

**A Historical—Geographical Study of Jerusalem:
David's Capital City**

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Jerusalem occupies a unique position in three major world religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. One need not be in the city for long to observe the depth of sentiment which is directed toward this one location as evidenced by the numerous sites in and around the city set aside as holy places by anyone of these groups. Although various human concepts of God produce most of this emotion, the devotion of people toward Jerusalem is amazing. This religious zeal has created a situation where several of the groups, the Muslims and Jews in particular, wish to claim the city as their own exclusive property. The temple mount provides the most obvious example of the deep rift between the groups. The mount, the former city of the Jewish temple and the current site of the Muslim Dome of the Rock, is a constant source of tension between conservative Jews and Muslims.

That Jerusalem occupies such a position in modern Israel is ironic. When David first conquered the city and made it his capital, he chose it largely for the reason that no particular faction within his kingdom attached any particular significance to it. There were several other cities David might have chosen in which to live, but each would have posed almost insurmountable administrative difficulties. In order to

appreciate David's choice, one must understand David's position in Israel and the advantages Jerusalem offered to him over any other city. To that end, this study will begin by focusing on David's capture of Jerusalem. Of particular interest are its status during the period from Joshua's conquest of Israel until the time of David's reign and the means by which it was captured. Second, a consideration will be made regarding David's consolidation of power and how his relationship with both Israel and Judah was deemed necessary for his monarchy to be established. Since the monarchy was new to Israel under Saul and since David was supplanting the former king, he chose a neutral site for his capital to avoid offending anyone. Third, the strategic advantages of Jerusalem will be discussed in order to show how David benefited from this action. As an expert warrior, he was certainly aware of the need to choose a defensible location. All of the Biblical evidence suggests that his selection of Jerusalem as his capital city was instrumental for the establishment of David in his position as king of both Israel and Judah.

The Capture of Jerusalem

Jerusalem and Judges 1:8

According to Judges 1:8, Jerusalem was captured and burned by Judah shortly after the time of Joshua. This brief notation raises the question of why David needed to conquer Jerusalem if it had already been taken by Judah hundreds of years earlier. Joshua 15:63 and Judges 1:21 further complicate the problem by stating that the Judahites and Benjamites, respectively, were unable to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem. Thus the Biblical testimony concerning the occupancy of Jerusalem appears to be a confusing tangle of conflicting stories.

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Before dealing directly with the question, it will be helpful to note a few points concerning the nature of historical narrative. First, it must be remembered that the Bible does not set out to present a continuous history of the city of Jerusalem. The city usually enters the narrative only when important for the particular episode within which it is mentioned. The author assumes the history of the intervening years, since those in Israel at the time David captured Jerusalem probably would have known the current status of Jerusalem. Conversely, the Judges account occurs within the record of the successful battles of Judah. It is included more for the sake of showing the leadership potential and effectiveness of that tribe than it is for advancing the account of the history of Jerusalem or commenting on its disposition at any point after the battle itself.

Having noted the selective character of the events included within biblical narratives, it is now possible to investigate exactly what did happen to Jerusalem during the years between this initial conquest and David's. The first option is that Judah captured the city, but that it was reoccupied or reconquered by the Jebusites shortly thereafter. If this is the case, the Bible never mentions it simply because it is not germane to the narrative at any point to do so. Hertzberg suggests a second possibility. He believes that Judges 1:8 "may . . . merely deal with the possession of the pasturage of Jerusalem by the men of Judah The city was regarded as a foreign element in Israel—Judah (Judges 19:10-12), and that was in fact the case."¹ According to this theory, the city of Jerusalem was not confined to merely the part of the land that was enclosed within the city wall.

¹Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 268.

Jerusalem was the name for the Jebusite settlement on two hills, one of which was heavily defended (the "fortress of Zion," [2 Sam] v. 7) and was located in the southeast sector of the present city while the other consisted of unprotected open country located in the southwest The two-site location of Jebusite Jerusalem also explains the apparent contradiction between Joshua 15:63 and Judges 1:8. The former text states that at the time of the conquest Israel "could not dislodge the Jebusites, who were living in Jerusalem (cf. also Judges. 1:21)—a reference to the fortress on the southeastern hill. The latter text asserts that the men of Judah "attacked Jerusalem . . . and took it. They put the city to the sword and set it on fire"—a reference to the open settlement on the southwestern hill.²

So the conclusion suggested by all of this data is that Judges 1:8 indicates either a partial conquest of Jerusalem limited to the surrounding environs or the reoccupation of the city by the Jebusites at some later date. Judges 1:21 (indicating the Jebusites dwelled with the Benjamites in Jerusalem), Judges 19:10-12 (indicating the refusal of a Levite to spend the night in Jebusite occupied Jerusalem), and 2 Samuel 5 (indicating David was the conqueror of the fortress city), all support the view that the Jebusites remained in the land and controlled the city until the time of David.

Chronology of David's Early Years

A great deal of uncertainty exists regarding the implied chronology of the early years of David's reign. 2 Samuel 2:11

²Ronald F. Youngblood, *1,2 Samuel*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 854.

and 5:5 indicate that David ruled over Judah from Hebron for seven and one-half years, and that he reigned over all Israel and Judah from Jerusalem for 33 years. Ishbosheth, Saul's son reigned as king over Israel for two years according to 2 Samuel 2:10. He reigned until very shortly before all the tribes transferred their allegiance to David since 2 Samuel indicates his disagreement with Saul's former general Abner led to Abner working to secure the allegiance of the northern tribes for David. The situation in the northern tribes during the five years when nobody is said to have ruled is unclear. It is possible that Ishbosheth's rule came toward the end of the seven-year period of David's rule from Hebron. In this case, the northern tribes were either without a leader, or Abner, who appears to have been the real power behind the reign of Ishbosheth, controlled them. It is more likely, however, that Ishbosheth ruled toward the beginning of David's reign. The problem with this view is that it is nowhere stated that David ruled over a united Israel from Hebron for any period of time, and this would place the seat of his government in Hebron for four to five years. 2 Samuel 5 records, however, that Israel anointed David king while he was still in Hebron, so there would obviously have been a transition period during which David would have been ruling a united Israel from Hebron only until it were possible to transfer the seat of his government to Jerusalem.

The chronology of the period as it relates to the capture of Jerusalem and David's ongoing battle with the Philistines is also somewhat uncertain. One view puts the capture of Jerusalem in the first year of David's reign.³ According to Mazar, David and his men captured the city and made it a

³Benjamin Mazar, "David's Reign in Hebron and the Conquest of Jerusalem," *In the Time of Harvest: Essays in Honor of Abba Hillel Silver*, ed. Daniel Jeremy Silver (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 242.

base for military operations. After David was anointed king over all Israel in his third year, the Philistines attacked him, and Jerusalem was the stronghold referred to in conjunction with the battle against the Philistines in 2 Samuel 5:17. According to this view, David made Jerusalem his capital only much later.

Here we must distinguish two different stories, which became joined by way of association, since both speak of Jerusalem. The one tells of the conquest of Jerusalem (5:6-8) while the other deals with its conversion into David's capital. . . . There is no reason to assume that these events are of necessity chronologically linked to each other and that immediately after the capture of the Citadel of Zion David made Jerusalem his capital. The contrary appears to be the case. It is much more reasonable to assume that since the author started off with the story of the conquest of the Citadel of Zion, he went on describing David's activities in Jerusalem after it became the capital and the war with the Philistines had ceased.⁴

This view assumes that the Philistine war was resumed as a result of David becoming king of a reunited Israel, something which they could not allow.

The alternate view places David's capture of Jerusalem shortly after the northern tribes made him their king.⁵ This view is based on the opposite assumption that the biblical account of the period follows a chronological, as opposed to a thematic or topical, scheme of organization. The chief

⁴Ibid., 243.

⁵Christian Ewing Hauer, "Jerusalem, the Stronghold and Rephaim," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (October 1970): 573.

weakness in taking the account as chronological is the position of Joab. 2 Samuel 2:12-14 may be taken as indicating Joab occupied his position as David's military general while Israel and Judah were still at war. 1 Chronicles 11:6 indicates that this position was conferred upon Joab, because he was the first to enter the city of Jerusalem during the battle in which it was taken.⁶ Therefore since Joab seems to be leading David's forces during the battle between David and the remnants of Saul's house, Jerusalem must have been captured before the unification took place. It should be noted, however, that though Joab occupied an important position in the brief narrative of the Israel—Judah war, he was nowhere specifically designated as the leader. His exploits received attention in order to begin the process of characterizing him. He acted in a way which exhibited qualities of leadership which would one day make him David's military commander, but he did not yet occupy that post.

Although one cannot be dogmatic, it is most likely that the events unfolded as follows. David was anointed king in Hebron over Judah. Shortly thereafter, Ishbosheth was anointed King over Israel. As David was receiving the kingdom from the elders of Israel, Ishbosheth's two—year reign and Abner's leadership were ended by assassination. Having ended the civil war with the house of Saul, David was now free to deal with other concerns. Very shortly after his inauguration as King of Israel, David's men captured Jerusalem and the Philistines resumed their war with Israel. During this time, David began to refortify Jerusalem in view of transferring his capital to that city. After a four or five year transition period, the ark was transferred to Jerusalem and this

⁶James W. Flannagan, "The Relocation of the Davidic Capital," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47 (June 1979): 238.

marked the official transfer of the capital from Hebron to Jerusalem.

This view does not account for why the text fails to indicate that David ruled over the united monarchy from Hebron for any length of time. It may be that Hebron is slighted in order to magnify the position of Jerusalem.⁷ It is likely that the people held Hebron in higher esteem than Jerusalem and the author did not wish to draw attention to it. Jerusalem had been a foreign city until David's time and it probably held no real significance for the Jews. Conversely, generally positive feelings directed toward Hebron are indicated by the fact that David was indeed able to rule all of Israel from it for a short time and that Absalom, David's son, initiated his rebellion against his father in Hebron. As will be discussed below, the exact terms of the covenant between Israel and David are not known. It may be that there was some type of understanding between the two parties that David would eventually rule from a more central location instead of Hebron.

⁷Ibid., 238-9. Flannagan states that, "by rearranging the sequence of events, the compiler of Samuel makes the Jerusalemite monarch, who had been joined in covenant with Yahweh, responsible for solving the Philistine problem, rather than allowing the Hebron monarchy to have that privilege as the author of Chronicles and history itself testify. In the same manner, the Hebron-based rebellion against Jerusalem is portrayed as displeasing to Yahweh, who ultimately overcomes it by the same series of events that brought David back, secure and powerful, to Jerusalem and to his house." Of course, rather than stating that the author of Samuel has deliberately changed the chronology (thus suggesting he is dishonest), it should be understood that he makes no definite claims for chronology and merely opts for a thematic approach to his subject. Regardless of the specific date, the capture of Jerusalem and transfer of the ark of the covenant and capital to Jerusalem are a part of what established the rule of David.

Determining Who Captured Jerusalem

Related to the issue of when Jerusalem was captured, 2 Samuel 5:6 states that David and his men went into battle against the city. 1 Chronicles 11:4 indicates that David and all Israel went against Jerusalem. It may be argued that if David conquered Jerusalem with his own personal force, then he probably conquered it before he became king of a united Israel. If, however, members of all the tribes of Israel went with him to the battle, then he probably conquered Jerusalem after receiving the allegiance of the northern tribes. Some might even assert that the two accounts represent two different traditions and that one of them must be wrong.

This difference in the accounts of who captured Jerusalem is only one of a number of variations observable within the parallel accounts of Samuel—Kings and Chronicles. The author of each book approached his task with different thematic stresses in view.⁸ In 2 Samuel, the writer was more interested in telling the story of David's rise to power whereas in 1 Chronicles, he is more interested in Israel as a whole. The accounts are complementary, not contradictory. Merrill explains this difference when he writes that,

Many of the emphases of Chronicles were already present in Samuel—Kings. . . . Chronicles has heightened these points by stating them more clearly

⁸For a discussion of these thematic emphases, see Eugene H. Merrill, "A Theology of Chronicles," *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 157-187.

and by omitting material which might contribute to an opposite understanding.⁹

It is again difficult to determine in detail the dynamics involved in the political conflicts that unfolded at this time in Israel's history. One thing is certain, however. David's military force continued to play a pivotal role after he became king. 2 Samuel 2:12-3:1 narrates events from the civil war between the remnants of the house of Saul and David. The soldiers of Abner are referred to as "Benjamin," "the men of Israel," and "Abner's men." Conversely, David's soldiers are referred to only as "David's men." Though presumably some from his own tribe were in this fighting force, this would seem to suggest that David was fighting this battle primarily with his own mercenary force as opposed to using the men of Judah even though he was their king. Ultimately, however, David was still working on behalf of all the people to establish his kingdom. David's men probably continued to play a very prominent role in his military exploits throughout his reign. Furthermore, David's men included people from a wide range of backgrounds—they were not all his fellow Judahites. Though many of his soldiers were foreigners, 1 Chronicles 12 indicates men from the tribes of Benjamin, Gad, Manasseh, and Judah also came to David while he was still a fugitive from Saul. Presumably, all of the tribes had at least some form of representation among David's men, even though they were David's men, not an army of Israel. The best explanation for the change in terminology in Chronicles is that David's actions were performed for the benefit of all Israel, even though it is primarily his own military force that is supporting him. Japhet explains this when she states,

⁹Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 14 (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 155.

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On the one hand it is stressed that David was king over all Israel and acted on behalf of all the people in the conquest of Jerusalem. On the other hand there is a reflection on the status of Jerusalem: its conquest is not a limited military foray with a small group of warriors, but concerns the people as a whole.¹⁰

David may have used only his own men to conquer Jerusalem, but he was successful because God was working to establish the entire nation. 2 Samuel emphasizes the fact that David was the captor of Jerusalem, but 1 Chronicles emphasizes the fact that the capture of the city was done in the interests of all the people.

The Foundations of the Israelite Monarchy

Transition from Judges to the Monarchy

David reigned during a transition period in the history of Israel. That the monarchy had to gain complete acceptance in the minds of the people and that the exact extent of control it would exercise over the people had to be determined is apparent from the nature of the kingdom established by Saul. When Saul was first publicly proclaimed king (1 Sam 10), there were certain evil men who did not support him (verse 27). The first reported test of Saul's authority is recorded in 1 Samuel 11. In this chapter the Ammonites besieged the town of Jabesh-Gilead. The leaders of Jabesh-Gilead sent messengers to see if anyone in Israel would help them (they did not send for Saul). When Saul heard of the threat to the city, he had just come from working in the field with oxen! Saul responded swiftly by cutting the oxen in pieces, sending

¹⁰Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993), 239.

them throughout Israel, and threatening to do likewise to the cattle of anyone who refused to send men to help fight the battle. This scene suggests several interesting facts concerning the state of the monarchy. First, there was an almost complete absence of government bureaucracy. There was no standing army in Israel at this time as there would be in the days of David. Saul was still involved in farming, and the monarchy had not yet developed any organizational or administrative functions. Second, Saul felt that he had to resort to a threatening tactic in order to ensure the compliance of the people. He did not simply order the army to go into battle but had to summon them.

After Israel's victory over the Ammonites, Samuel, Saul, and the people went to Gilgal to make Saul king. This amounted to a mutual covenant entered into by Saul and the people. Though God had chosen Saul to be king, the people still had to willingly enter into this relationship with him. It would have been similar to the covenant relationship Israel entered into with God at Sinai shortly after the Exodus. The people might have refused. David was made king of Judah first only by mutual consent on the same basis. Alt remarks that,

The word 'covenant' would have been appropriate for the act that made David king of Judah, and the brief account undoubtedly refers to just such a thing when it tells how David originally established himself in Hebron with his soldiers, and how the men of Judah came there to anoint him king; the initiative of the one matches the initiative of the other, and together the two

provide the mutual bond on which the body politic was based.¹¹

The people came to David and recognized that God had anointed him king over all Israel, but he did not exercise that function until they entered into a covenant with David and recognized his rule.

This understanding of the nature of the monarchy continued to exist at least until the days of Rehoboam, David's grandson. The nature of the relationship between king and subjects is more fully revealed in the account of Rehoboam's failure to gain the allegiance of all Israel upon the death of Solomon. When he met with the people, the assembly of Israel agreed to serve Rehoboam if he would lighten their service (taxes and conscripted labor). They were proposing the terms on which they would enter into a covenant with the new king. When Rehoboam refused to meet their terms, the northern tribes made Jeroboam their king. The covenant nature of the monarchy seems to suggest that it possessed certain qualities of a representative democracy, as opposed to the concept of absolute power which modern thought tends to accord to this institution. As for David, there must have been some understanding on his part of the need to sufficiently gain the goodwill of the people so that they would willingly enter into this type of covenant relationship with him. Given the well-entrenched tribal loyalties existing within Israel, he must have realized that the transition of loyalties from one's own tribe to a central government would not be automatic.

¹¹Albrecht, Alt, "The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine," in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, trans. R.A. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 213.

Transition of the Rule of Saul to David

Not only did David have to establish his new form of government, he also had to establish himself as the head of that new government. His right to rule did not come due to the law of primogeniture. Obviously, his authority to rule was firmly grounded in the fact that God chose him. On a popular level, however, it was necessary for Israel to recognize him as the legitimate king instead of one of Saul's descendents. And it is possible to trace the accumulation of David's power from the point of an obscure young man in Israel to the point of his reception of the kingdom from the northern tribes of Israel.

David's rise to power began when he slew Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Besides securing a victory for Israel, this was the action that brought David into Saul's court permanently. As David continued to be successful in battle, Saul eventually had him set over the men of war. Saul became jealous of David's popularity, however, and determined that he would find a means to eliminate him. One of his schemes to do so was to allow David to marry his daughter Michal. Michal was a person of low character and Saul undoubtedly hoped she would exert a corrupting influence on David. In reality, however, having her as a wife worked in David's favor as he was now recognized as an official member of the royal family.

The balance of 1 Samuel details the wilderness wanderings of David as a fugitive from Saul. At this point Michal was taken from David, and he certainly lost most of the influence he had earlier enjoyed. During his wanderings, David spent most of his time either in the Judean wilderness or as a Philistine vassal on the edge of Judean territory in the city of Ziklag. Through a series of military successes with his group of 600 soldiers, he was able to build enough of a power base to be anointed king over the tribe of Judah in the city of Hebron. As mentioned above, the northern tribes anointed Ishbosheth as their king at approximately the same time.

David was thus faced with the problem of how to extend his rule over the northern tribes.

During a brief period of war between Israel and Judah, the house of Saul began to grow weak. 2 Samuel 3:6 notes that while the war continued, Abner was working to strengthen his position within the house of Saul. When Abner appropriated Saul's concubine, Rizpah, for himself, Ishbosheth angered Abner to the point that he set out to give the kingdom to David. Upon Abner's proposal, David requested that Michal be returned to him as a wife. David correctly surmised that the renewal of his marriage ties with the house of Saul would serve to legitimize his claim to the throne. Sometime between the offer of the kingdom and the transaction of the covenant officially establishing David as the king, both Abner and Ishbosheth were put to death. David refused to condone either action. Besides being morally correct, his response to these two deaths was designed to avoid incurring suspicion of complicity in the assassinations. Failure to do so might have jeopardized his chance to gain the loyalty of the northern tribes. The fact that David received the allegiance of the northern tribes only with the help of Abner must not go unnoticed either.

It is within the framework of this political situation that the transfer of the capital to Jerusalem must be approached. Though the anointed successor of Saul, David always had to concern himself with maintaining his position on a popular level. His reacquisition of Michal as a wife and his response toward the deaths of his potential political rivals show how he was aware of the fact that his power base was subject to popular opinion. As Absalom's revolt proved, the threat of rebellion was very real. It is therefore highly unlikely that David would have transferred his capital to Jerusalem unless there were specific advantages to doing so. At every point in his rise to power, David acted in a way that helped him consolidate his position.

Strategic Advantages of a Jerusalem Capital

Having discussed the chronology of the first seven years of David's reign and his need to consolidate his position and establish his rule, it is now possible to determine how moving the capital to Jerusalem helped him achieve those goals.

Militarily Defensible

Jerusalem was located in an ideal strategic position. The city is surrounded by valleys on three different sides and is easily approached only on the northern side.¹² "Roughly speaking, the ancient city can be visualized as sitting on a rise in the bottom of a large bowl, where the rim of the bowl is higher than the rise within it."¹³ The city is defensible to the point where more than one thousand years after the death of David, the highly efficient Roman army captured it only after a lengthy siege. As an expert military commander, David would have naturally been concerned about the military prospects for wherever he chose to locate.

The defensibility of the city is aptly attested to by the heroic means Joab used to capture it. 2 Samuel 5:6 states: "The Jebusites. . . spake unto David, saying, 'Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither': thinking, David cannot come in hither." Though there is some debate as to the exact meaning and reference of the taunt, it is

¹²Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, fully revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), s.v. "Jerusalem," by W.S. Lasor.

¹³Carl G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 189. Rasmussen also includes a concise, helpful description of the layout of the valleys and hills surrounding the city.

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most likely that “the Jebusites regarded their city so impregnable that even the blind and the lame could defend it and repulse David’s troops.”¹⁴ David’s solution was to enter the city through the water system that had been developed to provide access to the Gihon Spring during times of war.¹⁵ He realized that a direct assault would not be wise.

Not only did the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem offer military advantages, the outlying areas contributed to its defensibility as well. This natural defense is described by Rasmussen when he writes,

The Dead Sea, the Rift Valley cliffs, and the wilderness provided protection on the south and east, while the latter two provided security on the northeast as well. It was also difficult to approach Jerusalem from the west because the hills of the Shephelah and the deep, v-shaped valleys carved into the hard limestone of the Judean hills formed a rugged and treacherous landscape. It was somewhat easier to approach Jerusalem from the north or south, along the ridge route, but access to the ridge route from either the coast or the Rift Valley was difficult. Thus, besides

¹⁴A.A. Anderson, *II Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 82.

¹⁵There is some debate about the identification of the Hebrew word שִׁנּוֹר. The majority of scholars, however, believe the word does refer to the ancient Jebusite water system. Terrence Kleven, “The Use of *snr* in Ugaritic and 2 Samuel v8: Hebrew Usage and Comparative Philology,” *Vetus Testamentum* 44 (April 1994): 203, offers a very well researched definition of the term. He states: “My re-examination of the literary and philological arguments confirms that on the basis of Hebrew usage and the best available arguments from comparative philology, *šinnôr* probably refers to some type of water shaft. The Ugaritic usage also attests the possibility of a Canaanite *snr* from a date earlier than the events of 2 Sam. v 8.”

being removed from the main routes of commerce and military expeditions, Jerusalem enjoyed the security of its natural defenses.¹⁶

Hebron, conversely, may have appeared more vulnerable to David from a military standpoint. "Hebron was . . . the gateway to the south—to the Negev, for one road ran southwest to Beersheba, while a second ran southeast to Arad."¹⁷ Since it was further south (approximately 19 miles) than Jerusalem, it was away from the heart of Israel on the southern flank of the tribes. Since the southern boundary of Israel was generally regarded as being in the vicinity of the city of Beer-Sheba, this put Hebron only 25 miles north of the southern border, near what would be part of the first line of defense should Israel be attacked from the south. It was one of the cities which Rehoboam fortified during the first few years of his reign over the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles 11:5-10). The pattern of fortification suggests that Rehoboam was scared by the possibility of invasion from Egypt. Indeed, when Shishak the Egyptian Pharaoh invaded Judah, the fortified cities, including Hebron, were the first to fall (2 Chronicles 12:4). For Hebron to be a capital city so close to the border would have been unthinkable to David. Jerusalem, being in the heart of the country however, was well insulated from foreign invasion.

¹⁶Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*, 188.

¹⁷Carl Rasmussen, "Hebron," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4:699.

Inoffensive to the Supporters of Saul

Even though Hebron would appear to be an unacceptable capital for a united Israel, David was not necessarily free to move to whatever location he desired. One such possible location would have been to set up his capital in Gibeah, the town from which Saul ruled. This would have been advantageous from the standpoint of its central location within the territory controlled by Israel. It probably would have been inoffensive in the same sense that Jerusalem was inoffensive since it was not located within the territory of either Ephraim or Judah, the two strongest tribes. Locating the capital here, however, might have compromised the goodwill David had worked so hard to foster among the small groups that did not support his rule. 1 and 2 Samuel record a number of accounts of the grim fate suffered by many people who were David's enemies or potential enemies (Saul, Abner, Ishbosheth, Saul's sons). Part of the reason that the author included these accounts was to show that David was innocent of any wrongdoing in their deaths. Had he appropriated the land of the now dead Saul, however, he would have made a grave error. "David had no claim on the royal lands . . . at Gibeah. It was all ancestral property of Saul's family Eventually he would confirm the Saulide estates to Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1-13). Meanwhile, David's political wisdom warned against risking the appearance of despoiling a prominent Benjaminite family in its hour of misfortune."¹⁸

¹⁸Hauer, "Jerusalem, the Stronghold and Rephaim," 572. It should be noted that as the husband of Michal, David may have had a claim to the estate of his father-in-law. It probably would have been a secondary claim, however. Furthermore, regardless of the fact that he technically had a claim to the lands of Saul, it may have

Inoffensive to Israel and Judah

The City's Neutrality. Presumably, a move far away from the territory of Judah would have risked alienating segments from among David's closest supporters. Jerusalem was, however, located in the tribe of Benjamin, about 1 mile to the north of the territory assigned to Judah.¹⁹ The city was also very close to the territory assigned to Ephraim, the dominant tribe from the north, so it would probably have been acceptable to them as well (Bethel, a prominent city in Ephraim, is only about ten miles north of Jerusalem). Furthermore, Israel had been ruled from the area of Benjamin for an extended period of time. Samuel, the last judge, had lived in Ramah (about 5 miles north of Jerusalem); Saul had ruled from Gibeah (about 4 miles north of Jerusalem). The city was located within the boundaries of what had been functioning as the "capital district" of Israel for an extended period of time.

The manner in which Jerusalem was captured may have also benefited David. Flannagan notes that,

The site's neutrality was further enhanced by David's capturing it with his own men, rather than with the militia of either Israel or Judah. Neutral and independent, the city could be a unifying factor for the two kingdoms rather than a dividing one, as it had been when it was one of a chain of non-Yahwistic cities intersecting Canaan.²⁰

been a case where David simply refused to risk alienating any of his subjects by exercising it.

¹⁹This may explain why Judges 1 connects the Judahites and Benjamites with the city. In 1:8, Judah fights against Jerusalem because it is a foreign stronghold.

²⁰Flannagan, "The Relocation of the Davidic Capital," 224.

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As noted above, there is some uncertainty about whether the city was captured by David's men exclusively or by a united force after David was crowned king of all Israel. In either case, the site would have been a unifying factor for the nation. If David captured it with his own men, then neither side could claim it as their own. If David captured it using additional soldiers from Israel and Judah, then they both took part in its capture with the same result: neither could claim the city as their own.

The City as David's Possession. The fact that David probably captured Jerusalem with his own men and that it was known as the City of David have led to the conclusion that the city was the personal property of David and his house. According to this line of reasoning, the city encouraged loyalty to its conqueror, David, rather than to any particular tribe, for David captured it on behalf of all Israel as opposed to the benefit of any particular tribe. This view is actually the cornerstone of the idea that Jerusalem continued to exist after its capture as an independent city—state ruling over both Israel and Judah. This view also postulates that Israel and Judah were never really joined into one political entity under David but existed side by side as separate kingdoms with the same ruler. All comments that,

This is the typical form of a personal union between neighboring states The inevitable result is that the king whom they have in common never fully belongs to either of the kingdoms, and from his mediating position gains a superiority over both, which it would be far more difficult for him to acquire as ruler of a single kingdom. This effect was strengthened in David's case by the fact . . . that he possessed in his mercenaries a domestic bodyguard owing allegiance to himself alone, before he ever became king, and the

result was rapid and plain to see; he removed his capital from Hebron to Jerusalem, which, being neither Israelite nor Judean, was in a neutral position with respect to the two kingdoms From then on he lived within . . . a higher plane outside the twin kingdoms of Israel and Judah.²¹

It is unlikely, however, that Jerusalem maintained this level of sovereignty. It is better to view the situation as one in which Jerusalem failed to achieve "the status of a city—state but . . . [attained] some kind of limited autonomy."²² Nevertheless, this view is to be commended for its recognition of the unique position of Jerusalem within the framework of the united monarchy. Regardless of its exact political status, it is clear that the city was more closely associated with David than with any of the twelve tribes. Jerusalem would have encouraged loyalty to him as opposed to any particular tribe or location.

Conclusion

All of the biblical evidence suggests that his selection of Jerusalem as his capital city was instrumental for the establishment of David in his position as king of both Israel and Judah. There are certainly some gaps in the amount of knowledge modern Bible scholars possess concerning the events of this time period. The chronology and the components of David's army are all open to debate. The general feeling of the people toward the cities of Jerusalem and Hebron cannot be known with certainty. Even allowing for these uncertainties, however, the

²¹Alt, "The formation of the Israelite State in Palestine," 217-219.

²²Anderson, *II Samuel*, 81.

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importance of the city for David is still clear. Ewing aptly summarized the benefits of locating his capital in this location.

By lodging his government in the formerly Jebusite city David secured a capital which was untainted by Israelite tribal rivalries, which was ideally located at the Judean—Israelite border, and which had the valuable characteristic of remarkable strategic security. In the process he erased an alien presence from the watershed highway down the backbone of his kingdom. The new capital also exhibited the virtue of being crown property by right of conquest, quite literally, “the city of David.”²³

Jerusalem simply had too many advantages as a capital city for David to seriously consider any other location.

²³Hauer, “Jerusalem, the Stronghold and Rephaim,” 573.