According to Which “Law of Moses”? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles

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Abstract

The Chronicler, as an early interpreter of Samuel and Kings, alerts us to the diverse understandings of (or emphases in) cult centralization that are represented in these texts and in the Pentateuch. Recent studies demonstrate the Chronicler’s apparent desire to bring his source narratives into compliance with both Deuteronomic and Levitical understandings of Law. In light of this observation, reading backward from the Chronicler’s opinion on centralization may help us evaluate the model of centralization represented in the final form of Samuel and Kings. Such a reading will demonstrate that Samuel is in fact a “Deuteronomistic” book, exhibiting the precise view of cult centralization that one would expect from a book that advances the Deuteronomistic narrative in the way that it does—that is, the “discovery” of “the place which YHWH will choose to set his name to dwell there.”

Keywords

Deuteronomistic history – Book of Samuel – Book of Kings – Book of Chronicles – cult centralization

1 Introduction

The general question that motivates this study is literary and theological: To what legal standards are the characters in the narratives of the Former Prophets and Chronicles held accountable by the storymakers? To ask the
question more plainly: What was “Law” for the Deuteronomistic Historian, the Chronicler, and the authors of the sources that they apparently used?

An example from the interpretive history of the Former Prophets is instructive. Targum Jonathan observes that Jephthah’s horrible conundrum over his vow (Jdg 11:34-40) would have been solved without human sacrifice, if only he had consulted the high priest, who would have told him about Leviticus 5:4-6, and he would have offered the proper sacrifice before the priest at the sanctuary to release himself from his rash vow! It is easy for us to chuckle over the assumption that the original author of this set of Northern Israelite judge traditions would have been aware of Leviticus—but it points to the deeper question of the inner logic of the narratives: What is presumed as “Law” from the standpoint of the narrator, and how are we as readers expected to evaluate the characters’ actions?

The question is also complicated by the uncertainties surrounding the compositional history of these texts. It is perfectly plausible that a certain character’s actions would have been considered acceptable in a source text, but then evaluated negatively (explicitly or implicitly) by the editor who incorporated that narrative into a later work (or vice-versa).

The narrowed focus of this essay is the problem of cultic centralization in Samuel, the Deuteronomistic History, and Chronicles. Some scholars have questioned the extent of “Deuteronomistic” influence on the book of Samuel. One of the ways that Samuel supposedly differs from [especially] Kings is the lack of explicit “Deuteronomistic” disapproval of the plurality of religious sanctuaries.

This paper suggests that the Chronicler, as an early interpreter of Samuel and Kings, alerts us to the diverse understandings of cult centralization that are represented in these texts. In light of recent studies that demonstrate the Chronicler’s apparent desire to bring his source narratives into compliance with both Deuteronomistic and Priestly understandings of Law, I suggest

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1 Targum Jonathan for Judges 11:39 reads: “And at the end of two months she returned unto her father, and he did to her his vow that he vowed. And she did not know man. And it was made a rule in Israel in order that a man not offer up his son and his daughter for a holocaust as Jephthah the Gileadite did. And he was not inquiring of Phinehas the priest; and if he inquired of Phinehas the priest, he would have redeemed her with blood.” Daniel J. Harrington and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Aramaic Bible, vol. 10; Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1987), p. 83.

2 For a helpful discussion of this question, see Cynthia Edenburg and Juha Pakkala, eds., *Is Samuel Among the Deuteronomists? Current Views on the Place of Samuel in a Deuteronomistic History* (Ancient Israel and Its Literature 16; Atlanta: SBL, 2013), especially the editors’ introductory essay (pp. 1-15).
that we read backward from the Chronicler’s perspective on centralization in order to evaluate the model of centralization represented in the final form of Samuel and Kings. This comparison demonstrates that Samuel is in fact a “Deuteronomistic” book, exhibiting the precise view of cult centralization (and related cultic activities such as sacrifice eating and priestly identity) that we would expect from a book that advances the Deuteronomistic narrative in the way that it does—that is, the “discovery” of “the place which YHWH your God will choose to for his name to dwell there” (Deut 12:11).

2 Different Kinds of Cult Centralization

At least two varieties of “cultic centralization” may be discerned in the Pentateuch: “Deuteronomic,” and “Levitical.” Both patterns emphasize the importance of priests in religious sacrifice, as well as a central location for sacrifice. There are two key differences: the sacral nature of domestic slaughter for food, and the particular central location that is emphasized.

One pattern of centralization emerges in Leviticus 1-7 and 17. Leviticus 17 sweeps all slaughter of domestic animals into a category of ritual: the šlm. These animals must be slaughtered at the door of the tent of meeting, and the blood of the animal dashed upon the altar of YHWH (17:3-6). For a šlm, the fat is burned before YHWH (7:31), and the right thigh (šwq hymyn) and breast (ḥzh) belong to the priest (7:31-36). The centralization of slaughter at the sanctuary was intended to prevent idolatry (17:7).

Deuteronomy 12 presents a different pattern of sacral domestic slaughter in Israelite practice. The passage observes that at this point in the narrative “every man is doing what is upright in his own eyes” (12:8), but this will soon change, “for you have not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which YHWH your God is giving you” (12:9). When Israel will enter the Promised Land, they may slaughter and eat domestic animals whenever they please (12:20-21), but “ritual” slaughter would be centralized in “the place in which YHWH your God will choose for His name to dwell” (12:15-18).

The stated rationale for this pattern is the same as that of the centralization of all slaughter in Leviticus 17: the avoidance of idolatry and animism (12:2-8, 23-25, 29-31). Tigay writes:

[Leviticus 17] was practical when all Israelites lived near a sanctuary, as when they lived in the wilderness. Even after they settled in Canaan and scattered across the land, it would remain practical as long as it was legitimate to have sanctuaries throughout the land. But once a single
sanctuary was chosen the requirement would become impractical, since those who lived far from it would be able to eat meat only on the infrequent occasions when they visited there. To avoid this hardship, secular slaughter of domestic cattle, too, will be permitted, and the people may eat meat whenever they want and can afford to.3

The Leviticus command confirms the prevailing ANE assumption that all slaughter is a spiritual/religious act, and centralizes that religious activity under the authority of the priests. The Deuteronomy command retains the centralization of religious activity under priestly authority, but desacralizes the act of slaughter for food, apparently for reasons of practicality (Deut 12:21). Sacrifices are still eaten (12:17-19), but no longer is all consumption of domestic meat a ritual act. In fact, pilgrims to the prospective central sanctuary may even sell their own animals and their produce, travel with the proceeds to the sanctuary, and purchase sacrificial offering feast animals and produce at the central sanctuary (Deut 14:22-27). In Deuteronomy 18:3, the priest’s portion (of either an ox or a sheep) is to be the shoulder (zrw’), the two cheeks (lhyym), and the stomach (qbh).

The other difference in emphasis between these two variants of cultic centralization is the location of centralization. Both systems presume priestly involvement, but the Levitical system is closely tied to the tabernacle, and is therefore portable. Deuteronomy, on the other hand, never mentions the tabernacle/tent of meeting in cultic instructions, but looks intently “forward” to the discovery and establishment of “the place which YHWH your God shall choose.” This difference becomes important in reading the narratives, because there is a period between the full conquest of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5; 1 Chr 11) and the consolidation of the tabernacle into the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 8:4; 2 Chr 5:5) in which Jerusalem is available as a cultic center but the tabernacle is elsewhere. The Deuteronomist and the Chronicler approach this period of “conflicted centralization” somewhat differently.

3 Cult Centralization in the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles: Examples

I previously remarked that I consider the Chronicler to be an early interpreter of Samuel-Kings; my view is that the so-called Deuteronomistic History

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reached its received form in the late Babylonian or early Persian period, and that Chronicles is the product of a single author or circle in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period.\(^4\) I also take the view that the Chronicler possesses the Pentateuch in something close to its final form,\(^5\) and therefore regards both Deuteronomy and Priestly material as scripture—“Law.”

**Cult Centralization from Eli to Solomon in Samuel and Kings**

A survey of the early chapters of 1 Samuel reveals that sacrifice is not centralized during this period. Sacrifices are frequently conducted without apparent regard for either Deuteronomistic or Priestly requirements concerning location, the identity of the priest, or the portions eaten by the participants [see Table 1]. Several observations are relevant to this study.

First, numerous non-Levites administer sacrifices as priests. Interestingly, the book begins with Levites (Eli and his sons) serving as priests, and includes a Deuteronomistic apology for the Zadokite priesthood (1 Sam 2:27-36)\(^6\)—and yet Samuel, an Ephraimite,\(^7\) serves as judge and priest until his death. Even after the ark is brought to Jerusalem, David’s sons serve as priests (2 Sam 8:18).

Second, the priestly conduct during this period with regard to which portions of the sacrifices are eaten does not appear to conform to either

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\(^4\) My view is that the Deuteronomistic History developed in several stages between the late monarchy and the early Persian period, and that Chronicles is the product of a single author or school in the middle to late fourth century BCE. The present thesis is not dependent to any significant degree on the precise dating of either the Deuteronomistic History or Chronicles, but rather on the consensus position that the Chronicles is later than Samuel and Kings and uses those books as its source. For an alternative position that considers Chronicles and The Deuteronomistic History as “contemporary, competing historiographies,” see Raymond F. Person, Jr., *The Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).


\(^7\) Lest it be thought that Elkanah, Samuel’s father, is a Levite residing in Ephraim, the text explicitly calls his ancestor an Ephraimit (ʾprty; 1:1). Leuchter observes that during this period non-Levites could function as Levites in judicial and priestly capacities, and calls Samuel “an archetypical Levite”; see Mark Leuchter, “‘The Levite in Your Gates’: The Deuteronomic Redefinition of Levitical Authority,” *JBL* 126 (2007): pp. 423, 426.
### TABLE 1  
*Cultic activity from Judges 20 to 1 Kings 8: Locations, Priests, Sacrifice-Eating*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passage</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jdg 20:26-28</td>
<td>Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, administers various sacrifices at Bethel; ark is also present.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jdg 21:19</td>
<td>Yearly festival to YHWH at Shiloh.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Sam 1:3-5, 9, 24</td>
<td>Eli and his sons minister at the <em>hykl yhwh</em> at Shiloh.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Sam 4:1-7:2</td>
<td>The ark is taken from Shiloh, lost to the Philistines, and returns, ending up at Kiriath-jearim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 7:10, 15-17</td>
<td>Samuel (an Ephraimite) offers sacrifices at Mizpah; judges on a circuit at Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah; and also sacrifices at an altar at his home in Ramah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 9:13, 23-24</td>
<td>Samuel leads a sacrifice at Zuph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 13:8-15</td>
<td>Saul improperly leads the sacrifices of burnt offering (<em>ʿlh</em>) and well-being (<em>šlm</em>) at Gilgal without Samuel. His error is the failure to wait for Samuel, not the location itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 21:1-6</td>
<td>Ahimelech the priest, ministering at Nob (Benjamin), offers David the “bread of the presence” from “before YHWH.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 5:6-9; 6:1-19</td>
<td>David conquers Jerusalem and brings the ark there. He offers sacrifices, and the people receive cakes to eat (6:19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 8:18</td>
<td>David’s sons serve as priests along with Zadok and Ahimelech, but no location is mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 12:20</td>
<td>David worships “in the house of YHWH” after Bathsheba’s son dies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 15:8, 12</td>
<td>Ahithophel the Gilonite, a conspirator with Absalom, offers sacrifices at Hebron with Absalom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 15:24-29</td>
<td>When David flees from Absalom, Zadok and the Levites try to bring the ark with them, but David insists that it stay in Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sam 24:16-25</td>
<td>David sacrifices at Araunah’s threshing floor in Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Kings 3:3-4, 15</td>
<td>Gibeon is “the great high place”; Solomon sacrifices there and has a vision that night in a dream. Afterward, he sacrifices only before the ark in Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Kings 8:4</td>
<td>Solomon consolidates the ark and “the tent of meeting” into the newly-built temple.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deuteronomistic or Priestly requirements. 1 Samuel 2 describes two sacrificial meat-cooking practices: a random draw from the boiling pot (2:13-14), and the taking of raw meat for the priests before the fat has been turned to smoke (2:15-16). Some argue that both practices—the random draw and the raw-meat confiscation—constitute “deviation from accepted procedure,” and that the narrator regards both as sinful.8 In my view, the text affirms the legitimacy of the random-draw practice, which would imply that in many instances the priests received some portion other than “the right thigh and breast” prescribed by later Priestly Law (Lev 7:31-36).9 The contrast between the two procedures—a random portion versus the choicest fatty portion—is highlighted by the man of God’s rebuke of Eli’s sons in 2:29: “Why do you . . . honor your sons above Me by fattening yourselves with the choicest of every offering of my people Israel?” In the narrator’s view, the sin was demanding the choicest portions raw (for curing, or for selling at a profit), rather than accepting their lot from the random draw.

In 1 Samuel 9, Samuel administers a sacrifice at Zuph. A portion is eaten by all involved (9:13). Samuel, having received a word from YHWH that Saul was coming, saved “the thigh and what was above it” (hšwq whʿlyh) for Saul as an honor—a portion reserved in Priestly law for the priests.

One final example pertains to grain sacrifice. In 1 Samuel 22, Ahimelech the priest ministers at Nob. In accordance with Priestly requirement, Ahimelech is a descendant of Aaron (1 Sam 22:9; cf. 14:3). However, he offers David and his men the “bread of the presence” from “before YHWH” (1 Sam 21:1-6), bread which is reserved for the priests alone in Leviticus 24:9.

The book of Samuel in its received form does not exhibit disapproval of these two un-Lawful practices (i.e., not in accordance with the Pentateuch): administration of sacrifice by non-Levites, and the consumption of the wrong sacrificial portions by the wrong people. The text does not hesitate to express disapproval of some practices: Eli’s sons demanding the fatty portions (1 Sam 2:15-17, 29), and Saul conducting a sacrifice without Samuel (1 Sam 13:8-14). This is evidence that the book of Samuel does indeed have pre-Deuteronomistic content, and that the storytellers of pre-Deuteronomistic Samuel held the

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8 David G. Firth, 1 & 2 Samuel (Apollos Old Testament Commentary; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 68.
9 Admittedly, the random draw for the priest is contrary to either set of precise specifications in Leviticus 7:31-36 or Deuteronomy 18:3.
characters to some version of “Law,” though a Law or set of customs that does not include significant material found in the received Pentateuch. However, we cannot with this evidence alone answer a more complicated question: why did the Deuteronomistic editors allow these stories to remain unchallenged in the text’s received form?

The third relevant observation is the separation of the cultic symbols from one another. Samuel begins with the ark and the tabernacle (i.e., tent of meeting) in the same location (Shiloh). Eli’s sons take the ark into battle against the Philistines at the request of the elders (1 Sam 4:3-4), and the ark is captured. From this point on until 1 Kings 8:4, the ark and the tabernacle are separated, though each appears in several locations.

The fourth observation is that as soon as Jerusalem is conquered (2 Sam 5) and one of these cultic symbols (the ark) is brought there (2 Sam 6), Jerusalem is treated as the proper location for sacrifice. When David recovers after the death of his son by Bathsheba, he worships at “the house of YHWH,” (2 Sam 12:20) which seems to be the “tent” in which the ark rested in Jerusalem (2 Sam 7:2). Later in the book, David sacrifices at the threshing floor of Araunah in Jerusalem (2 Sam 24:36-25). When he flees before Absalom, he insists that the ark stay in Jerusalem (2 Sam 15:24-29).

The references to cultic activity outside Jerusalem between 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Kings 8 are portrayed negatively. Absalom offers sacrifices at Hebron as a prelude to his usurpation (2 Sam 15:8, 12). Hebron was Absalom’s birthplace (3:3-5) and the site of David’s coronation over All Israel (5:1-5). However, in the era of the establishment of YHWH’s name in Jerusalem (2 Sam 6 and onward), votive offerings are not to be performed elsewhere (Deut 12:11, 17).

Solomon’s sacrifice at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:3-15) also seems to have been a point of concern from the storymaker’s perspective. Solomon’s “love for YHWH” and “walking in the statutes of his father David” is immediately qualified: “except (raq) on the high places he sacrificed and burned [incense]” (3:3b). This

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13 It is true that David releases Absalom to perform cultic activity at Hebron (2 Sam 15:9). However, this should not be construed as the storymaker’s approval of Absalom’s activity. Indeed, a recurring theme in 2 Sam 13-19 is that David’s reticence to discipline his sons leads to calamity for his house: 13:21, 39; 14:33; 18:5; 18:29-19:7.

14 This qualification is similar to the mitigated statements of approval of later kings of Judah: Jehoash (2 Kgs 12:2-3 [MT 12:3-4]), Amaziah (2 Kgs 14:3-4), Azariah (2 Kgs 15:3-4).
qualification would seem unnecessary unless there were something suspect about Gibeon as a cultic site at this time. After seeing YHWH in a dream, Solomon proceeds without explanation to Jerusalem for sacrifices instead of conducting those sacrifices at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:15). The storytaker seems eager to imply that henceforth Solomon only offers sacrifices in Jerusalem (until his apostasy in 1 Kgs 11).

In summary, we see little regard for Deuteronomy’s rules concerning centralization, the identity of priests, and eating sacrifices—until David brings the ark to Jerusalem. After 2 Samuel 6, the Deuteronomic laws in these areas are followed, with the exception of 2 Samuel 8:17-18, which notes that David’s sons served as priests alongside Zadoq and Abiathar.

The fact that there is little concern for centralization in the book of Samuel before the ark is brought to Jerusalem should not be interpreted as lack of Deuteronomistic ideology or editorial input. The period covered by the book of Samuel is exceptional with respect to “Deuteronomistic” centralization, precisely because Jerusalem is not yet conquered. It would be unreasonable for the Deuteronomistic historian to have the same centralizing expectations for pre- and post-2 Samuel 6 characters. The unique aspect of the Deuteronomistic presentation of the story is the eagerness to centralize in Jerusalem, before the tabernacle—which would seem to be the more important cultic symbol for sacrifice—arrives in 1 Kings 8. This aspect is brought into relief by a comparison with the book of Chronicles.

The pre-2 Samuel 6 cultic circumstances actually appear to be “anticipated” in Deuteronomy 12:8-9: “You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, each man doing what is upright in his own eyes, for you have not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which YHWH your God is giving you.” The author of these verses does not betray any awareness of the Levitical cultic model, as a naïve reading of the Pentateuch would suggest; he does not say that the Israelites should cease doing “what is right in their own eyes” and adhere to Levitical cultic law until they discover the place where YHWH will

15 “Dtr has to admit this, however distasteful to his ideology, in order to make use of the Gibeon story.” Simon J. de Vries, 1 Kings (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 51.

16 “This verse appears to be an attempt to correct the impression given of Solomon and his aberrant cultic behavior at Gibeon, especially as seen in Dtr circles.” Mordechai Cogan, 1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 188.

17 Note the presence of both positive and negative references to other cultic locations (such as Gilgal, Bethel and Gibeon) in Joshua and Judges. In some texts, later rejection of these locations is clearly present anachronistically—whereas other texts portray these sites positively (Josh 4:5; 10:22-15; Jdg 4:5; 20:18).
set his name to dwell! Rather, this “anticipated” pre-Jerusalem-conquest period is more permissive with respect to centralization. I suggest that this permissiveness, when applied by the Deuteronomistic storymakers to the book of Samuel, extends to priestly identity and sacrifice-eating. The Deuteronomists did not need to bring these elements of their source narratives into conformity with Deuteronomistic practice, because there was no need to do so.

**Cult Centralization in Chronicles**

The Chronicler, having inherited such a peculiar mix of traditions in Samuel-Kings, undertook a daunting (but apparently necessary!) task: shaping the traditions according to the standard of “Law” that prevailed in his community. The Chronicler’s attention to the Levites and priests, and his affinity for the Law as found in Leviticus, are well-known. However, recent studies have attempted to show that the Chronicler also embraces the Deuteronomistic perspective found in his main source, the books of Samuel and Kings. Ben Zvi, Knoppers, and Jonker argue that the Chronicler in various ways exhibits a reverence for existing Torah tradition.

We shall see that the Chronicler remains fundamentally respectful of Deuteronomistic elements in the narratives relating to centralization, even as he attempts to incorporate Priestly requirements as well. If, in fact, the Chronicler reworked his *Vorlage* to bring it more in line with P, this need not represent a deviation from “Deuteronomism” as an ideology but rather a consistent “Deuteronomistic” application of scripture—which, for the Chronicler, may have been a text very close to our received Pentateuch.

First, with respect to the tribal identity of those serving as priests, the Chronicler “grafts” Samuel into the genealogy of Levi. Even though he

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20 Rendsburg accepts the connection with Ahitub, a “legitimate priest” according to 1 Chr 6, as further evidence that Eli, Hophni and Phinehas are Levites—but argues that Samuel
belongs to a period that precedes the point at which the Chronicler picks up the narrative, Samuel's importance to Israel's story and the tacit approval in the book of Samuel of the prophet Samuel's priestly service necessitate the his inclusion in the priestly line (1 Chr 6:28ff). Furthermore, the Chronicler alters 2 Samuel 8:18 to "clarify" that David's sons were not *khnym* but *ršnym* (1 Chr 18:17).

Second, the Chronicler, by coincidence or by design,21 bypasses the pre-David portions of the Deuteronomistic story during which multiple cultic centers are used. After the death of Saul (1 Chr 10), David's first act as king of All-Israel is to take Jerusalem from the Jebusites (1 Chr 11:4-8). The story of David's transport of the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6) is split into two narratives (1 Chr 13, and 15-16). Of interest to our study is one of the Chronicler's additions: David's continued provision for the tabernacle at Gibeon, even after the ark is enshrined in Jerusalem (1 Chr 16:39-42). Herein lies the contrast: for the Deuteronomist, Jerusalem is the proper cultic center ("the place where YHWH will set His Name to dwell") once David has conquered it (2 Sam 5) and brought the ark there (2 Sam 6). The Chronicler embraces this perspective but also adds an element consistent with Leviticus: sacrifice should still be offered at the "tent of meeting" until it is consolidated into the temple (2 Chr 5:5). The Chronicler stresses that David's provision for the Zadokite priesthood at Gibeon was done "according to all that is written in the Torah of YHWH" (1 Chr 16:40).22

This blending of Deuteronomy- and Leviticus-flavored perspectives on centralization accounts for the Chronicler's lack of hesitation in reporting that

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22 Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 652. By contrast, Sara Japhet argues: "Notwithstanding this duality, there was always an absolute centralization of cult in Israel. At first, a full cultic ritual was conducted before the 'tabernacle of the Lord'; concurrently in the tent of the ark in Jerusalem, only a 'service of song' was performed" (*I & II Chronicles: A Commentary; OTL*; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993, p. 528). This seems to be at odds with verses that point to sacrificial activity at David's ark-tent in Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:26; 16a-2); see Louis C. Jonker, *1 & 2 Chronicles* (UBCS; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), p. 112.
Solomon sacrificed at Gibeon (2 Chr 1). Whereas the Deuteronomist feels the need to excuse Solomon’s private actions (1 Kgs 3:3-4), the Chronicler turns the private pilgrimage into a national assembly (2 Chr 1:3). Instead of making Solomon’s “thousand offerings” at Gibeon anterior to the story as the Deuteronomist appears to do (1 Kgs 3:4b: ʾlp̄ ʿlwṯ yʿlh šlmh ʿl hmzḥ hhw’),23 the Chronicler makes the “thousand offerings” occur on the occasion of this assembly (2 Chr 1:6: wyʿl šlmh šm . . . wyʿl ʿlyw ʿlwṯ ʾlp̄). The Chronicler also omits Solomon’s sacrifice in Jerusalem immediately following the vision of YHWH at Gibeon (2 Chr 1:13; cf. 1 Kgs 3:15); from his perspective, there is no need to offer a corrective to the cultic activity at Gibeon. Gibeon is not mentioned in Chronicles after this episode—not is any cultic center other than Jerusalem mentioned by name. The Chronicler has transformed the story of the census, the plague, and David’s altar on the threshing floor of Araunah/Ornan the Jebusite from an appended narrative (2 Sam 24) into a catalyst for the discovery of the temple site (1 Chr 21:1-22:1);24 thus, the key moment of “Deuteronomistic” centralization is not the conquest of Jerusalem but the consecration of the temple (2 Chr 5-6).

This view of the Chronicler’s approach to centralization slightly nuances that of Knoppers, who writes:

Chronicles completely endorses the Deuteronomic mandate for the centralization of the Yahwistic cultus and follows the lead of the Deuteronomistic work in applying this mandate to Jerusalem. But more than that, it buttresses the exclusive status of the temple both by refusing to mention other major temples by name and by averring that the central sanctuary was elect of God and was resorted to with much success on various occasions in Judahite history. In this manner, Chronicles creatively accentuates and extends motifs found in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic work.25

23 “The imperfect verb yaʿâleh is frequentative; thus, there is no reason to think that on the occasion of the present visit such a large number of sacrifices was made” (Cogan, 1 Kings, p. 185).
Knoppers is certainly correct that the Chronicler is concerned with centralization, and hesitates to mention other sanctuaries. I argue that the Chronicler’s “flavor” of centralization focuses on both the tent of meeting (stemming from his regard for P) and Jerusalem (an emphasis in The Deuteronomistic History). So, in one sense the Chronicler is more “Deuteronomistic” than the Deuteronomist because of the heightened focus on centralization generally. But the Chronicler’s “Deuteronomism” shares a regard for written Torah tradition, which, for him, now includes P—hence, the continuing interest in the tent of meeting.

For the Deuteronomist, the objectionable parts of Israel’s pre-temple cultic history are the failure to conquer Jerusalem sooner—David remedies the conquest failures of Judah (Josh 15:63) and Benjamin (Jdg 1:21)—and any failures to acknowledge Jerusalem as the exclusive cultic center once it is in Israel’s possession. The Chronicler balances regard for Jerusalem with Priestly regard for the tabernacle and its successor, Solomon’s temple. The Chronicler remedies David’s apparent lack of regard for the tabernacle in Samuel by “clarifying” that David most certainly did hold both the ark and the tabernacle at Gibeon in high esteem.

In my treatment of 1 Samuel I raised the related issue of sacrifice-eating in the pre-Deuteronomistic material of Samuel. An instance of sacrifice-eating in Chronicles may provide another instructive example of the Chronicler’s attempt to balance regard for both D and P. 2 Chronicles 35—a Sondergut expansion upon 2 Kings 23:21-24—harmonizes disparate Pentateuchal commands concerning the proper cooking of the Passover sacrifice. Exodus 12:9 commands roasting and explicitly forbids boiling with water (ʾl tʾklw mmmw nʾ wbšl mbšl bmym ky ṭm šly ʿś). Deuteronomy 16 commands that the sacrifice be boiled (wbšlt wʾklt). The Chronicler splits the difference by stating that the Passover was “boiled with fire” (wybšlw hpsḥ bʾš kmšpt). Knoppers wryly observes: “Those participating in the Chronistic version of Josiah’s Passover may not have enjoyed having their Paschal offering both boiled and roasted, but at least they had the comfort of knowing that the mode of its preparation

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2 Kings 23 does not specify at all how the Passover sacrifices are cooked or which animals were offered, so the Chronicler’s harmonization of D and P is not, strictly speaking, a “revision” designed to bring a Deuteronomistic Vorlage into conformity to the Exodus 12 tradition (which is generally ascribed to a Priestly author). However, it is interesting to note that the 2 Kings account of Josiah’s reforms places a greater emphasis on his efforts at cultic centralization and the destruction of other high places (23:1-20), a key Deuteronomic theme—whereas the Chronicler gives more details about the work of the Levites and priests and the conduct of the Passover rituals (2 Chr 35:1-19).
conformed to both Deuteronomic and non-Deuteronomic prescriptions.”27 Knoppers also notes that whereas Exodus specifies that the sacrifice be a lamb (šḥ), Deuteronomy 16:1-2 allows the sacrifice to be drawn from either “the flock or the herd” (šn wbqr). In Chronicles, he cattle “are made part of the broader Passover celebration (2 Chr 35:7, 8, 9, 12), but are relegated to a separate sacrifice, designated by Chronicles simply as sacred offerings (qdšym), boiled (bšl) in cauldrons, pots, and pans (2 Chr 35:13).”28

4 Conclusion

In these few examples considered, the differences between “The Law” observed in Samuel-Kings and in Chronicles could be characterized as “Priestly.” The Chronicler is respectful of Deuteronomic traditions, but brings characters’ actions within the narratives into conformity with other Pentateuchal commands as well. Knoppers suggests that this strategic move points to a complete Pentateuch as the Law for the Chronicler, which was

a single entity, not merely a collection of writings or an amalgam of diverse literary strata….The Pentateuch may be a five-fold collection of scrolls, but these scrolls are for the Chronicler (and many other early interpreters) a single work with multiple parts. The effort to harmonize two discrepant pieces of legislation would be totally unnecessary otherwise.29

Most scholars accept that the Deuteronomistic History makes use of earlier traditions, and a comfortable consensus exists that the Chronicler makes use of the Deuteronomistic History as a source. Based on a close reading of the Pentateuchal sacrificial requirements and the legal regimes that are presumed in the narratives of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, I suggest the following line of development:

• The pre-Deuteronomistic traditions found in the book of Samuel presume some sort of “Law of Moses,” with some recognizable requirements such as burning the fat for YHWH (1 Sam 2:16), designated priests (not necessarily Levites), and designated locations.

27 Knoppers, “Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist,” p. 327.
28 Knoppers, “Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist,” p. 327.
29 Knoppers, “Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist,” p. 327.
• The Deuteronomistic storymakers, in appropriating the proto-Samuel traditions for their (numerous) ends, are not clumsy, indiscriminate “Deuteronomizers”—that is, they do not change elements of those traditions that do not need to be conformed to Deuteronomistic cultic requirements. The overriding Deuteronomistic requirement is centralization at Jerusalem as soon as possible. Prior to the installment of one of the cultic symbols (the ark) in Jerusalem, the storymakers allow the characters a certain amount of freedom in other areas of cultic practice, including who may serve as priest and which portions are eaten. This freedom falls under the dispensation of Deuteronomy 12:8-9, which permits a less-than-ideal situation to persist while Jerusalem is unavailable.

• The Chronicler, in appropriating material from Samuel-Kings, accepts and even enhances the characters’ compliance with Deuteronomistic cultic requirements—and in certain places the Chronicler adds Priestly compliance as well.

I would like to conclude this study with three points for further consideration. In an essay entitled, “The Distinctiveness of the Samuel Narrative Tradition,” Jürg Hutzli contends:

[The] plurality of Yahwistic cult places in the book of Samuel stands in noticeable tension to the doctrine of cult centralization, which is of central significance in the books of Deuteronomy and Kings. Although one might argue that the mention of a variety of cult sites in the book of Samuel would not necessarily irritate a Deuteronomistic author since the Temple had not yet been built, I think that we should expect the Deuteronomist(s) to add explanatory-apologetic remarks like those found in 1 Kgs 3:2-3 if the ideology of cult centralization was indeed inherent to a Deuteronomistic narrative in Samuel. However, no such apologies are to be found.30

Hutzli is certainly correct that we find no apology in Samuel for the plurality of cultic sites. My first contention is that the book of Samuel is in fact “Deuteronomistic,” despite its lack of overt condemnation of non-centralization, because it portrays David as eagerly embracing Jerusalem once it is available for sacrifice. Solomon’s sacrifice at Gibeon does require “an

apology” within the grand narrative (and Absalom’s sacrifice at Hebron is portrayed negatively), but Samuel’s sacrifices at Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah require no apology because they are pre-Jerusalem-conquest. I think we can say that at least this one aspect of “Deuteronomism”—centralization at Jerusalem—is present in Samuel. In this respect, as in a great many others, the book of Samuel is subtle and nuanced because it draws significantly on earlier traditions which contain their own perspectives.31

The second point is that the Chronicler’s “Deuteronomism” manifests itself in two respects: A high regard for scriptural tradition (which, for him, now includes P as well as D), and in the balancing of both P and D brands of centralization in the narrative. This is a distinction that is not always made in comparisons of the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles: both are interested in “centralization,” but the emphases are different because P and D diverge in the details of centralized sacrifice and the ritual significance of domestic slaughter.

Third, I have suggested that it is the Chronicler’s editorial activity pulling the narrative in a P direction that brings the Deuteronomistic aspects of Samuel and Kings into greater contrast. Without the Chronicler’s slant on the attitudes of David and Solomon toward pre-temple-era Gibeon as a cultic site, we would not see the single-focus Jerusalem centralization in the book of Samuel as clearly.

This brief study has not by any means given a comprehensive answer to the question of the “Laws” to which the storymakers of The Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles hold their characters. A great deal remains to be said concerning the Deuteronomist’s attitude toward cultic sites in Joshua and Judges. But my suggestion is that when the Chronicler “corrects” the Law observance (or non-observance) of his source narratives, we should carefully consider what this might mean for close readings of Samuel and Kings.

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31 Nelson writes, “[Noth] conceived of the Deuteronomistic Historian as an author who was willing to let his sources speak for themselves, even if they did not mirror Deuteronomistic orthodoxy” (“The Man Behind the Green Curtain,” p. 18).