also provide an attractive practical explanation for why the ritual actions of Solomon and Hezekiah share key structuring elements with those of David. All three include seven-magic alongside song-acts governing the establishment, building, or maintenance of the cult center. Moreover, the continuity between these events is made explicit. Solomon’s completion of the Temple is seen as the fruition of David’s own vision, the Levites ministering ‘with instruments for music . . . that King David had made for giving thanks to the Lord’.⁸⁹ The Hezekiah episode is justified by appeal to liturgical procedure ‘according to commandment of David’ (and the will of God, as communicated through the royal seers).⁹⁰ So here too one may view the Davidic narratives as reflecting a descriptive ritual which provided his successors with a blueprint for their own undertakings. Of course it may well be that David’s own actions were based upon an earlier Canaanite ritual of this kind, a product of the same cultural environment which inspired, or dictated, his musical reorganization.

With this we may consider more closely the musical dimension of David’s own performance. The king sings, dances, and plays the *kinnôr* before Yahweh, at the head of all his subjects, in front even of his own priests, musicians, and Chief Singer. As a victory procession for Yahweh, David plays the role of royal praise-singer, a position he had actually held under Saul. Equally, however, as a victorious king, this was David’s own triumph: he assumes a position analogous to that of Yahweh. From this perspective the ritual is an astonishing practical application of what appears to be, in the Sumerian texts, a rather poetic conceit: the king who excels his own singers, and single-handedly executes state rituals. It perhaps encourages a more ‘faithful’ reading of the Sumerian material. And it fleshes out what one supposes at Ugarit, where the king appears as the dominant actor in the ritual texts, and yet one must suppose the full involvement of the cultic establishment. David’s royal *kinnôr* performance is as close as we are likely to come to witnessing an actual ritual involving the Divine Lyre. Here more than anywhere the *kinnôr* is a powerful royal symbol, and specifically a symbol of the king’s favor in the eyes of ‘God’—or the chief god in the ‘old theology’. But the practical dimension of the lyre tradition makes the *kinnôr* more than a symbol. It was the actual instrument by which the king could cross the chasm separating gods from men. With it he could receive and communicate divine instructions, and channel divine power towards specific ends.

Why does Michal react against this performance? That she found it strange is important: such a ritual was evidently unprecedented in some way. This can be connected

⁸⁵ The Ark narratives closely match all generic criteria laid out by Levine 1983; cf. Levine 1963a, 105 (quotation).

⁸⁶ For which see Wright 2001, *passim*.

⁸⁷ Fleming 1992, 70.

⁸⁸ Levine 1983, 473.

⁸⁹ 2 Chron. 7:6.

⁹⁰ 2 Chron. 29:25.

with the equal newness, from the Jewish perspective, of the musical groups which were initiated for the same ceremony. Yet because this organization was modeled on the temple music traditions of the Bronze Age, David's own 'novel' performance probably derives from the same sphere. Indeed the two are clearly of a piece. It seems that David is putting on the mantle of palatial kingship, and conducting a ritual which is both his royal right and duty—publically demonstrating divine favor, while simultaneously seeking to secure it. His actions are in accord with the people's desire that 'we also may be like other nations', the request that led to the original appointment of Saul. The popular nature of David's rite is clear: it is repeatedly stressed that 'all the people' are present. In gratifying the crowd to this extent, David goes far beyond any royal display credited to Saul, and thereby shows himself to be 'more kingly'. Significantly it is Michal, the last vital link between David and her deposed father, who voices an objection to this new model of kingship. David, in his rejoinder, takes up the contrast with Saul, and asserts that the performance is his divinely-approved royal prerogative:

David said to Michal, 'It was before the Lord, who chose me in place of your father and all his household, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord, that I have danced before the Lord.'⁹¹

To conclude, David's *kinnôr* is an integral part of the narratives treating the rise of the United Monarchy. It serves in part as a narratological structuring device. But this itself derives from the instrument's more ancient potency in the royal cults of the wider region. Even there the *kinnôr* was never merely a symbol, but intimately embedded in liturgy and ritual. It is perfectly probable, therefore, that the portrait of king and *kinnôr* offered by these narratives is a genuine reflection of musical conditions in the time of David and Solomon.

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⁹¹ 2 Sam. 6:21.

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