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The House of David: Between Political Formation and Literary Revision

Mahri Leonard-Fleckman

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Current scholarly debate over the historical character of David's rule generally considers the biblical portrait to represent David as king of Judah first, and subsequently over "all Israel." The ninth-century Tel Dan inscription, which refers to the "House of David" (*byt dwd*), is often taken as evidence for the dynasty of Judah. Mahri Leonard-Fleckman argues, however, that references to Judah in the story of David as king do not suffice to constitute a coherent stratum of material about Judah as a political entity. Comparing the "house of . . ." terminology in the ninth-century Tel Dan inscription with early first-millennium Assyrian usage, then giving close examination to the "house of David" materials in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, she understands the "house of David" as a small body politic connected to David, but distinct from any Judean dynastic context.

One implication is that the *identification of* Judah *as* a later southern kingdom may have less to do with an Israelite secession from Jerusalem than with an Israelite rejection of David's lineage and the subsequent redactional creation of Judah-centric language on the part of a Davidic coterie. Leonard-Fleckman's arguments suggest a rethinking of the rise of monarchy in Israel.

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