

Boston College - School of Theology and Ministry

STL Thesis

**MAKING ROOM FOR OPPONENTS AS THE MISSION OF THE
ELECT: Reconciling divine election in the Hebrew Bible and
political elections in Contemporary Ivory Coast.**

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Introduction

Divine election is a theme that pervades the Hebrew Bible and gives great insights into the life, mission, and deeds of an authentic leader. Biblical election entails the notion that God favors some individuals or group of people over others to carry out his mission. God has selected some outstanding individuals such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David and several other prophets. In the Hebrew Bible, divine favoritism often manifests itself through an underdog character, the privilege of the younger sibling over the elder brother. Though the biblical text gives few hints about divine choices, there is a recurrent pattern that demonstrates divine preference for the weak, the little or the youngest child over the other siblings. God often chooses the weakest link and promotes them to become the leader of many. Election entails leadership.

The study here will reflect and analyze the underdog motif of divine election, especially in the narratives of Joseph and David. We will survey the narratives through literary and theological method in order to identify the features of their election, the key traits of their leadership and the way they treat their enemies. Examining the elections of Joseph and David will enlighten us as to the qualities and actions of their leadership, their unique leadership style, the challenges they face, the mission entrusted to them and their interaction with their adversaries or enemies during their respective missions.

A survey of their leadership can also provide valuable insights to a contemporary reading of the political leadership situation in postcolonial Africa. Indeed, political leadership in Africa, especially in Ivory Coast, has been subject to criticism as well as feelings of shame and despair due to the failure to overcome conflict and tension. In Ivory Coast from 1990 to 2010, presidential elections have brought officials to power who consider themselves above the law, who are not held

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accountable to the people and create a climate of fear, hatred, and conflict among their citizens. Their poor quality of leadership has undermined unity, peace and justice in the country. Leaders are only concerned with retaining power and find it difficult to “relinquish power at the expiration of their tenure, thereby breeding general discontent among the political elite, who often mobilize their ethnic and religious constituencies to fight their cause.”¹ The failures of the political leadership in Ivory Coast have hindered economic development, contributed to poverty and social inequality, and exacerbated ethnic and political tensions. There is, therefore a need to take lessons from biblical examples of leadership in order to address these failures.

This thesis looks first at the notion of biblical election as building a case for legitimate leadership. Then it applies the insights of biblical leadership to the case of political leadership in Ivory Coast. I argue that though the leadership of Joseph and David each carries a unique style, there is a contrast often made between the signs and manifestation of their election and the immature and negative traits of their personalities. Though Joseph and David are both imperfect characters, they are chosen to accomplish a noble mission of unity and salvation of a great number of people. They are chosen not because they are good or bad, but because they need to grow, learn from their mistakes and serve others. Self-awareness and openness to dialogue with adversaries help them achieve their mission. Among many other qualities of the elect is stressed the importance of being less self-centered and more people and goal-oriented. The more the divinely elected learns from his weaknesses and gives room for dialogue with his adversaries, the more he can accomplish his mission. In our findings, forgiveness is subtly present in the leadership of Joseph and David, and

¹ Kenneth Kalu and Toyin Falola, *Reflections on Leadership and Institutions in Africa* (London, UNITED STATES: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020), 137–138, accessed March 28, 2023, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bostoncollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6209386>.

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compassion and mercy are praiseworthy personality traits of the biblical elect. Other lessons in leadership are the importance of accountability and the importance of giving room to dialogue with adversaries and enemies. These findings will be applied to the case study of Ivory Coast with the goal of pinpointing the different areas of attention in the political leadership.

Thus, the first chapter will provide a general portrayal of the socio-political and historical background of the country and single out the failures of the political leadership in terms of tackling corruption, ethnic manipulation, socio-economic injustices and parodies of political reconciliation. The second chapter will explore and analyze the concept of biblical election in the narrative of Joseph and David, and single out the lessons of leadership and the manner they treat their opponents and adversaries. The last chapter will use these lessons as valuable insights to identify the role and duties of political leaders in Ivory Coast. Like those who are divinely-elected in the Hebrew Bible, political leaders need to be accountable for the power entrusted to them by their electorate, pursue the goal of the common good of their citizens and make room for dialogue and communication with their adversaries.

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Part 1: Introductory remarks to the context of Ivory Coast

This part of my thesis will give an account of the conflicts that oppose political officials in Ivory Coast and the different reasons of these conflicts. I will point out that the major failure of political officials in Ivory Coast is to fail to make room for their opponents when they seize power. The overview of the context of Ivory Coast will support the case of understanding the main traits of an elect, his/her mission, and the way they treat their adversaries.

1.1. Why Ivory Coast?

This dissertation focuses on Ivory Coast primarily because I have studied the leadership of the country at length during my last thesis in Political Science, majoring in Conflict Management. In addition, in terms of economy, political leadership, and relations between the various inhabitants, the case of Ivory Coast is not far from my native country, Togo. Ivory Coast is a model for the study that can inform our understanding of other French-speaking countries of West and Central Africa. They share the same political history of colonization, coup d'état, administrative upheavals, and economic challenges. Above all, they share the same challenges of leadership and human development. I do not claim here to be able to apply the Ivorian study model to all other West African countries. Still, I am convinced the case of the Ivory Coast can shed some light on the effort to be made in other West African countries in forming leaders who are aware of and responsible for the well-being of their population.

In the following section, I will first analyze the socio- historical identity of the country, then I will point out to the different motives of conflict between the leaders. Then, I will consider the roles played by political leaders in exacerbating conflicts in the country due to their lack of giving room to political reconciliation and inclusiveness in the country.

1.2.Socio-political history of Ivory Coast

The historical background of the Ivory Coast shows us that leaders have contributed majorly to the social instability. Their desire to stay as the unique leader and not give room to dialogue with other adversaries has undermined the unity and well-being of the citizens.

The Republic of Ivory Coast is located on the coast of West Africa, bordered by Ghana, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Liberia. It covers an area of 322,462 square km and is composed of 29.389.150 inhabitants.² The population is composed of more than 60 ethnic groups, a source of its rich diversity but also conflicts.

Ivory Coast was colonized and exploited by France since March 10, 1893. Under the French colonial empire, the Ivorian citizens were often arrested, beaten and tortured because of their fight for economic and political independence. The exploitation of the natural resources were in the hand of French companies which built infrastructures to allow the evacuation of export products. The indigenous population was subjected to force labor, brutality and racial segregation. With the organization of political life and the birth of political parties in 1946, Ivorian voters appointed Félix Houphouet-Boigny to represent the Ivorian people in the French parliament. Houphouet fought to abolish forced labor in the country and a more equitable treatment of the Ivorian planters. After a series of fierce and sometimes violent struggles, the Ivorian people gained independence on August 7, 1960 with Houphouet as President.

From 1960, the institutions are well distinct with a separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers provided by the said constitution. President Félix Houphouet Boigny remained in

² Institut National de Côte d'Ivoire, *Résultats globaux*, https://www.ins.ci/RGP2021/RGPH2021-RESULTATS%20GLOBAUX_VF.pdf (accessed on Sept 20, 2022)

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power until his death on December 7, 1993. Henri-Konan Bedie, the national assembly president, who France supported, replaced him. He was re-elected in the 1995 elections. Ethnic and religious tensions were rising in the country and at Christmas 1999 (Red Christmas), mutinous soldiers under the leadership of Brigadier General Robert Gueï took power by staging a coup. Although he had promised to leave power to civilians, Gueï wanted to retain power but was defeated in the October 2000 elections by Laurent Gbagbo of the FPI (Ivoirian Popular Front).

A coup d'état was aborted on September 19, 2002, and General Gueï was killed, leading to a civil war that divided the country. On one side, Guillaume Soro and Alassane Ouattara led the rebels, on the other side in the south, the Republican army was under the leadership of Laurent Gbagbo. Despite several political agreements, attempts at reconciliation, and the establishment of a joint government of the two belligerents, the 2010 elections opened the door to an even greater crisis. In October-December 2010, presidential elections were held. The two main candidates, the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and the eternal opponent Alassane Ouattara declared themselves winners of the presidential election, leading to widespread fighting in the country and more than three thousand deaths. With the help of France and UN forces, Laurent Gbagbo was ousted from power and handed over to international justice in April 2011. In 2015 another election was held but boycotted by the opposition and in 2020 Ouattara won a third term despite the two-term limit stipulated by the Ivorian constitution.

The social and political instability of the country has different causes. In the following lines, I will investigate the economic and socio-ethnic motives that lead the political officials in Ivory Coast to exclude each other and maintain an environment of crisis.

1.3. The roots of division and polarization in Ivory Coast

The socio-political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire is the result of a combination of political, governance, economic, social and historical factors. Political leaders have created an environment of exclusivity by instilling xenophobia, promoting ethno-linguistic cleavages and supporting the unfair distribution of land resources. The following lines will point out to the areas of improvement in Ivory Coast: the importance of collaboration across ethnic groups (part 1), the self-awareness of the leaders or building of some skills such as honesty, humility, trust (part 2 and 3), the seeking of common good through tolerance and dialogue (part 3).

1.3.1. The ethnic manipulation

One of the roots of political instability in the post-independence Ivory Coast is the instrumentalization of ethnic affinities by leaders. This ethnic manipulation is a legacy of the politics of ethnicity during the colonial period. Ethnic groups were forced to coexist within borders enforced by the French colonial rule. As a result, more than sixty ethnic groups were forced to cohabit or were separated across the Ivorian and Ghanaian borders. This "divide and rule" strategy was played between the different ethnic groups to impose their hegemony and efficiently administer the colonies. Julius Adekunle states that:

“Ethnic politics in the form of marginalization violates the principles of justice and democracy because some groups are deprived of access to power, providing fertile grounds for conflict. The process of adjustment from ethnic politics to the nation-state system was not easy for

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African nationalists who assumed leadership roles with the legacy of division and rule of the colonial administration.”³

During colonization, a French historian and governor Maurice Delafosse (1870- 1926) was responsible for defining, identifying, and taking an inventory of all the ethnic groups in Ivory Coast. His ethnographic list includes the Dioula, a Muslim people from the North who were mostly traders, the Senufo, who the colonists also valued, reputed to be farmers and good workers, and who embodied the image of a strong and docile workforce, the Baoule, whose weak political organization was mentioned, the Krou (west and southwest), who were depicted as anarchical, and the Bete, who were considered primitive, deceitful and lazy.⁴ Ethnicity and the state, therefore, played a major role in the Ivorian political crisis.

The political parties that subsequently formed are heirs to this ethnic division. The tensions arising from the fragmentation of identity are indisputable. The parties mobilized according to the ethnicity of the political leaders: The PDCI (Democratic Party of Ivory Coast) of political leader Henri-Konan Bedie is mostly composed of Akan-Baoule, while the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI) is the party of the Bete under the leadership of Laurent Gbagbo. The Union of Republicans (RDR) of Alassane Ouattara, the current president, is the party of the Dioula (or Malinke), and the UDPCI (Popular and Democratic Union of Cote d'Ivoire), the party of the Dan (or Yacouba).⁵ According to Professor Dakouri Gadou, a professor at the Institute of Ethnosociology in Ivory Coast, the seeds of the political and ethnic crisis in Ivory Coast were sown well before the September 2002

³ Julius Adegunle, “Ethnic Conflicts and African Politics” in ed by Toyin Falola, *Africa* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2000), vol 5, 221.

⁴ Jean-Pierre Dozon, “L’Invention de la Côte-d’Ivoire,” *Le Genre humain* 20, no. 2 (1989): 143.

⁵ Dakouri Gadou, “Crise Ivoirienne: Enjeux et Sens d’une Mobilisation Patriotique,” *Afrika focus* 22, 2009, no. 2 (2009): 66.

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war. There was a revival, in oral and written literature, both national and international, of patriotic speeches or words like ‘nationalism’, and ‘new Ivory Coast’. This provoked a nationalist, xenophobic and exclusionist backlash, first in 1990 in the demand to abolish the vote of foreigners, and through the notion of “*Ivoirité*” (return to a purely Ivorian identity). Indeed, it was under the presidency of Henri Konan Bédié of the PDCI that the concept of *ivoirité* was born to keep Alassane Ouattara of the RDR out of power, since the latter was not of Ivorian descent, but had a Burkinabe parent.⁶

Moreover, the Ivorian rebels that started the rebellion in 2002 and were led by Guillaume Soro, an Ivorian from the North, claimed their attack was a patriotic mobilization to restore the injustices committed against their ethnic group. On the night of September 18-19, 2002, the rebels began shooting and made two claims.⁷ Politically, they demanded the resignation of President Laurent Gbagbo of the Bete ethnic group because of the fraudulent conditions under which he took power, and ethnically, to stop Gbagbo’s attempts to revise the Ivorian nationality law so that all inhabitants of Ivory Coast, immigrants or not, could run for president. Most rebels came from the North, and one of the sergeants, Issiaka Ouattara, said:

"The rebellion in Ivory Coast should not surprise anyone. For ten years, everyone has seen the tearing apart of this country; everyone has seen how the army and the population have been divided, everyone has seen how other Ivorians have been arrested, tortured, and

⁶ Richard BANEGAS and René OTAYEK, “Le Burkina Faso dans la crise ivoirienne: Effets d’aubaine et incertitudes politiques : La Côte d’Ivoire en guerre: dynamique du dedans et du dehors,” *Politique africaine* (Paris, France : 1981) 89 (2003): 71–87.

⁷ Gadou, “Crise Ivoirienne,” 69.

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killed on false grounds and simply because they are opponents or because they come from the North.”⁸

Rodrigue Kone, an Ivorian researcher at the Center for Research and Action for Peace, structures the progression of this ethnic division in three main moments.⁹ First, from 1960 to 1990, corresponding to the period of governance of President Houphouët Boigny, when he undertook an ethnic distribution of economic and political resources through the "sons of the regions" or "regional executives". It was followed by a protest by the Bete ethnic group with the speech of one of their own, Kragbé Gnagbé, and a repression by the government resulting in more than 4000 deaths. The second phase is from 1990 to 1999 when the concept of ethnicity was rooted in the Ivorian political field in a context of multiparty politics. Political parties were ethnicized and when Bédié took power, the people of the North were increasingly excluded from the management of power even within the PDCI. Another party was created to bring together those excluded from the North under the leadership of Alassane Ouattara. The third phase, from 2000 to 2011, is the immediate consequence of the other two phases characterized by "the more visible involvement of ethnic communities in the theater of political violence."

Until now, the political parties are ethnically polarized and the politicians rarely give room to dialogue with other ethnic groups when they are in power. The political leaders have thus failed in their mission of inclusivity and unity. Instead, they have used the ethnic fiber, inherited from the colonists, to continue to polarize the country. Therefore, we have exposed one important lack

⁸ Journal Le Front n° 818 du mercredi 19 Janvier 2005; Cf. aussi: <http://www.bataillon-anaconda.info/wattao/lire-article.php?newsid=16>

⁹ Fahiraman Rodrigue Kone, "Les racines ethniques de la crise ivoirienne," *Popoli*, no. 6 (Juillet 2011): 1.

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in Ivorian leadership that needs to be rectified: ethnic rivalry that traps the country in a cycle of revenge.

What can be said of the difficulties on the economic plan?

1.3.2. Economic injustice

The unequal distribution of economic resources is a major cause of the instability in the country and political leaders contributed in exacerbating injustice. The economy injustice is closely linked to political leadership and ethnicity. Long before independence, in the early 20th century, present-day Ivory Coast was the feeder region of French West Africa (AOF), including the French territories of West Africa. In 1922, the opening of the railroad between the Ivorian coast and the voltaic region of Upper Senegal-Niger made it possible to recruit cheaper labor. Thus, the administration of Upper Volta sent and forced the immigration of Burkinabe to the various public worksites (Thies-Kayes railroad for Senegal and Bouake-Bobo-Dioulasso for the Ivory Coast) as well as to the plantations and agricultural operations of the Ivory Coast. That represents a population of 42,930 laborers from 1921 to 1930 and 16,545 laborers from 1920 to 1930.¹⁰ This strong immigration of Burkinabe populations will lead to the development of the land in the southeast region of Ivory Coast. The colonial state forced the populations of the Agni ethnic group to devote themselves to the plantation economy, specifically cocoa farming. As a result, the Southeast developed with the Agni planters who exploited the cheaper workforce, made up of most of the Senufo (northern ethnic group), Burkinabe, and Bete. The Agni planters became rich through the sale of cocoa and the use of non-native labor. They formed a purely ethnocentric association,

¹⁰ Jean-Yves Marchal, "Frontières et réfugiés en Afrique occidentale française (1900-1950)," *Editions IRD, Colloques et séminaires* (1999): 209–225.

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ADIACI (Association for the Defense of the Interests of the Natives of Ivory Coast), to fight against the strategies of land appropriation by non-native workers (Dioula, Baule, Bete, and Burkinabe) in the 1930s.¹¹ In addition, another actor, the Baule ethnic group, entered the economic scene and began to play an important role due to "the increase in the production and trade of food crops, particularly yams," and the exploitation of coffee. The Baule gradually become the major economic actors with the acquisition of larger areas of land (more than 2 hectares) and an increasingly dominant role in the colonial and political administration.

Under the political leadership of the Baule farmer and entrepreneur Felix Houphouet Boigny, the African Agricultural Union (SAA) was created in 1944 and defended the rights of Baule planters with more than 2 hectares of coffee or 3 hectares of cocoa. However, this union excluded small farmers of other ethnic groups, particularly the Bete, who owned land smaller than the 2 hectares limit. The SAA did not practice an ethnocentric policy but welcomed the Dioula ethnic group, the Senegalese and the Burkinabe. This union represented a bourgeoisie of planters that gradually imposed itself in the economic realm, and more broadly on politics. Thus, Houphouet was elected as the first deputy to the French Assembly, defeating the Bete and Agni representatives, and taking the name Houphouet-Boigny.¹²

After independence, it was not without surprise that President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Baule ethnic group took as Prime Minister the Burkinabe immigrant Alassane Dramane Ouattara in order to improve the economic situation. President Houphouet's policy was to welcome immigrants from the region, especially encouraging external (mainly Burkinabe) and internal

¹¹ Dozon, "L'Invention de la Côte-d'Ivoire," 149.

¹² Dozon. "L'Invention de la Côte-d'Ivoire," 154.

According to rumor, the Ivorian deputy took the name of Houphouet-Boigny to make it the emblem of his victory over the Agni (Bo-Agni meaning winner of the Agni)

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(Baule) agricultural immigration. According to him, "the future of the country depends on agriculture" and "the land belongs to the person who develops it". Around the land were grafted the communication routes and the opening of the port of San Pedro in 1970. From 1970 to 1980, the economy grew by 7%, it was called the "Ivorian miracle".¹³ Despite Houphouët's progressive public policies, economic inequalities existed between the North and the South due to the exploitation of cocoa, coffee and natural resources located more in the South.

In 1980, the worldwide drop in coffee and cocoa prices negatively influenced the Ivorian economy. Since more than 70% of the population lived off the profits of agriculture and the formal sector, this drop led to civil unrest and student riots under the leadership of a history professor, Houphouët's political opponent, Laurent Gbagbo. Jobs were scarce, and young people did not have enough resources to buy the best land sold to immigrants, creating strong anti-immigrant sentiments in the country.¹⁴ The subsequent devaluation of the CFA franc by 50%¹⁵ led to a reduction in salaries, privatization of public enterprises, a 25% increase in the price of public services such as electricity, water, and public transportation, and a budget deficit of 3% until 2000.¹⁶ Average per capita consumption fell to about \$1.5 per day per capita.¹⁷ Half of the poor were concentrated in the savannah areas in 1985, and the drop in coffee and cocoa prices led to

¹³ Fabrice Courtin, Florence Fournet, and Philippe Solano, "La crise ivoirienne et les migrants burkinabés," *Afrique contemporaine* 236, no. 4 (2010): 15.

¹⁴ Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, 1st ed.. (New York: Harper, 2009), 157.

¹⁵ J.-P. Azam, "Poverty and Growth in the WAEMU after the 1994 Devaluation," *Journal of African Economies* 13, no. 4 (December 1, 2004): 536–562.

¹⁶ Denis Cogneau and Sandrine Mesplé-Somps, "Les illusions perdues de l'économie ivoirienne et la crise politique," *Afrique contemporaine* n° 206, no. 2 (May 1, 2003): 93.

¹⁷ Grimm, M., C. Guénard et S. Mesplé-Somps (2002), "What has happened to the Urban Population in Côte d'Ivoire Since the 1980s? An Analysis of Monetary Poverty and Deprivation Over 15 Years of Household Data", *World Development*, vol. 30, n° 6, p.1073-1095.

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increased poverty in the forest areas and in the west of the country, where the poverty rate rose from 2% to 38%.¹⁸

The adoption of a national plan to fight poverty in 1997 did not help the Ivorian economy. The splitting of the country in two with the 2002 coup d'état and the rebellion in the North led to glaring geographical inequalities between the North and the South, and between the cities and the countryside. In 1998, 60% of Ivorian households did not have access to water, electricity, or water taps. In addition, the Bedie government adopted an exclusionary law prohibiting foreigners from owning land, which was confirmed and passed in January 2002, under the presidency of Laurent Gbagbo. It was called the "national identification" law. The land law led to conflicts as early as 1999 in Tabou, in the southwest of Ivory Coast, between the indigenous Krou and the Burkinabe, resulting in the displacement of more than 12,000 Burkinabe.

In 1998, the Ivorian Economic and Social Council wrote a report entitled "Immigration in Ivory Coast: the threshold of tolerability is largely exceeded." This report noted an increasingly large foreign population (one in four inhabitants), with 56% of foreigners being Burkinabe, or nearly 15% of the total population.¹⁹ Furthermore, the rebellion and land conflicts of 2002 led to the return of immigrants to their country of origin. Still, they could not access resources in their own country because of the difficult socio-economic situation in their country. Therefore, these immigrants returned to Ivory Coast in 2005, making an immigrant population of 200,000 people.²⁰

¹⁸ Cogneau and Mesplé-Somps, "Les illusions perdues de l'économie ivoirienne et la crise politique," 101.

¹⁹ Courtin, Fournet, and Solano, "La crise ivoirienne et les migrants burkinabés," 16.

²⁰ Unocha, Humanitarian Briefing Pack, Burkina Faso, 2005.

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The economic inequalities and exclusivist economic policies of the various presidents constitute one of the roots of the Ivorian crisis. Each president prioritized his ethnic group by developing his zone or region and neglected the other regions. In addition, exclusionary economic policies have led to social frustration and hatred has marred the elections.

The overview of the different economic policies shows us that there is a lack of tolerance and integration across national boundaries. Leaders have misused and abused their power and created hatred among the citizens. There is a lack of honesty, humility and collaboration promoted by leaders. These traits will be debated in the second and third part of the work.

1.3.3. lack of tolerance and forgiveness

Despite the different opportunities of reconciliation in the country, the political leaders refused to make room for their opponents and failed to establish unity and peace in the country.

Following the rebellion from the North of Ivory Coast in September 2002, French army Licorne and African Union forces tried to protect their citizens and act as a buffer between the belligerents. Also, several attempts at reconciliation and mediation have failed between these three main leaders: Bedie, Gbagbo, and Ouattara. I argue that these various mediations have failed mainly because of the unwillingness of these leaders to collaborate with others and their selfish intentions to favor the nationals of their ethnic group politically, administratively, and economically. Each has continued the mistakes and failures caused by the others, leading to ethnic-political tension in the country, even though the country traditionally called itself the "country of hospitality".

The integrationist policy, characterized by a culture of dialogue, compromise, rewards and punishments, forgiveness, and reintegration, only existed in Ivory Coast during the presidency of

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Houphouet Boigny (1960 - 1993).²¹ To maintain order and social stability, Houphouet used carrot and stick. He violently repressed the secessionists of the Sanwi king in December 1969 and during the Guebie crisis in November 1970. The president used the system of ethnic quotas to establish a balance in the distribution of representatives of the different regions and ethnic groups within the institutions of the state.²² President Houphouet during his term of office visited the northern regions several times in 1974 and initiated the Northern Program which allocated an average of 20 billion CFA in investment programs to the North and alternated festivities during the commemoration of independence in various regions of Ivory Coast.²³

The peace agreements initiated by ECOWAS members in Lomé were the first attempt at reconciliation. However, in the middle of the negotiations that began on November 1, the rebels suspended their participation following the assassination of Dr. Benoit Dacoury-Tabley, the brother of the coordinator of external relations of the MPC (Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast), Louis Dacoury-Tabley, by the forces of Laurent Gbagbo's regime. Another rebellion, the MPIGO (Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest), was formed at the end of November 2002, with a strong Yacouba ethnic affiliation, the ethnic group of General Robert Guéï who was killed in Abidjan. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), the Lomé agreements were unsuccessful because of internal rivalries and petty quarrels.

France's diplomacy could not subsequently resolve the crisis because of accusations by the Ivorian government and the rebels that they were favoring their opponent. It led to the Linas-Marcoussis

²¹ Francis Akindes, *Cote D'ivoire: La Reinvention De Soi Dans La Violence* (African Books Collective, 2011).

²² Bakery, "Elite Transformation and political succession", in I. William Zartman and Christopher L. Delgado, *The Political Economy of Ivory Coast*, SAIS study on Africa (New York: Praeger, 1984).

²³ World Bank, *Ivory Coast, the Challenge of Success: Report of a Mission Sent to the Ivory Coast by the World Bank*, World Bank country economic reports (Baltimore: Published for the World Bank by the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

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agreements under the auspices of France from January 15 to 24, 2003, signed by seven different political parties and three rebel groups. The Marcoussis agreements stipulated the creation of a government of national reconciliation headed by a consensual prime minister and ministers appointed by the warring parties, the revision of procedures aimed at identifying ethnic Ivorians and discriminating against non-indigenous Ivorians, the reform of the electoral commission, the revision of the rules of eligibility for the presidency, and the revision of the citizenship code and the land law. The signing of this treaty led to a violent demonstration by the Young Patriots, a pro-government alliance that turned into an urban militia and threatened the non-Ivorian population.²⁴ In addition, the agreements welcomed foreigners and allowed for the possibility of the naturalization of a large number of foreign immigrants, which the ruling party rejected, claiming that the agreements were only suggestions.²⁵

Following the failure to implement the Linas-Marcoussis agreements, the conflicting parties met in Accra in July 2004. They confirmed their commitment to respect the Marcoussis agreements and to adopt reforms by the end of August 2004. The rebels agreed to demobilize and disarm as of October 15, 2004, and join the national unity government. The agreements were not respected, and even under the mediation of South African President Thabo Mbeki, Gbagbo's party would not relinquish power. Yet another agreement was signed in Pretoria on April 6, 2005, to stop the violence, accelerate disarmament, and establish an independent and autonomous electoral commission. Another meeting in Yamoussoukro on February 28, 2006, under the auspices of Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, the country's strongman, was also without success. The

²⁴ Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "The War of 'Who Is Who': Autochthony, Nationalism, and Citizenship in the Ivoirian Crisis," *African studies review* 49, no. 2 (2006): 9–44.

²⁵ Arnim Langer, "Côte d'Ivoire Elusive Quest for Peace," *Bath Papers in International Development* 11 (December 2010): 12.

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subject of discussion and disagreement was the establishment of new procedures for the identification of Ivorian nationals and the preparation of national identity documents.

Further government-led mediation took place in Ouagadougou in 2007 with the main decision to hold elections within 10 months. The elections did not occur until October 2010 after the Gbagbo government postponed them more than six times. The government since 2002 did not accept the results of the 2010 elections. It resolutely led the country into a bloodbath.

According to researcher Langer, there are two main reasons for the failure of mediation and reconciliation processes.²⁶ The first is the presence of a security dilemma, i.e., the situation in which the conflicting groups see the rearmament of others as a threat and are not ready for a power-sharing agreement since it interferes with their goal of achieving complete political and military victory. The second reason, he said, was the presence of spoilers, those actors who took advantage of the war system to enrich themselves, consolidate their position of power, and refuse to account for the use of public funds. There is a lack of honesty during these mediations, a preferential option of military solutions than pacific solutions and a strong unwillingness to collaborate with others for the common good.

Whatever the case, there was a lack of will on all sides to achieve peace, since the conflict situation allowed them to maintain their authority over a part of the population, manipulate it, and find economic and political benefits. The refusal to collaborate with opponents and the lack of political inclusion have been the hallmarks of the various administrations in Ivory Coast since the death of the first President Houphouet.

²⁶ Arnim Langer, "Côte d'Ivoire Elusive Quest for Peace", 18.

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In this chapter, we have point out the main problems of leadership in Ivory Coast, that are the lack of self-awareness of the leaders, the abuse of their authority, the lack of collaboration and tolerance across ethnic groups and between foreigners and nationals, the lack of looking for the common good. Using the same framework, how we learn from the conflicts sparked by divine election in the stories of Joseph and David? What can we learn about their traits or skills, the goal that they must achieve and if they were able to make room for opponents in the success of their mission and in strengthening their authority?

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Part 2: Theology of election in the story of Joseph and David

The narrative of Joseph and David gives us clues as to how the divine elect treat their opponents or adversaries. Different outcomes can be drawn from the altercations with their adversaries. Sometimes, the divine elect suppress the influence of adversaries by exterminating them. Another way of treating opponents is to banish them to exile. Some opponents are killed in order to prevent them from causing harm and others are somewhat integrated in the mission of the elect.

In this part I will highlight the particularities of the leadership of Joseph and David, their leadership styles, the goal of their mission and especially the way they treat their adversaries. We can retain that Joseph and David are neither saint nor sinner, they are both complex, duplicitous in their attitudes. Joseph gives us more lessons than David about the self-growth and awareness of the leader and the importance of tolerance and dialogue with the adversaries.

The analysis of Joseph's narrative will follow three main steps. I will explain how the Joseph story provides a clear understanding of the biblical topic of election. I argue that Jacob's favoritism of Joseph aims to bring unity to his divided family and reveal God's power to the people of Egypt. The mission of unity would not be possible without the maturity gained by Joseph through the challenges and downfalls he endured along the way. This growth and maturity greatly affect how he treats his adversaries, mainly his brothers. Though Joseph gave up seeking revenge against his brothers, he collaborated timidly with them. The portrait of Joseph gives us a model of a neutral and open relationship with the opponents or adversaries. The narrative gives us some lessons about the importance of the leader's self-awareness, the need of a purpose or mission focused on the common good, the qualities of humility, service and perseverance important for a leader, and the importance of treating others compassionately.

2.1. Signs of the election of Joseph

A great lesson of the Chosenness of Joseph is that he is freely chosen by God. God takes the initiative to select a person to accomplish his mission. Joseph's divine favoritism can be explained by God's pure providence and his particular love for the "youngest" or the underdog in the family. Some signs accompany the election of Joseph: his position in the family, the love of his father, his capacity to interpret dreams, divine providence and his attractive physical traits. These characteristics will be important to achieve the mission of saving the region from famine and uniting his family. The challenges that Joseph encounters will affect the way he treats his adversaries, especially his brothers.

In the following lines I will outline the signs of his election and the lessons of leadership that can be drawn from it.

2.1.1. The birth of Joseph

The birth of Joseph is marked with the seal of divine favor to the family of Joseph. Rachel was called "עֲקָרָה" that is the barren woman, the sterile. This appellation was given in Genesis to Sarah and Rebecca (Gen 11:30; 25:21) and signals the arrival of a particular character. Different means were used by Rachel to overcome infertility, such as giving her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob to bear sons, "treatments in the form of mandrake plants (*dudaim*) purchased from Leah in exchange for Jacob's company at night."²⁷ All the means used were not successful to pave the way of the miraculous birth of Joseph. The conception of Joseph is a direct action of God, God's will. The text affirms: "וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־רָחֵל" (Gen 30: 22) which means God has remembered Rachel.

²⁷ Alan T Levenson, *Joseph: Portraits through the Ages* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2016), 1.

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God's remembrance of a person means in the Bible that God has gazed his eyes upon the person and listened to their plea. Although every conception can be seen as a sign of divine providence, some notable births foresee not only the direct intervention of God among humans but also the mission and responsibility that a person may carry in the realm of the living. "God opened the womb (of Rachel)" (Gen 30: 22) because God has already chosen the child before his birth and has endowed him of a mission. S/He is the only one to be aware of. If God chooses the elect, it means that the elect is required to follow the divine agenda, rather than following their own impulses and desires.

Moreover, the double-naming of the son can be a sign of a unique destiny and Joseph's divine election. Alan Levenson affirms in that sense, "double-naming at birth in the Bible is rare and in this case is fraught with destiny."²⁸ The Hebrew verbs used, "אָסַף and יָסַף" (asaf/Yasap) attributed to a child can be understood as the "one who is taken away and added back with increase." Joseph will be taken away, but God will add Benjamin, his younger brother. Due to the miraculous birth of Joseph, his father will favor him and that favoritism will create tensions between brothers.

2.1.2. Jacob's favorite son

The preference of Jacob for Joseph presumes and echoes the love of God for Joseph. That love will be the source of enmity between the brothers. In Genesis sibling stories, there is a familiar pattern, in which the youngest is often preferred to the oldest. At many times, the biblical author shows that Jacob loves Rachel more than Leah and he is ready to do all in his power to marry her (Gen 29: 18; 20; 30). Rachel is second-born, the youngest and shares the same fate and status of

²⁸ Alan Levenson, *Joseph: Portraits through the Ages*, 2.

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Jacob of being more privileged than her older sibling.²⁹ The favor of Jacob for Rachel may be due to the same life experience and status they have in common rather than solely her beauty (Gen 29: 17). The text tells us that Leah's eyes were "רַכּוֹת" (tender) while Rachel has an attractive body/form and beautiful וַיֵּפֶת מְרָאָהּ (Gen 29:17 WTT). Though the description of Rachel is more detailed than the one of Leah, the text did not explain the real reason behind Jacob's favor for Rachel. The contrasts in the description of Leah and her younger sister sets up "the symmetrical inversion of the Jacob-Esau story, in which the theme of competition between siblings highlights the goal of each sibling to participate in the continuation of the covenant promises."³⁰

The second sign of Joseph as his father's favorite is his role as spy or tattletale he played among his brothers. In Gen 37: 2, the text says that he brings bad reports to his father about his brothers: "יֹסֵף אֶת־דִּבְרֵיהֶם רָעָה אֶל־אָבִיהֶם: (Gen 37:2 WTT). On top of that, Joseph gets gifts from his father, "כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים: (Gen 37:3 WTT)" (a coat of different colors). For Claus Westermann, the sleeved tunic put Joseph in a privileged position in the family and it is the costume of a princess, or a high rank person as in 2 Samuel 13: 18.³¹ For Westermann, the biblical author presupposes the social significance of clothing, and it is the most striking evidence of social stratification. Rather than the dreams, the tunic according to Westermann is the most striking sign of the exaltation of Joseph over his other brothers. The gift of the tunic exacerbated the conflict among the brothers.

The third sign which will cause conflict between brothers, is Jacob's designation of Joseph as the preferred one, thus the potential heir. Joseph is the preferred son of Jacob as Gen 37: 3 states:

²⁹ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis*, 1st ed, Belief (Series) (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 267.

³⁰ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, New Cambridge Bible commentary (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 266.

³¹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 262.

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“מִכָּל-בָּנָיו אֶת-יוֹסֵף אָהָב וַיִּשְׂרְאֵל.” Joseph is the last son of Jacob born in Paddan-Aram (Gen 30: 23-24), and he is younger than his half-brothers. The Hebrew word “נָעַר” which means young man, can also imply “servant” in Gen 37: 3. The New American Bible and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) render it as “the helper”. Joseph has a lower rank status compared to his elder brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, who have responsibility over the flocks. The narrator gives a direct reason why Joseph is the favorite son: he is the son of Jacob’s old age. It suggests that Joseph is the son who brings him hope for his posterity, a successor for his future generations. Jacob did not only grant Joseph gifts (Gen 37: 3). Confident in his father’s patronage and protection, Joseph will look down and show less respect to his older brothers. In other words, election often brings conflicts due to competition between those struggling for power or through the ambition and selfishness of the elect.

The birth of Joseph teaches us a crucial lesson on the importance of humility in the character of the divine elect. The successor is often the youngest. The youngest takes priority over the firstborn, in order to teach *all* a lesson of humility. In the ancient near east, the heirs of property were normally the firstborns of the family. In the tradition of Genesis, two related customs were important for the designation of a successor: the birthright (Gen 25: 31) and the blessing (Gen 27: 4). The birthright, reserved for the firstborn son, conferred him the right to inherit a bigger share of his father’s properties in terms of goods and land (Deut 21: 17). The blessing was the invocation of God’s blessing for the heir in order to perform well in his role as leader of the family and the entire household. However, the firstborn is rarely the one favored by God, as we have seen in the sibling stories of Genesis: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers. The *youngest* is favored and chosen by God, independently of the choice of the patriarch. In the story of Jacob and Esau, God favors Jacob while his father Isaac loves Esau. However, in

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the narrative of Joseph, God's choice and the patriarch's choice are the same. Their favoritism will create opposition and enmity between Joseph and his brothers.

2.1.3. Dream as a sign of Joseph election

Dreams clearly signify God's favor on Joseph and have created antagonism between the brothers. Dreams originated from God or the gods and their interpretation belongs to a person who is divinely blessed. In the ancient near east, dreams "were perceived as encoded revelations of a higher order, often needing specialists, oneiromancers, to decode their meaning."³² Two types of dreams can be distinguished: "message dreams", which do not require any interpretation because a divine being or a god communicates directly to the person, and "symbolic dreams" in which the dreamer is given images and symbols that need interpretation.³³ In Joseph's narrative, visual images are given for him to interpret. The dreams are symbolic and the right interpretations of the dreams are seen as gifts of God's presence with him (Gen 40: 8; 41: 16). Concerning the "symbolic dreams", Adolph Leo Oppenheim writes: "Most of the symbolic dreams of the Old Testament occur in a context which is typical. They are primarily meant to serve as a vehicle for the display of the piety and the sagacity of their god-inspired interpreter."³⁴ Oppenheim concludes however that the Lord speaks in "message dreams" to his people while non-Israelites mainly receive symbolic dreams. In Joseph's case, it is different and unique. Joseph receives symbolic dreams but his first dreams are directly understood by his father and siblings.

³² Arnold, *Genesis*, 322.

³³ Scott Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven, Conn: American Oriental Society, 2007), 6–9.

³⁴ A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book.*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society ; v. 46, pt. 3 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956), 209–210.

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In the first set of “message dreams,” Joseph tells his brothers that “my” sheaf rose to an upright position and your sheaves formed a ring and bowed down to it” (Gen 37: 7). It suggests that Joseph will lord over his brothers and the whole family. The brothers used the term מֶלֶךְ which conveys the meaning that Joseph intends to become king over them

The narrator makes it clear that the dreams of Joseph increase hatred among the brothers and fuel the plot against him (Gen 37: 8). The brothers even mock Joseph by calling him the “dreamer” and plan his murder in order to thwart the realization of his dreams. In the second “message dream,” Joseph sees the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him. Neither his brothers nor father approve of it. However, Joseph boasts of these dreams and treats his brothers with contempt. One of the lessons drawn from this analysis is that a leader may enter conflict with others due to his dreams and vision of the future.

2.1.4. Divine providence

God’s favor on Joseph becomes obvious in the development of the story in Egypt. Even when he was no longer in the house of his father, in a foreign land, the hand of God is still guiding his actions. The biblical author wants to stress that the challenges that Joseph is facing in Egypt do not in any way remove God’s presence and protection.

In Genesis 39, the expression “וַיְהִי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ” (Gen 39:2 WTT) (the lord was with him) occurs four times (Gen 39: 2; 3; 21; 23). The stress of God’s presence is mentioned when he was sold to Potiphar, and also when he was thrown in jail after being seduced by the wife of his master.

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According to Bill Arnold, the presence of God with Joseph in verse 2 provides a theological underpinning for the rest of the story.³⁵ There is first a causation relation between the presence of the Lord and the success of Joseph: because God is with Joseph, he became successful even in a foreign house. Also, the divine presence is an echo of the ancestral promise to the descendants of Abraham (Gen 26: 3; 24; 28: 15). “Joseph illustrates the truth of promise stated directly to his ancestors in the context of the ancestral covenant.”³⁶

Furthermore, the narrator wants to assert that outsiders like Potiphar became aware that “the Lord was with him,” he promoted Joseph as the leader of the entire household (Gen 39: 3- 4). God’s presence benefits not only Joseph’s personal success but also the success of his work. Joseph becomes the mediator of God’s blessing for the household of Potiphar. God blessed the household of Potiphar because of the presence of Joseph (Gen 39: 5). In other words, Joseph becomes the instrument for God’s blessing to Potiphar who is blessed by association with Joseph.³⁷ The expression “בִּרְכַּת יְהוָה” (God’s blessing) is a subjective genitive, in which the subject of the action of blessing is Yahweh.

It is also worth noting that God’s favor and presence to Joseph changes directly the relationship of people towards Joseph. Normally, Joseph - sold as a slave in the house of Potiphar - should be considered as a mere slave, an outlaw and outcast. However, God’s favor affects people around Joseph. His master shows him special favor (39: 3-4) and his wife too (Gen 39: 7). Moreover, the name יְהוָה (Yahweh) appears only here in the mouth of the narrator in order to make a connection

³⁵ Arnold, *Genesis*, 331.

³⁶ Arnold, *Genesis*, 331.

³⁷ Christopher Wright Mitchell, “The Meaning of *Bṛk* ‘to Bless’ in the Old Testament,” Dissertation series (Society of Biblical Literature) ; no. 95 (Scholars Press, 1987), 70–71.

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between the Lord's presence with Joseph and the patriarchs in chapters 25- 26.³⁸ Due to God's blessing and providence, the adversaries of Joseph become the means through which Joseph develops into a leader. God's providence turns some adversaries like Potiphar or the chief jailer into indirect collaborators. In other words, the divine sponsor and protection is important for the success of the mission of the elect. The elect needs a sponsor who will guide him and coach him in the realization of his mission. Divine providence shows us clearly a lesson which can be applied to Ivory Coast, the importance of collaboration with the adversaries. Adversaries can be turned into indirect collaborators if there is a good will to build things together with sincere honesty.

2.1.5. The beauty of Joseph

The physical attractiveness of Joseph is an obvious manifestation of God's favor for him. The narrator says of Joseph that "he was strikingly handsome in countenance and body" (Gen 39: 6b, NAB). The Revised Standard Version renders: "Joseph was handsome and good-looking". The use of the superlative is due to the word "תָּאַר" which can be translated as goodly. The expression relates to not only the bodily physique but also the general appearance.³⁹ The mother of Joseph, Rachel, was also described as "beautiful in countenance and pretty in appearance" (Gen 29: 17). These descriptions are part of the aesthetic conventions in the ancient Near East (cf Gen 12:12-14; Deut 21:11; 1 Sam 25:3; 2 Sam 13:1; 14:27).

God's presence with Joseph is also a blessing to his appearance and attractiveness. Blessings and divine presence are often associated with beautiful appearance as we see in 1 Samuel 16: 18: "He is also a stalwart soldier, besides being an able speaker, and handsome. Moreover, the Lord is with

³⁸ Westermann, *Genesis*, 272.

³⁹ Arnold, *Genesis*, 332.

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him”. Though in the same chapter of 1 Samuel 16, God told Samuel that he does not look on the appearance but rather into the heart (1 Sam 16: 7), the physical traits cannot be seen only as an effect of God’s election. Although physical appearance is as important as other natural talents, the divine elect needs to bring his talents to fruition in order to be an authentic leader.

It is worth noting that the signs of divine election are not necessarily an advantage for the chosen one, but rather a source of tension and hatred from adversaries and enemies. Aware of being specially endowed by God with certain talents, Joseph originally used them for selfish purposes to belittle his opponents. It is also a lesson that can be applied to leaders in Ivory Coast who need to be aware of their own responsibility for ongoing conversion and self-improvement.

The talents of the elect should help him to achieve a mission. What is the mission entrusted to Joseph and how can we understand the mission of political elect in Ivory Coast?

2.2.Mission of the elect

The mission of Joseph is to bring unity into his family and save God’s nation from famine. That mission was not well understood by Joseph from the beginning. According to many scholars, Joseph knew from a young age that he has been destined from great things. He was conscious of the special gifts he has received from God and it becomes evident through “his immature conduct.”⁴⁰ I doubt, however, that Joseph understands that his talents should serve a greater purpose and the well-being of the wider world. The author of Joseph’s story, at the beginning of the story mentioned neither the nature of Joseph’s greatness, nor the mission that he will accomplish.

⁴⁰ Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 59.

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Jealousy, rebellion and race for power among the brothers is the lot of Jacob's family. There is a need to restore peace and unity among the brothers. God chooses the lowliest to humbly show the way to collaboration and peace. In that sense, his elevation is not for his own glory but for the good and well-being of his brothers. Through Joseph, God wants to bless the family of Jacob and save them from further destructive competition. The lesson here is that the divine elect has a greater purpose: serve the common good rather than to trample on others who we perceive as rivals.

God chooses Joseph to accomplish His will for the descendants of Abraham and save them from famine. God chooses certain people to carry out his mission of salvation. In other words, elect people are meant to serve *others*. Joel Kaminsky stresses the connection between election and service. For him, the elect carries the duty to help others.⁴¹ He is chosen for a greater purpose, not for selfish reasons. The Joseph narrative depicts service as the fulfillment of the divine election. In chapter 45 of Genesis, Joseph recognizes that God sent him to Egypt for the sake of saving lives. (Gen 45: 5). The same goal is repeated further in Gen 50: 20: "even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good, to achieve his present end, the survival of many people." Divine election has the goal of bringing salvation to a large number of people, and God favors one person to carry out that mission. Therefore, the talents granted to the elect are not for selfish reasons but for altruistic ones. His understanding of his mission will affect the way Joseph treats his brothers. Moreover, the lessons from his difficulties and challenges have changed how he treated his brothers. Joseph would not have changed his way of relating with his brothers without the maturity he acquired. How does this growth and maturity take place? What are the significant experiences that transform Joseph from being in competition with his brothers to make room for dialogue?

⁴¹ Joel Kaminsky, "Reclaiming a Theology of Election: Favoritism and the Joseph Story," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31, no. 01 (2004): 140.

2.3.The progressive maturity in carrying his mission

There is a progressive maturing of Joseph in carrying out his mission. He is conscious that he is the favorite son of his father and used to bring “bad reports” of his brothers to his father (Gen 37:2). By bringing negative reports about his brothers, he was acting “immaturely”⁴². Knowing that God has given him the capacity to interpret dreams, Joseph uses it for his *own* glory. He taunts his brothers with his dreams, begging them to listen to him: “שְׁמַעוּ־נָא Listen please” (Gen 37:6). There is also the use of the pronouns “my” and “your” to establish the contrast and level of superiority between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph himself told the dreams to his brothers with some interpretation in it: “my sheaf rose to an upright position and your sheaves bowed down to it.” (Gen 37: 7). “Bowing down” denotes clearly the interpretation that Joseph draws from the dream and his obvious superiority over his brothers. The Hebrew verb used here is “חָוָה” a reflexive verb (*Hitpa'el*) which means to bow down, or prostrate oneself in front of a royalty or a God. The verb is not used for respect between siblings or towards a paternal figure but rather towards a God or king. Joseph in fact, was interpreting himself to be like God or king. Joseph wants to stand as the sole winner of the competition between him and his brothers. It provokes the anger and surprise of his brothers: “Are you going to make yourself king over us?” Joseph uses the dream to serve his own purpose of dominating his brothers. The second account of his dream confirms his misunderstanding of his special gift and immaturity. Knowing that his dreams and actions displeased his brothers, Joseph did not pay attention to his brothers' feelings. Joseph seems to ignore his brothers' resentment and continues flaunting his favored status. In the second dream, his parents are included as part of the group who pledge allegiance to him. Like the first dream, there

⁴² Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 59.

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was no need for interpretation to Joseph's brothers and his father. The reaction of the father tells us about Joseph's arrogance: “וַיַּעַרְבֵהוּ אָבִיו (Gen 37:10 WTT), which means “his father rebuked him.” (Gen 37: 10). The Hebrew verb “וַיַּעַרְבֵהוּ” means to reprove. His father seems to reject the interpretation of the dream; however, he ponders the matter” (Lk 2: 19). The behavior of Joseph demonstrates well that he does not yet possess the emotional intelligence to see the negative results of his actions. Joseph seems not to care about the feeling of his brothers and their hatred of him (Gen 37: 8).

As the story unfolds, there is a progressive and slight change in the way Joseph carries out his mission. In Potiphar's house, he was put in charge of the household. In that episode, we do not hear much about Joseph's speech. Joseph seems to manage the household of Potiphar well since he entrusted to him “all his possessions.” (Gen 39: 4) The courtier of Pharaoh has also left everything he owned in Joseph's charge (Gen 39: 10). The biblical narrator wants to show us that Joseph's interpretation of dreams is not the only special gift he has. Joseph is also talented in the management of goods and a trustworthy person. Joseph quickly wins the trust of Potiphar because “the Lord was with him” (Gen 39: 3). The Lord's blessing on Joseph has endowed him with the talents of a manager and efficient administrator of goods and properties.

Joseph's integrity is also put on trial in the house of Potiphar. Due to his beautiful appearance, Joseph caught the eyes of the wife of Potiphar who tries to entice him.⁴³ In Gen 39: 9, Joseph affirms that Potiphar has withheld from him nothing but his wife:

⁴³ The episode of Joseph and Potiphar's wife has some resemblance to an Egyptian Tale of two brothers. Two brothers Anubis and Bata lived together, and Anubis had a house and a wife while Bata served him in the fields. One day, when Bata came to the house to get seed for the farm, his brother's wife wanted to sleep with her. Bata refused and rejected her. When Anubis came back home, he discovered his wife with self-inflicted wounds and she accused his brother of trying to seduce her and lie with her. Anubis attempts to kill his brother Bata, but later discovered that his younger brother is innocent and proceeds to kill his wife. Cf James Bennet Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near*

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“אֵינֶנּוּ גְדוֹל בְּבֵית הָהָא מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא־חֲשׂוֹךְ מִלְּנִי מְאֹדָה” (Gen 39:9 WTT). In other words, Potiphar has kept back only his wife from him. This sentence seems to be different from the earlier verse 6 in which the narrator says that Joseph was not in charge of the food Potiphar ate:

יֹסֵף וְלֹא־יָדַע אֶתֹּךְ מְאֹדָה כִּי אִם־הִלָּחֵם אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה אוֹכֵל (Gen 39:6 WTT)”. What is the extent of the power or administration of Joseph in Potiphar’s house? These two verses (v.9 and v.6) give us a clue about the limits of his administration. He is trustworthy, but he cannot abuse of his position in the house of Potiphar. Joseph’s maturity can be seen in his response to the wife of his master: “How then, could I commit so great a wrong and thus stand condemned before God?” The narrator tells us that Joseph sees the act of adultery not only as a breach of trust of his master but also a sin against God. For the first time, Joseph is making God a witness of his action and he is more aware of the result of his actions. Joseph preferred bearing the consequences of the lies of the wife’s master than sinning against God. Joseph pays more attention to his relation with his adversaries and avoid unnecessary competition. This can be a lesson of respecting boundaries, avoiding corrupting or abusing one’s position of power.

In the ancient near east, women and children are possessions of men. In that patriarchal society, the head of the household has rights and power over the wives, servants, and children. Some scholars argue that women are often equated to objects as we read in Exodus 20:7: ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, wife, slave, ox or donkey.’⁴⁴ If the woman is a property belonging to a man, engaging in adultery means to steal another man’s property and violate his rights. Sexual intercourse with a woman who belongs to another man “fell under thievery of the other man’s

Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd edition with supplement.. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 23–25.

⁴⁴ Arnold, *Genesis*, 319.

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rights to his woman's body and his right to legitimate offspring.”⁴⁵ The result of any act of adultery in the biblical law must be death: “If a man commits adultery with another man's wife- with the wife of his neighbor- both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.” (Lev 20: 10). The main difference between the biblical and cuneiform law is that adultery is considered a private wrong against the husband in ancient near east while it is an offense against God in biblical law.⁴⁶ In the Egyptian context, Joseph will be put into prison waiting for another judgment. Most important for our focus is that Joseph remained trustworthy and did not accept the seduction of the wife of Potiphar. The Professor of Social Ethics and Latinx Studies Miguel de la Torre wonders: “if her daily attempts to seduce Joseph were rebuffed, what was Joseph doing alone in the house with her?” He sees in Joseph's decision to allow himself to be alone with the woman an example of poor judgment. He thinks that Joseph was seeking more attention from her. I do not concur with such arguments because the text does not specify that Joseph was aware that no servant was not in the house. The Hebrew phrase renders:

וַיְהִי כִּתְּיוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֹא הַבַּיִתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכָתּוֹ וְאֵין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי
הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבַּיִת:

which can be translated as: “It happened that on one day, Joseph went into the house to do his work and there were no men there within the house.” (Gen 39: 11) The absence of servants concerns the interior of the house or a room of the house in which Joseph is working. The use of “בַּבַּיִת שָׁם” gives a clear understanding of the place. There are several rooms in the house of Potiphar and Joseph was visiting and checking the cleanliness of the rooms. The wife of Potiphar may know

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Raymond Westbrook, “Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law,” *Revue Biblique* 97, no. 4 (October 1990): 542–580.

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also the schedule and the timing of the servants in the house. After the failure of her advances, she is able to scream and call the servants of the household to bear witness to her lies.

In jail, Joseph grows in maturity and understanding of God's plan for him. When two courtiers of the Pharaoh told him that they had had dreams, Joseph asked them:

הֲלוֹא לֵאלֹהִים פְּתָרִים “do you not know that interpretations belong to God?” (Gen

40: 8) The interrogative and negative particle used here is הֲלוֹא . Joseph formulates into a question something that is now becoming obvious and certain to him: the interpretation of dreams and his skills are coming from God and have been freely given to him. According to Hugh White, Joseph assumes a role that defines his identity in the rest of the narrative by claiming access to divine knowledge and also humbling himself before God.⁴⁷ He makes God the source of the interpretation. Joseph finally understands the importance of finding the correct meaning of a dream. Contrary to the Egyptian courtiers who believe in the interpretation of oneiromancers, Joseph takes a different view and believes in the power and greatness of his God that he called “Elohim”. Some modern readers think that Joseph's response is arrogant, that his statement conveys that he and his God were functionally the same. In contrary, Levenson argues that the intention of the narrator is to display Joseph's piety.⁴⁸ Joseph's response to the wife of Potiphar denotes the good understanding about the impact of his actions: “How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?” (Gen 39:9). Joseph urges the courtiers to tell him the dream because he is more conscious that his talents should be used to help those in need and serve for the glory of his God. The more Joseph

⁴⁷ Hugh C. White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 257.

⁴⁸ Alan T Levenson, *Joseph*, 34.

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understands his mission, the more he places himself at service of the people around him and treats them well.

Similarly, in his dialogue with Pharaoh after being released from prison, Joseph demonstrates the same maturity and belief in God. He is aware that the gift of interpretation comes from God and was given to him for the salvation of others. He says to Pharaoh: “It is not I, but God will give you a peaceful answer.” (Gen 41: 16). Joseph acknowledges that his skill of interpretation is a divine gift that entails responsibilities to God.⁴⁹ He understands also that when he uses the divine gifts to help people in need, he benefits also from it. The more he uses his divine talents to serve others, the more he is put in a leadership position.

Moreover, Pharaoh’s acceptance to trust a foreigner to become his prime minister is a big lesson for leaders in Ivory Coast. There is a need to trust in people’s competence despite their ethnic or national provenance. Joseph is entrusted the management of the food in a foreign country because of his trustworthiness. This is a big sign post for leaders who favor some ethnic groups over others.

Joseph gives a lesson of humility but also a referral when he met with Pharaoh. Joseph advises the Pharaoh to find a “wise and discerning man” (Gen 41: 33) to manage the economy of the land during the period of abundance and scarcity. During his encounter with Pharaoh, Joseph shows his humility by continually invoking God’s name, “אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה” without fearing Pharaoh. The name of God is mentioned four times (vv. 16, 25, 28, 32), and Joseph is convinced that the will of God is to save Egypt and the rest of the world from the coming famine (Gen 41: 57). In his journey of growth and maturity, Joseph understands clearly that his gifts are for the greater good, they are service-oriented. The Joseph narrative therefore depicts the fulfillment of election as the service of others.

⁴⁹ Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 62.

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Kaminsky states it well that “election carries with it a duty to help others.”⁵⁰ Challenges incite Joseph to reflect on himself and examine his actions. This is a true lesson of self-awareness.

The above analysis helps us to understand that the style of leadership and identity of the elect are acquired through the different challenges encountered. The maturity and growth of the elect will surely affect the way he treats his adversaries.

2.4. Relationship between Joseph and his brothers

Scholars have discussed the ending of Joseph’s story and have debated Joseph’s intention: was he offering true reconciliation or exacting revenge or punishment on his brothers. How does Joseph treat his brothers during their encounter in Egypt? What is the reaction of his brothers? I argue that Joseph interacts with his brothers in a neutral, non-aggressive way, which does not necessary lead to effective collaboration. A non-interference and non-violent agreement seems to reign in the relations between the brothers. In the following paragraphs, we will analyze the process of the tacit agreement by surveying Joseph’s different reactions or behavior toward his brothers, and the reaction of his brothers.

2.4.1. Joseph’s treatment of his brothers

Firstly, Joseph treats his brothers as a pedagogue who gives some exams to his students and judge their progress according to their result. The narrator shows already in chapter 42 that Joseph is not only in charge of the distribution of the rations to people, but also the one who first recognizes his brothers. The Hebrew verb used in verses 7 and 8 is: **נָכַר** which means to look intently at, to acknowledge or recognize. In other words, all the words and actions that will follow are

⁵⁰ Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 63.

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intentionally selected by Joseph to test the behavior of his brothers and give them the opportunity to repent for their behavior. The repetition of verse 7 and 8 brings dramatic effect to the narration and emphasizes the authority of Joseph over his brothers. The wordplay between the verb “וַיִּכְרֶם” (recognize them) and “וַיַּתְנִיחֵם” (treat them like strangers) in verse 7 introduces the tension between the brothers at the beginning of their encounter.

The first sign of the trial is the way Joseph speaks to his brothers with a harsh and severe tone. To conceal his identity, Joseph uses a harsh tone but also an interpreter (Gen 42: 23). Two sets of interrogation can be identified in their first encounter. Joseph’s interrogations vv7- 13 quickly turned into accusation: “You are spies, you have come to see the nakedness of the land”. This expression occurs 4 times during their first encounter. These repetitions have a clear function. Joseph wants to break down and provoke his brothers in order to see their reaction. For Claus Westermann, during this kind of interrogation, the accused are defenseless, and the interrogator can take advantage of the lack of defense and convince the accused by persistent hammering. In return, the accused will reveal more about themselves. Joseph demonstrates a great social-psychological technique of investigation. Despite the fact that the brothers explain the purpose of their visit to Egypt and their family origin, Joseph quickly arrests them and jails them for three days without any further explanation. The accusation of spying is based on some specific historical situations in Egypt where the northeastern border was vulnerable to incursions.⁵¹ However, the narrator explains clearly that he was doing that to conceal his own identity from his brothers (Gen 42: 7).

⁵¹Jozef Vergote, *Joseph en Egypte: Geneèse Chat.37-50, a la lumière des études Egyptologiques récentes*. (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1959), 160.

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On a literary level, the narrator gives us hints about why Joseph is treating his brothers in this manner. He told his brothers that they shall be put on trial to verify the truth of their affirmations. Joseph establishes a plan for test (Gen 42: 15- 16) to ensure the safety of his “full brother” Benjamin (Gen 42: 4). He informs his brothers “they shall be tested” in order to prove their innocence. The niphal form of the verb used here “נִבְחָן” can be translated by investigate, to be tried. The brothers must prove that they are not spies, that they are “honest” men as they claim earlier (Gen 42: 11). The expressions of trial or test form an inclusio with the repetition in verses 15 “you shall be tested” and 16: “thus your words shall be tested for their truth”. Joseph acts here as a teacher, a moral compass for his brothers.

I disagree with Bill Arnold’s assertion that Joseph simply does not trust his brothers.⁵² Joseph’s intent is to see whether the brothers have changed and if the family has become more united. The test is of their integrity, honesty and the capacity to make sacrifice for their younger brother. It is clear also that the narrator wants to conceal Joseph’s identity as long as possible and reveal it at the climax of their encounter. While Gunkel argues that Joseph punishes and harasses his brothers appropriately, I do think that the reactions of Joseph should be analyzed as a whole. Joseph remembers his first dreams, when he saw his brothers prostrating before him. Joseph’s intention is yet still concealed, he wants to bring healing to what has been shattered.”⁵³

After putting his brothers in custody for three days and requiring only one of the brothers to look for the younger one, Joseph releases them. His tone is not harsh like in the first dialogue. Joseph softens his position by telling them: “You shall live... you will not die” (vv. 18 and 20). He may

⁵² Arnold, *Genesis*, 353.

⁵³ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1986), 107.

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have seen the unity among the brothers during these three days, how none of the brothers tries to leave the other brothers in prison. When Joseph asks one of the brothers to stay in prison to prove their loyalty, his tone is also soft. He says: “אִם-כִּנְיִים אַתֶּם אֲחֵיכֶם אֶחָד יֵאָסֵר בְּבֵית מִשְׁמָרְכֶם (Gen 42:19 WTT)” which can be translated by: “If you are true, let one of your brethren be bound in the prison”. The verb used here is not imperative, but the simple passive of “אָסֵר”. Joseph gives the reason for the change in his orders saying that he is a “God-fearing man”. Redford understands this expression rather negatively. For him, it is an “ironic cut at his brothers” because if Joseph fears his god, it would be the Egyptian gods, and the brothers could see it as a mockery.⁵⁴ For Westermann, this statement is not about the piety of Joseph but it serves as a reason to reduce his anger towards them and acknowledge that God protects the defenseless stranger.

It is worth mentioning the sensibility of Joseph when the brothers were confessing their wrong deeds in the past against him. Joseph reacts with emotion and weeps. His tears and sensibility will occur at least three times during the encounter with his brothers (Gen 42: 24; 43: 30, 45: 2). First, he weeps silently and conceals his tears in front of the brothers, then he hides in a private room to weep, and the third time, he weeps openly and loudly before his brothers. Joseph’s tears are the manifestation of his compassionate personality and his reaction to his brothers’ recognition of their faults. Joseph is emotional and his tears manifest the outpouring of his inner healing.

Prior to their departure, Joseph continues testing his brothers by loading the sacks the grain and the money they paid for it. For some scholars like Gunkel, the intention is to punish them further while for Von Rad, it is “a sign of his deep love”. I see rather in Joseph’s conduct a means to continue testing their integrity and honesty. The brothers have been lying to their father for a long

⁵⁴ D. B Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37- 50)*, VT. S20 (1970)

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time about what they have done to Joseph, so he wants to test the conversion of their heart and make sure his brothers will return to Egypt with their younger brother Benjamin. Also I concur with Westermann that Joseph's heart is undecided: Should he reveal himself to his brothers or wait for the hour to come? In the process of reconciliation that has to take place, Joseph the victim will need to remove the veil to reveal his real identity so that the brothers recognize their crime.

During the second journey in Egypt, Joseph's worries about his full brother and his father are greatly reduced. He treats his brothers in a friendly manner, which contrasts with the first encounter. He gives instruction to his servants to take care of his brothers and prepare a banquet for them (Gen 43: 16- 17). The brothers were thinking that this invitation is still a trap (43: 18). Though there are many similarities between the first and second meeting between Joseph and his brothers, it is more obvious that the climate of the conversations is peaceful and friendly. Joseph asks about their peace "לְשָׁלוֹם" that is he inquired about their well-being. In the second encounter, "שָׁלוֹם" occurs three times in their dialogue. The serene environment is due to the reassurance from the steward of Joseph to his brothers to be at ease, the encounter of Joseph with his full brother Benjamin, and the sharing of the same meal. All these bring a lot of relief to the brothers so that they drank and were merry with him. In the Hebrew phrase, the two verbs used: "שָׁתָה" and "שָׁכַר" are very related: to drink and become drunk. They enjoyed and shared the banquet together without knowing the real identity of their host.

All these trials are a preparation to forgiveness or unity among the brothers. There cannot be forgiveness without truth. The sharing of the meal was a break from Joseph's testing and is followed by one final trial. This final trial is meant to reveal the behavior of the brothers towards Benjamin. Silver goblets are placed in the sack of Benjamin and he is accused of stealing the

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personal drinking vessel of Joseph. The climax of the trial was reached when Joseph feigns to jail Benjamin for theft. The brothers, especially Judah clearly wants to sacrifice his life for his brother. After being sure that the brothers will sacrifice their freedom to save the youngest of them, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. With the revelation comes an outpouring of emotion, a major step in the reconciliation process between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph tells them to come closer to him (Gen 45:4), he assures them that he has been chosen for a higher purpose of saving many lives, and he asks them not to feel guilty for what they have done in the past (Gen 45: 5). Joseph weeps with his brothers, kisses them and cries over each of them (Gen 45: 15). All these are signs of his willingness to forgive them and be reunited to them. The long speech of Joseph (Gen 45: 4- 15) demonstrates that there is a divine plan hidden behind all this. Due to his maturity and the growth that has happened over the past years, Joseph is now able to see the hand of God clearly in the traumatic events of his abduction and slave trade in Egypt. He says: “it was not really you but God who made me come here.” (Gen 45: 8). Joseph’s speech is not only theological but imbued with wisdom and transformational reconciliation. Though Joseph is free of resentment and willing to forgive, he does not deny the horror of wickedness and the evil that his brothers have committed.⁵⁵ Joseph understands that God’s plan is beyond the evil plan or scheming of his brothers. In chapter 45, Joseph repeats 3 times “God has sent me” (vv. 5, 7, 8) and twice “God has established” (vv. 8, 9). In other words, the link between election and reconciliation is very important. The more Joseph understood that “God has sent” him for a greater purpose, the more he is able to let go of the grudges against his brothers and focus on his mission. He cannot save his own family, the remnant on earth (Gen 45: 7), if he is preoccupied with seeking vengeance. Joseph’s concern for the unity

⁵⁵ Pierre Berthoud, “The Reconciliation Of Joseph With His Brothers Sin, Forgiveness And Providence Genesis 45. 1-11 (42.1-45.11) and 50.15-21,” *EuroJTh* 17 (2008): 9.

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of his family can also be seen in Gen 45: 24 when he exhorts his brothers not to quarrel along the way back home.

Moreover, it is important to notice how Joseph has been favoring his “full brother” Benjamin since his arrival in Egypt. Joseph has been partial in the treatment of his brothers. He utters special blessings and greeting for his brother, he bursts into tears seeing him and makes his portion five times larger than his other brothers. (Gen 43: 34). In his speech of revealing the truth of his identity, Joseph talks to Benjamin and his brothers as equals when he says in Gen 45: 12: “Surely, you can see for yourselves, and Benjamin can see for himself, that it is I Joseph whom am speaking to you.” Joseph through his speeches and actions often singles out his brother Benjamin and favors him. One may wonder why “Benjamin weeps in his arms” (Gen 45: 14) when his brothers only talk to him?

Joseph is also reluctant to include his brothers in the management of the economy. The integration of the brothers to his leadership is very mild. Joseph introduces only “five” of his brothers to Pharaoh (Gen 47: 2). Why does he not include the others? Why does Joseph make a selection of his brothers? Joseph is cautious about integrating his brothers by giving them some responsibilities in the house of Pharaoh. Under the directives and leadership of Pharaoh, Joseph establishes his father and brothers “in the pick of the land.” (Gen 47: 6). Joseph mediates the settlement of his family and directs his brothers to stress that they are shepherds in front of Pharaoh (Gen 46: 34). The caution taken by Joseph in introducing his brothers to Pharaoh could signify that Joseph does not want to compromise his own position among the Egyptians.⁵⁶ Though the land given to the

⁵⁶ Terence Fretheim, "The book of Genesis", *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 653.

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family of Joseph is the “best part of the land” (Gen 47: 6, 11), the land was far from the capital. Joseph suggests that land because shepherding is not appealing to the Egyptians (Gen 46: 34) and it might be beneficial to have his brothers at a distance. Pharaoh encourages Joseph to make the qualified members of his family responsible for his livestock. This responsibility will guarantee their security. Joseph's special introduction of Jacob to Pharaoh also signifies the privileges and unique treatment Joseph gives to his father and Benjamin. Pharaoh receives the blessing of Jacob for his welcome.

The theologian Eric Jarrard argues that reconciliation did take place in the culmination of the Joseph story. For him, it is more than a private act of forgiveness which emphasizes the restoration of the interpersonal relationship between Joseph and his brothers, it is rather a *public* act of reconciliation.⁵⁷ When his brothers asked him on behalf of their deceased father to forgive them completely, Joseph responds by “prioritizing the benefit and needs of his brothers, the general public, and the descendants of his brothers.”⁵⁸ He said: “Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? Am I in the place of God? And even though you intended evil against me, God intended something good so that today so many people would still be alive.” (Gen 20: 19- 20). For Jarrard, the response of Joseph shifts from an egocentric quest of vengeance to a sociocentricity enabled by a public reconciliation. Not only does he assure his brothers not to be afraid (vv. 18 and 21) but he promises to take care of their families and descendants. Jarrard concludes that there is more evidence to support a public act of reconciliation than a private act of forgiveness between Joseph and his brothers.

⁵⁷ Eric X. Jarrard, “Reconciliation in the Joseph Story,” *Biblical Interpretation* (October 9, 2020): 1–39.

⁵⁸ Eric X. Jarrard, “Reconciliation in the Joseph Story,” 165.

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I think that the expression of the feelings of Joseph, his sensitivity (Gen 50: 1, 17, 18) and his concern for the emotional being of his brothers (vv. 19, 21) are signs of his desire to make up with his brothers. It can be considered as the first step towards reconciliation. However, Joseph tells his brothers that he is not God (Gn 50: 19) following their request to: “Please forgive the crime that we, servants of your father’s God committed.” It seems like Joseph, in giving all accountability to God, his own responsibility to restore the relationship is somehow hidden. Joseph had the branch of peace to his brothers but was reluctant to integrate them in the management of the economy of the country. How do the brothers react to Joseph’s test? How does the behavior of the brothers help us to understand the relationship between the brothers? A further analysis of the reaction of his brothers will help us to understand the conflict from their perspective.

2.4.2. The slow motion of Joseph’s brothers towards reconciliation

The attempt to restore the relationship between the brothers and Joseph and to collaborate together is ineffective due to a lack of trust on behalf of the brothers. The brothers move slowly towards true reconciliation. Joseph’s brothers experience a lack of trust towards Joseph because of the partiality and favor he shows to Benjamin and their father Jacob. Even though the elected Joseph initiated the reconciliation process, the brothers were also reluctant to trust their brother.

In this polygamous family, there were conflicts and dissensions concerning the firstborn status or the one who will inherit the riches of the father. The race of being recognized as the “firstborn” is the main reason for the brothers’ rivalry. Richard Clifford noted that the firstborn status “was not primarily a matter of biological birth, but involved the father’s preference and of course, divine

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choice operating with subtle hints and paradoxical means.”⁵⁹ The rivalry between the wives of Jacob - Leah and Rachel - grows and develops into the rivalry between the sons. The sons of Jacob often challenge his authority and fight for their self-advantage. In Gen 34: 30- 31, Jacob rebuked Simeon and Levi for recklessly bringing trouble upon the family by avenging the rape of their sister Dinah. Reuben tried to usurp the authority and his father’s power by sleeping with Bilah, his father’s concubine (Gen 35: 22). His act is a sign of usurpation of his father’s authority and power, an attempt to replace his father. Reuben, Simeon and Levi, the three oldest sons of Leah, all challenged the leadership of Jacob and attempted to take his place. Clifford argues that Judah’s instance to sell Joseph into slavery in Gen 37: 25- 27 should be viewed as “eliminating the most likely candidate for firstborn status, and frustrating Reuben’s attempt to repair his relationship with his father by saving Joseph.”⁶⁰

The special love of Jacob for Joseph has only added fuel to the fire of division that was already raging between the brothers. The favoritism of Jacob for Joseph, the espionage and the dreams of Joseph claiming to take the leadership of the family worsened the relationship among brothers. This situation created some solidarity among the brothers when they said to one another: “Here comes the Lord of dreams. Come on, let us kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns” (Gen 37: 19- 20). They form a front to commit a murderous act, but Reuben, the firstborn and Judah tried to dissuade them from killing Joseph (Gen 37: 21, 26). Reuben’s intention was to save him later and restore him to his father, and Judah wants to sell him so that the blood of Joseph may not put them in danger of divine retribution (Gen 42; 21). After selling their brother Joseph, the

⁵⁹ Richard J. Clifford, “Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or Jacob Story?,” in *The Book of Genesis*, vol. 152, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 2012, 215.

⁶⁰ Richard J. Clifford, “Genesis 37-50: Joseph Story or Jacob Story?,” 217.

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brothers - conscious of their wrong deeds and unable to bear the sadness and sorrow of their brothers - sent someone⁶¹ (Gen 37: 32) to bring Jacob the tunic with a simple message : “See whether it is your son’s tunic or not.” The brothers left their father to conclude himself what has happened to Joseph.

The brothers did not only keep the lies about the selling of their brother, but also the guilt coming from it. When they met Joseph in Egypt for the first time, their guilt was still vivid and they quickly conclude from their first arrest that this is the punishment of God. It is important to notice in the narration that they were awaiting God’s punishment towards them because they had committed a crime. Beneath their guilt, lies a strong concept of retribution, an understanding that they have to pay for the wrong committed. For Westermann, it is a confession of guilt. The Hebrew word “הַצָּרָה” (Gen 42:21 WTT) occurs twice and shows the awareness of the brothers of the distress or anguish that Joseph was going through during his kidnapping. The brothers have not heeded any response or showed any compassion for their brothers throwing him into the darkness of the cistern without listening to him. They experience the same situation in the test of Joseph: they are thrown into prison, and Joseph did not hear their claim of innocence: “we are being punished because of our brother, we saw the anguish of his heart, yet we paid no heed that is why this anguish has now come upon us.” (Gen 42: 21). Reuben draws attention to the guilt by reminding them of his warning about shedding the blood of their brother. I think that the brothers are convinced that without revenge or retribution, punishment for their sins, their life will never been peaceful again.

⁶¹ The verse 32 presents some difficulty : either the brothers brought the tunic themselves as the verbe הָבִיאוּ (Gen 37:32 WTT) or they sent it through another person with the verb וְשִׁלְחוּ (Gen 37:32 WTT). Scholars explain the contradiction often by source division.

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During their second journey to Egypt, the brothers of Joseph were still carrying the feeling of guilt. It can be seen in their thoughts: “it must be on account of the money put back in our bags the first time, that we are taken inside; they want to use it as a pretext to attack us and take our donkeys and seize us as slaves.” (Gen 43: 18). Their guilt is accompanied by fear of divine retribution. During the final test by Joseph, they said: “God has uncovered your servant’s guilt.” (Gen 44: 16) The Hebrew word **חַטָּא** is the same used for punishment, sin, and guilt. It means that the trials helped the brothers to become humble and admit that they are not innocent or “honest” as they claim in the beginning (Gen 42: 11).

Moreover, the capacity for the brothers, and especially Judah, to come to the defense of their younger brother Benjamin and their ability to sacrifice themselves for his sake could be seen as the manifestation of their conversion. The brothers who were fighting for leadership and power in the family are able to leave their tensions aside, and sacrifice self-interest for the common good. The shift from egocentric and selfish quest to the altruistic and generous care for others is worth noticing. Judah says: “let me, your servant, therefore remain in place of the boy as the slave of my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.” (Gen 44: 34).

Another sign of the lack of trust of the brothers towards Joseph is their reaction when he reveals himself to them. The brothers do not show any feelings. It says that “Joseph then kissed all his brothers, crying over each of them” (Gen 45: 15). Benjamin weeps, but “the brothers only talk with Joseph.” The brothers, who were bowing and recognizing their guilt, do not display other emotions. One may wonder why the brothers did not ask for forgiveness after being aware of the true identity of Joseph. They recognize the guilt of their crime before Joseph’s revelation, but after the revelation, nothing happens, they became mute. Since the brothers do not recognize their guilt

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and express their feelings after knowing the identity of Joseph, I think that true reconciliation did not happen at this point. I think that Joseph's response gives us a hint of his intention: "have no fear, can I take the place of God?" In other words, if any retaliation or retribution should occur, God should carry it. God judges the actions of Joseph's brothers by turning it their harm into good for the salvation of many people (Gen 50: 19). If God then does not punish them, Joseph does not find any interest in doing the same. The brothers are slowed down in the process of reconciliation because of their own intentions and presumptions, the persistence of their guilt and the belief in God's retribution.

Therefore, as to the overall question on whether reconciliation has happened, I conclude that Joseph exteriorizes his trauma and the wounds, and gives a chance for his brothers to live as a united family in a foreign land. However, Joseph is reluctant to integrate his brothers to the management of the economy in Egypt. He was very partial in the treatment of his half-brothers and Benjamin. Conversely, the brothers do not trust his true desire to reconcile with them. Joseph can be considered as a good model of initiating forgiveness, but also a negative example of integrating his brothers into the management of affairs. A full reconciliation requires a true desire of the two parties. In Joseph's story, the brothers play a role suggested by Pharaoh rather than by Joseph himself.

In the life of Joseph, some traits of leadership are seen as important: the self-awareness or growth, skills like honesty, patience and humility, accountability and trust in God. The second important feature is the seeking of common good through the collaboration with foreigners, the openness of working with the foreigners, and the last feature is the opportunity to dialogue and forgiveness.

In the next paragraph, we will analyze the leadership of David and how he treated his opponents.

3.1.The election of David

David is the well-renowned divinely elected leader in the Hebrew Bible and the greatest character of the books of Samuel. There are many controversies and disagreements over how to understand his deeds and leadership. On one side, the biblical author presents him as a pious hero, the favorite and divine elect (1 Samuel 13: 14). On the other hand, modern scholarship has denounced his wickedness and murderous acts. How can we argue that David is divinely elected? How does he carry out his mission and how does he deal with his main opponents? I argue that David is chosen by God to unite his kingdom politically, and he uses contradictory and arbitrary ways to reach his goals. David is at the same time a murderer and a wise man, a shrewd politician and a lovable man, evil and good. David gives us many warnings of how leaders should treat their opponents through murder, refusal to collaborate, dishonesty and lack of forgiveness.

3.2.The framework of reading the story of David

Two trends have dominated the theological reading of the story of David. The traditional reading praises David's merits as described in the Bible and minimizes the graveness of his faults. David Howard described him as "a shrewd military strategist and motivator with political skills", "a poet, musician and sponsor of music", ready to repent when his sins are exposed.⁶² Payne minimizes David's shortcomings: "the chief flaws one can discern in his character are his deceitfulness, his indulgence toward his sons, and of course his actions where Bathsheba was concerned. While his adultery cannot be condoned, with this glaring exception, he was in every way the ideal ruler."⁶³ Contrary to that is the critical and historical trend that challenges the

⁶²David M. Howard, "David," ABD, 2. 48

⁶³ D. F. Payne, "David," in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 1: 876.

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presentation of David as a pious man, a hero. David has been compared to “Stalin-like tyrant”, a murderer, a serial killer or a “holy terrorist”.⁶⁴ Scholars like McKenzie and Halpern have argued, based on the historical fact, that David was behind the murders of Nabal, Saul and his descendants and the narrative was designed to cover these accusations. They give a negative portrayal of the historical David and accuse him of being responsible of all the crimes against which the apologetic narrative defends him.

Beyond the positive and negative readings of David, I will analyze the different reasons why David can be portrayed as the chosen King, the mission of his election and the strategies used to achieve his God-given mission. Modern scholarship has paid less attention to the real mission of David and how his goal informs his relationships with his adversaries and opponents. I concur with Kurt Leshner Knoll that David’s character is complex and ambivalent, he is both “good and evil, lovable and worthy of admiration, frightening in his disregard for the welfare of others.”⁶⁵

While the author of the Davidic narrative has an apologetic tone, it is still valid to ask how the defense of the image of David as the rightful king contributes to achieving his goal. After the anointing of David by Samuel, David is challenged by many circumstances and adversaries. He encountered Goliath and won his first battle, but his rise to power is not only through military means. He conquers the throne of Israel and reunites the two kingdoms through managing his political image and pacific resolution of conflicts. I will base my arguments on the literary and theological analysis of the biblical narrative, rather than the historical accounts of King David.

⁶⁴ Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*, The Bible in its world (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001). Steven L. McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁵ K. L. Noll, *The Faces of David*, Journal for the study of the Old Testament. Supplement series 242 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 63.

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Aware of the apologetic tone of the narrative, I will survey the different ways David carries out his mission of elect, the way he treats his adversaries in his rise to kingship. He made friends at the court of Saul, he is “loved by the people and even by Saul” (1 Samuel 16: 21), and he is gifted with different talents such as his skill of playing the harp to ease King Saul’s melancholy. On various occasions, David could have killed Saul, but he considers murder as a last resort.

Instead of seeing an apology for David’s rise in the narrative, I believe that David’s ascension to the throne is the result of political shrewdness, the killing of some enemies and sometimes the pacific resolution of conflict with some adversaries. Secondly, though David has been divinely chosen, David did not act according to the divine or moral values. He made wrong choices, kill some opponents or adversaries that proved to be obstacles on his way. In the next paragraphs, I will focus on the election of David, the goal and mission of his election and his treatment of adversaries before and after his rise to kingship.

3.3.David’s divine favoritism

The first manifestation of God’s election of David is his initiative of designating David. After rejecting Saul, God sends Samuel to find another King for Israel. God specifies which family Samuel is to visit, the family of Jesse in Bethlehem. The text does not tell us why this family is specifically chosen. The anointment of David during the reign of Saul can be considered as an act of treason and rebellion. Samuel uses the excuse of offering sacrifice to God to divert the attention and suspicion of the inhabitants of Bethlehem. I see there an active involvement of God in the choice of David and a categorical rejection of Saul.

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There is a freedom in the divine choice to name David.⁶⁶ The choice of Samuel was not the choice of God, as the sons of Jesse pass before him. God refuses to choose according to the “appearance or lofty stature” (1 Sam 16: 7). Though some scholars think that the rejection of appearance and stature is an indirect rejection of Saul’s beauty and great height (1 Sam 9: 2; 10: 23), the text still mentions David’s physical attraction: “he was ruddy and attractive, handsome to the eye and of good appearance.” (1 Sam 16: 12) Physical appearance is a feature of God’s favor but not the only one.

There is a close link between the rising of David, chosen by God, and the rejection of Saul as the first king. After being presented 7 sons⁶⁷, God chooses the יְהוֹנָתָן the youngest. Saul also comes from the humblest clan of the smallest tribe of Benjamin. David is the youngest son in the tribe of Judah. The pattern of the youngest becomes recurrent in the narratives of Saul and David. Like in Saul’s story, there is the use of verb like בָּחַר (to choose) in reference to God’s election of a king (1 Samuel 10: 24; 16: 8, 9, 10). Moreover, we can notice the absence of David during the sacrifice presided over by Samuel. Barbara Green remarks that the name of David is not spoken by the narrator until he is anointed king.⁶⁸ There is a lack of agency and subjectivity which suggest that for some time, David will be seen as small, unseen, young and subordinate.

Later on, when Saul needs a doctor to calm his nerves, the servants give us more information on the qualities of David: he “is a skillful harpist, he is also a stalwart soldier, besides being an able speaker, and handsome.” (1 Sam 16: 18). Saul introduces David to his court and makes David his

⁶⁶ P Kyle McCarter (Peter Kyle) translator, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible Commentary Series (New Haven & London, London: Yale University Press, Bloomsbury Publishing, 1980), 277.

⁶⁷ P Kyle McCarter (Peter Kyle) translator, *1 Samuel*, 277.

⁶⁸ Barbara Green, *David’s Capacity for Compassion: A Literary-Hermeneutical Study of 1 - 2 Samuel*, T & T Clark library of biblical studies (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 58.

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armor-bearer and his healer during his troubled moment. The narrator affirms that “Saul became found of him”, in other translations “Saul loved him”⁶⁹. The love of Saul for David is a clear manifestation of David’s election since the narrator wants to show that David’s antagonists also favor him.

The contrast between the departure of the spirit of the Lord from Saul (16: 14) and the spirit of the Lord rushing on David (16: 13) is a clear sign of God’s favorite king. The expression of “The Lord was with him (David)” becomes a leitmotiv that will occur often through the stories of David and Saul. The talents, success and strength of David are the result of the divine favoritism (18: 14). The different roles occupied by David at the court of Saul are also signs of his divine election. In the position of armor-bearer, David becomes closer to Saul during battles and learn more about war and administration. His position of healer of the King’s melancholy has also put him in the position of being closer to the king. According to Jan Fokkelman, these positions contribute also to make David play the role of Trojan horse.⁷⁰

There is also a strong motif of divine providence in the election of David. As soon as David is anointed, the sequence of events that led him to the King’s court and even intimate circle is very rapid. After his anointing, the servants at the royal palace recommend his skills, and David immediately becomes the armor-bearer of the King. The invisible and indirect hand of God seems

⁶⁹ In Hebrew, the text does not specify “who loved whom?” Is it David who loved Saul or Saul who loved David? According to Wong, in chapter 16, David has been the subject as well as Saul. In v.v21 David is the clear subject of the three verbs and Saul the referent, but it does not implicate the fourth occurrence. The syntax is ambiguous and suggest that either one loved the other or each loved the other. GCI WONG, “Who Loved Whom? A Note on 1 Samuel Xvi 21,” *Vetus Testamentum* 47, no. 4 (1997): 530-555.

⁷⁰ J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel. Volume II, The Crossing Fates (I Sam. 13-31 & II Sam. 1)*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 23 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986), 135.

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to prepare the way for his rise to the throne. What could be the mission that God wants to entrust David?

3.4.The mission of David

The global view of the books of Samuel draws our attention to the fact that David was chosen by God to unite the tribes of Israel into one nation and maintain peace in the region. Israel was having some tensions with the neighboring peoples such as the Amalekites, the Ammonites and the Philistines (2 Samuel 8). As a military king, David subdues the non-Israelite kings and kingdoms in Canaan, and controls the military positions in Israel, the national and local administrators. David establishes the tribal tax and revenue collectors, and delegate officials in the country.⁷¹ Some scholars add that David united all Israelites under a common government through religious structures. David places the Ark of the Covenant on Mount Moriah, designating Jerusalem as the central location of religious worship.⁷² The goal of unity will inform the way David will treat his opponents or adversaries. He will lead some into exile, collaborate with others or kill some opponents to assure the unity of the kingdom.

Another expression recurrent to the books of Samuel which gives us a hint of the mission of David is “all Judah and all Israel love him” (1 Sam 18: 16). It seems to me that the mission of David was not only military-directed but also socially intended. One of the mission of David was to keep an image of a right and ideal king while acting duplicity. He became famous after his battle against the Philistines, however, later he seeks refuge with them when he was running from Saul. David

⁷¹ Galbraith, D.K., J. Ogden, and A. Skinner, *Jerusalem: The Eternal City* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1996).

⁷² McCONKIE, Wayne Boss, and McConkie, “David’s Rise to Power — and The Struggle to Keep It: An Examination of the Change Process,” *Public Administration Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2001): 191.

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conquers the hearts of the people through political shrewdness while killing his adversaries. Like Joseph, David learns progressively his mission as an elect.

3.5. The relation between David and his adversaries

Though David is anointed, his rise to power cannot be successful without many challenges and tensions. I argue that David's relationship with his opponents is much influenced by the political image and the unity of the kingdom he would like to preserve. In the following, I will analyze David's strategy and way of dealing with his opponents such as Saul, the Philistines, Abner, Ishbaal and Absalom.

3.5.1. David and Saul

David's relationship with Saul is marred with both enmity and respect, treason and carefulness. The tension between David and Saul permeates the two books of Samuel. Introduced by some servants in the king's palace, David plays the role of the soother "whenever the spirit from God seized Saul" (1 Samuel 17). David did not enter only the service of serving the king but also becoming his son progressively. For Fokkelman, Saul makes David part of his own household (16: 19; 17: 55- 58; 18: 2).⁷³ After his battle with Goliath, Saul takes David from his father and at some point makes him his own son. David starts living in the palace and becomes part of the family: "Saul laid claim to David that day and did not allow him to return to his father's house." (1 Sam 18: 2). The integration into the family can also be seen in the strong relationship between David and Jonathan. The Hebrew verb אָהַב, (to love) occurs 13 times in 1 Sam 16- 20 and 2 Sam 1, and it concerns the love for David. David is loved by different people such as Jonathan, Saul, the

⁷³ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel. Volume II, The Crossing Fates (I Sam. 13-31 & II Sam. 1)*, 194–198.

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people/court and Michal. Jonathan's love for David is mentioned seven times, which means a great intimacy in their relationship. Love in the ancient Near East is another way to talk about fidelity and political loyalty. According to the narrator, the heir to Saul's throne is loyal to David and ready to give up everything to keep their friendship.

After the victory of David against Goliath, Saul's behavior changes towards David. Saul seems not to recognize his armor-bearer, or the young boy who he clothed with his tunic and sword before the battle (1 Sam 17: 38- 40). He asked David: "whose son are you, young man?" (1 Sam 17: 58). Though David is entrusted to lead Saul's army, his military victories spark jealousy in the heart of Saul. Women of Israel praise David as their hero, making his status superior to Saul's. Saul begins to see David as an usurper who wants to take his place as king. Saul attempts to kill David many times. He tries to spear him twice (1 Sam 18:11), demotes David to participate in dangerous military expeditions and plots against David so that the Philistines strike him. Saul promises his daughter Merob to David, but later on gives his daughter in marriage to a Meholathite. Using another daughter Michal as a bait, he requires of David to pay the bridal price with 100 Philistine foreskins, hoping that David will die fighting the Philistines (1 Sam 18:20- 30). The foreskins can be considered as "dark humor" that illustrates Saul's insulting of David. The foreskins refer to "uncircumcised penises collected as war trophies", and may describe here the mockery of converting the Philistines into Israelites.⁷⁴ The narrator states clearly that Saul sets traps to precipitate the death of David (1 Sam 18: 25) because he fears David becoming his son-in-law. In return, David seems to understand the duplicity in the language and deeds of Saul and anticipates his deadly traps. David also becomes a wise and shrewd person, staying at the court despite the

⁷⁴ David L. Petersen and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 196.

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fact that his life is in danger. Due to the fact that “the lord was with him” (1 Sam 18: 12), he does not fear fighting the Philistines and bringing back their foreskins. We can notice that Saul does not talk directly to David but through his servants. The courage of David, his successes, ingenuity and his lack of naivety are presented as the consequences of his divine election. Even Saul recognizes that “the lord was with David” (1 Sam 18: 28) due to the failure of his plots against David. Jonathan also takes the defense of David by convincing his father of his innocence, and initiates a process of reconciliation between the two (1 Sam 19: 7). Despite the promise that Saul makes to spare David’s life, the fame of David due to military conquests (1 Sam 18: 8) worsens the relationship between David and Saul. The text gives us a clue of the relentlessness of Saul in his pursuit of David. He sent first some soldiers to kill him in his conjugal bed, three times in Ramah, the hometown of Samuel. Saul comes later to kill David himself at Ramah, but he is turned into a “prophetic condition” (1 Sam 20: 24) as the spirit of the lord comes on him.

The narrative demonstrates that David responds to Saul’s persecution in various manners. The first type of response is to seek allies. David is often helped by those who are supposed to be closer to Saul: Jonathan (whose fidelity and love saves him many times) Michal (the daughter of Saul who tricks her father to enable her husband to flee), the prophets of Ramah and Samuel (who protect David), Ahimeleck and the priests of Nock (who save David and his men from hunger (1 Sam 19)). It is a lesson for leaders to seek allies across ethnic groups or national boundaries. Leaders can seek allies among their adversaries.

Secondly, David responds to Saul’s persecution through skilled negotiation, surviving the tight grip of Saul through moments of ingenuity that allow him to escape the violence of Saul. Since David is aware that he cannot win the war against Saul, he flees and looks for allies among the

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relatives of Saul, the Benjaminites (1 Sam 23: 7). David also uses irony to answer Saul's questions about his ambition to become his son-in-law: "Do you think it easy to become the king's son-in-law? I am poor and insignificant" (1 Sam 18: 23). Barbara Green argues that "his interrogative utterance runs from a genuine statement of unworthiness to an ironic reminder to the king that being son-in-law is a promise to David's killing of Goliath."⁷⁵

The third way David responds to the persecution of Saul is by gathering an army and finding a safe place for his parents (1 Sam 22: 1-5). Family members, those in debt and those opposed to Saul join David's army in the cave of Adullam and want him to be their leader. Adullam, a small fortress about 17 miles southwest of Jerusalem, becomes the headquarters of David's army. The Hebrew term *מַעְרָה* (cave, den) also means place of sojourn or refuge, a stronghold. David tries to secure a place in the southern part of Jerusalem in order to counter the multiple attacks of Saul's army. David fears that Saul will take revenge on his parents or use them as bait and so he asked the king of Moab to take care of them (1 Sam 22: 3- 4). Though David had many opportunities to kill Saul, he avoids doing so because "he is chosen by God." (1 Sam 24:26). This is a big lesson of showing mercy to the rivals or adversaries or spare their lives. It is an important feature for leaders to be tolerant towards their adversaries and avoid to sacrifice their lives for their benefit.

Concerning the motives that led to a worsened relationship between Saul and David, Steven McKenzie argues that the ultimate reason was a failed coup attempt by David.⁷⁶ David as the General of the Army has the power and ambition to overthrow Saul. McKenzie notes that the narrative mentions more than once that Saul was afraid of David (1 Sam 18: 12, 15, 29) and that

⁷⁵ Barbara Green, *David's Capacity for Compassion*, 64.

⁷⁶ McKenzie, *King David*, 87.

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David's friendship with Jonathan and love of Michal are just apologetic elements to convince the reader of David's innocence. On the contrary, I think that David had several opportunities to kill Saul while he was being pursued. In the cave of En-gedi and in the desert of Ziph, David could have killed Saul in his sleep (1 Sam 24; 26). However, he spares Saul and refused to kill him saying: he is "the lord's anointed", the "מָשִׁיחַ". David recognizes that Saul is God's anointed, consecrated especially by God. In ancient Israel, to kill an anointed person was considered a capital offense, a sacrilege (1 Sam 26: 9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Samuel 1: 14, 16). The life of Saul is sacrosanct, and "David is presented as absolutely fastidious with respect to the sanctity of Yahweh's anointed."⁷⁷ In chapter 24, David calls Saul the anointed one on three occasions. David spoke to Saul with respect and reverence. David calls him "my father" "אָבִי" (v. 11) and he recognizes that his fear of God prevents him from the temptation to kill Saul. For Steven McKenzie, David's words of recognizing Saul as "my father" implies his right to succeed and Saul's begging David not to annihilate his line was a common practice for usurpers.⁷⁸ David's strategy is a strategy of dissuasion rather than committing murder. He simultaneously threatens Saul by cutting his garment and sparing his life. It is important to notice these words of David: "Why do you listen to those who say "David is trying to harm you?" David is obedient to Saul as King by bowing before him and showing him the piece of cloak he has cut. The shrewdness of David is expressed through the respect he gives to Saul and the display of his capacity of harming Saul.

In his relationship with Saul, David employs a strategy of dissuasion. He shows Saul that he can kill him, but spares his life because he does not want to ruin his political image among the Israelites.

⁷⁷ P Kyle McCarter (Peter Kyle) translator, *1 Samuel*, 384.

⁷⁸ Steven McKenzie, "1 Samuel" in Petersen and Gaventa (dir), *The New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary*, 198.

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David tries to appeal to the conscience of his persecutor Saul, discourage him and ask God to be the judge of his innocence. Saul's response "הֲקִלְכֶּם יְהוָה בְּנִי יִגָּד" (is this your voice, my son?) removes any ambiguity about David's calling him "my father."⁷⁹ Saul then acknowledges David's wisdom before all those present and begs David to make an oath not to wipe-out his descendants. David plays a double role, first as a gentle and honest person and later as persecutor. David shows that he has a reverence for God's anointed and will not carry out vengeance in the name of the Lord. However, he will kill Saul's descendants on the request of the Gibeonites (2 Samuel 21). This attitude of David is a warning for leaders who adopt an attitude of duplicity and hypocrisy, and who seek vengeance rather than dialogue and tolerance.

On another note, what is the involvement of David in the death of Saul and his three sons at Gilboa? For Baruch Halpern, the denial and silence in the text about David's involvement in the death of Saul amplifies suspicion.⁸⁰ The text denies that David worked for the Philistines, however admits that David was the trusted lieutenant of Achish, the Philistine king. The narrative claims also that Achish has dismissed David from the battle of Jezreel in which Saul and his sons died. The narrator explains how David came to be in physical possession of Saul's crown. There are indeed two different accounts of the death of Saul and his sons. The one in 1 Sam 31 is very different of the account in 2 Samuel 1. In the first account, Saul died by committing suicide after being wounded in the battle against the Philistines. In the second account, an Amalekite pretends to have ended Saul's life because he asked him to do it. (2 Sam 1: 9). The death of Saul benefits David politically because he can claim the throne as the sole survivor anointed by God. David's response to the

⁷⁹ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 1st ed.. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 151.

⁸⁰ Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 80.

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death of Saul can be understood by his desire to win Israelites' heart and his desire for a smooth accession to kingship. David kills the alleged murderer of Saul in order to preserve the image of a righteous king. In response to the Amalekite who brings him the news of Saul's death, thinking that he can make a reward out of it, David shows again his piety and respect for God's choice: "How is it that you were not afraid to put forth your hand to desecrate the Lord's anointed?" (2 Sam 1: 14). David does not tolerate the murder of the king and gives the order to strike the Amalekite. David cares more for the life of Jonathan than his opponent Saul, but by mourning their lives, he scores a political gain with the allies of Saul. Like David, a leader should care for the life of its adversaries and seek justice whenever the opportunity comes.

In this chapter, I have noted the different apologetic elements which imply David's innocence in the death of Saul and Jonathan, and I also argued that David's strategy can be understood as a dissuasion rather than an attempt to harm God's anointed king. Though David's punishment of the Amalekite and his mourning over the death of Saul and Jonathan can be seen as public acts of recognition for their lives, David does kill Saul's descendants and gains a political advantage through their deaths. David shows his concern for "the Lord's anointed life" and stays neutral in his relationship with Saul. His lament and his absence from the battle that killed Saul demonstrate his willingness to conquer the hearts of the people of Judah and Israel. The public acts of David to honor the memory of Saul are commendable, however the sacrifice of his descendants displays David's capacity for heinous and treacherous behavior. The relationship between David and Saul is therefore best described as duplicitous. Duplicity and dishonesty are traits that do not help the leader to achieve his goal of unity and collaboration with others.

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The attitudes of David give us more warnings about how leaders should treat their opponents. The duplicity and lack of honesty of David towards Saul are source of conflicts and hinder dialogue among political adversaries. David gives us warnings about how leaders portray a good image of themselves while committing privately killings to keep their power. This attitude of dishonesty can be a signpost of warning for political leaders in Africa especially in Ivory Coast. Integrity is a skill that is relevant for our world today.

3.5.2. David and the Philistines

The relationship between David and the Philistines is similarly ambiguous. David proves to be a clever and smart warrior who collaborates with the enemy through ruse and trick. The Philistines were the main and long-term enemies of the people of Israel in the two books of Samuel. In the beginning of the narrative, David's popularity rises after the defeat of Goliath, the hero of the Philistines (1 Sam 17), however David later takes refuge in the land of Philistines. During his first encounter with Achish, king of the Philistine city of Gath, David pretends to be insane in order to flee from their capture: "He scratched marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard." (1 Sam 21: 13). As the pressure and threat of Saul on his life is increasing, David is given a Philistine land at Ziklag, and David finds asylum among the Philistines (1 Sam 27: 1). He also serves as the bodyguard of Achish (1 Sam 28: 1). David is guilty of siding with the Philistines in slaughtering the Amalekites in Ziklag (1 Sam 30: 17), telling lies and struggling to maintain integrity.⁸¹ Indeed, David was playing the role of double agent with the Philistines, using their forces to counter the pressure of the army of Saul. His duplicity and lies are his main strategy in dealing with the Philistines. These attitudes cannot be a model for a true leadership in Ivory Coast.

⁸¹ Barbara Green, *David's Capacity for Compassion*, 136.

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For McKenzie, David is a “holy terrorist,” that is, David and his army were used as mercenaries to kill Saul⁸². The writer of the apology for David tried to cover up by explaining that David was not part of the last Philistine war in which Saul died. To conclude, David is a double agent who sides with his enemies to gain advantage over other opponents. This is part of his military strategy to consolidate his power in the area and secure a safe way to the throne.

3.5.3. David and Nabal

The relationship between David and Nabal gives us warnings about the impetuosity and bad temper of a leader. However, there is also a lesson of being opened to negotiations or mediation in solving a conflict. David does not hesitate to retaliate when Nabal refuses to grant him his needs. He seeks accountability from his adversaries and expects their honor and respect. At the end of the story, David gives room to dialogue and negotiations with the wife of Nabal.

In 1 Samuel 25, David was fleeing from Saul and he asked his men to look for supplies from a wealthy man named Nabal. Instead of providing for David’s men, Nabal insulted them and did not return the favor they had previously done for him by protecting his flock. As a result, David intended to kill all the men in the house of Nabal but his wife interceded and mediated with David. Some days later, Nabal is found dead, stricken by Yahweh.

For McKenzie, the narrator uses the vengeance of Yahweh to cover-up the murder of Nabal. For him, David uses Abigail to kill her husband and later acquires his property.⁸³ At the question ““Whom does the death of Nabal profit?” he answered that it benefits David. On one hand, there is the courtesy and respect in the request of payment from David, and, on the other hand, there is

⁸² McKenzie, *King David*, 110.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 98.

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Nabal's insulting answer to David that denied his request for resources. For McKenzie, Nabal is much like Saul: as rich as a king (v.2), and probably the chief of Calebites (v.3). David plans to retaliate by wiping out all the people in the house of Nabal when he was designated as a runaway slave and beggar (v. 10). The wife of Nabal, Abigail saves David from doing the irreparable. Since Abigail is a woman, she is allowed to talk and approach David, and intercede for the male of the house (v.23).⁸⁴ McKenzie sees, in the speech of Abigail, a model of diplomacy. Due to her intelligence and promptness, she is able to know the danger of the situation and act quickly (v.18) by riding out to meet David. She refers to David as "my lord" and herself as "your servant". She asks David to accept the gifts and does not imply that it has been coerced (v. 27). McKenzie concludes that the death of Nabal cannot be explained by natural causes. He affirms that the speech of Abigail gives us hints that she murdered her husband in return of liberation from a bad marriage and the prospect of greater prosperity and status in the future with David.⁸⁵ Abigail wishes that all David's enemies and people who want to do him harm will be like Nabal (v. 26).

An analysis of the narration gives us some insights of the anger of David rather than a proof of the complicity between him and Abigail. David is the first to initiate contact with Nabal. He sends ten of his young men to ask Nabal for food supplies. The biblical author insists that David comes in peace (1Samuel 25: 6) : וַאֲתָהּ שָׁלוֹם וּבֵיתָהּ שָׁלוֹם וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-לָהּ שָׁלוֹם. This greeting of peace is very common in the Ancient Near East and does not carry any hidden threat of vengeance. His first approach was peaceful and he is asking for a reward in return for the protection he gave to the shepherds of Nabal. Robert Alter mentions that David's armed men have previously protected the

⁸⁴ | McKenzie, *King David*, 98.

⁸⁵ McKenzie, *King David*, 99.

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shepherds of Nabal against marauders and did not take any of Nabal's flock as compensation.⁸⁶

Also, David does not impose any payment by not specifying the quantities. Though he sends ten of his young men, the narration says that he asks for whatever Nabal can give to his servants:

"אִם-כֶּנֶזִים אַתֶּם אֲחֵיכֶם אֶחָד יֵאָסֵר בְּבֵית מִשְׁמָרְכֶּם" (Gen 42:19 WTT)"

To the pacific request of David's men, Nabal's answer is sarcastic and provoking: "who is David and who is son of Jesse?" (v. 10). He does not only refuse to give them "whatever he can manage," but he does not recognize them. Furthermore, Nabal compares David to a servant or slave that breaks away from his master. In other words, Nabal is considering David as an outlaw who has rebelled "against the established social hierarchy"⁸⁷ represented by himself. David received the news as an insult because Nabal did not return the respect and therefore sullied his reputation.

When Nabal questions his authority, David bursts into anger and wants to clear the affront to his image. David assembles his men and plans to kill all the males of Nabal's house. David intends to affirm his authority and teach Nabal who is the real master. The restoration of his image is one of the motivations of his anger. Unsurprisingly then, when Abigail wants to calm his temper, she first "prostrates on the ground", paying homage to David and calls him: "אֲדֹנָי" (my lord and master (v. 25). David is striving to become the king of the region, and he is willing to give up his anger when he meets people that return him his respect. Despite his anger, David leaves room for dialogue and mediation. Abigail helps him to understand that the revenge on Nabal will not be favorable for his political ascension. Abigail says: "Because your lordship is fighting the battles

⁸⁶ Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets : Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings : A Translation with Commentary*, 1st ed.. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 386.

⁸⁷ Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel*, 387.

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of the Lord, and there is no evil to be found in you your whole life.” (v29). In Hebrew, “כִּי־מֵלֶכְמֹות”
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי נַלְתָּם וְרָעָה לֹא־תִמָּצֵא בָּךְ מִיָּמֶיךָ. Abigail is the voice of reason which helps David avoid committing an irreparable murder. Through this encounter, David is taught to rely on God amidst the challenges he faces when attempting to become king. A big lesson that can be applied to Ivory Coast here is the importance of being tolerant and patient in the midst of conflict and be opened to true negotiations.

David is open to dialogue and renounces killing his adversaries, even though his honor has been hurt. David has just fled the kingdom, is being pursued by Saul and it is important for him to make allies and build a stronghold. As a fugitive, and with his growing number of soldiers, there is a need to find a sponsor or benefactor in order to secure his future. Nabal shows his foolishness, and Abigail, in contrary, a clever wife helps the rebel and fugitive David. Nabal’s foolishness and carelessness could have caused the killing of his whole family. His wife Abigail understood David’s need and provided David the strategic alliance he needs to become the king of Judah. Unlike McKenzie, I argue that the text does not procure any motives for Abigail to kill her husband. Abigail is acting on her own, hiding to go and meet David as soon as she knew the “foolishness” that her husband has caused.

This narrative teaches David an important theological lesson. The life of an elect is “bound up in the bundle of life dear to YHWH” and the elect must avoid shedding blood needlessly by taking into his own hands what is God’s care.⁸⁸ The direct intervention of God in striking down Nabal is an important key to reading the stories of David. David still has to learn to rely on God rather than using his anger and impulsive behavior against his adversary. Leaders can learn from David’s way

⁸⁸ Barbara Green, *David’s Capacity for Compassion*, 103.

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to give room for dialogue and negotiation even though their image and respect are trampled by their adversaries.

3.5.4. David and Abner/ Ishbosheth

David's relationship with Abner and Ishbosheth give us warnings on the abuse of power, distrust and dishonesty between opponents. David undertakes a war against the house of Saul that is against Abner and Ishbosheth, however the biblical author seems to distance him from their deaths. David uses his shrewdness to compel the last strong men of the house of Saul to negotiate with him and force them to abdicate. David tries to neutralize his adversaries by making them feel weak so that they renounce their claims to the throne. David avoids directly killing his opponents Abner and Ishbosheth in order to preserve a certain political image. However, the deaths of these men do contribute to his rise as king.

After the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, there is a power vacuum in the combined kingdom. The Kingdom of Israel however has two important people: Abner the general of Saul's army and Ishbaal, the son of Saul. David was crowned at Hebron, the capital of the Kingdom of Judah. David was in control of Judah, ruling from Hebron for seven and half years (2 Sam 2: 11) while Ishbaal (Ishbosheth), the son of Saul, was reigning over Israel. According to 2 Sam 3- 4 there was a war between the two houses of Ishbaal and David. During a battle between the two kingdoms, Abner killed Asahel, the brother of Joab, who is the general of the army of David. Due to misunderstandings between Ishbaal and Abner, Abner opens negotiations with David to transfer him the power of Israel. David agrees on the condition of taking back Saul's daughter, his first wife, Michal. Abner encounters David to arrange a transfer of power, but later Joab, aware of the presence of his enemy Abner in the kingdom, takes revenge by killing him. After the death of

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Abner, the strongest man of the house of Saul, two men, probably from the tribe of Benjamin behead Ishbaal and bring it to David for reward.

Drawing from his historical analysis, McKenzie argues that David is a direct assassin of Abner and Ishbaal because their assassination helps him win the throne of Israel.⁸⁹ For him, the biblical narrator depicts Joab as the killer of Abner in order to defend David. The second episode is the accusation of Abner sleeping with Saul's concubine, Rizpah (2 Samuel 3: 8). According to McKenzie, the narrator wants to insinuate that Joab is taking revenge from the murder of his brother, and that he cannot tolerate Abner replacing him as the new commander-in chief. Furthermore, the absence of punishment of Joab by David may suggest a complicity between David and Joab, according to McKenzie. He argues: "With Abner gone, dominion over Benjamin and Israel would be there for the taking, and David would be without challengers. But Abner's removal had to be explained in such a way that David could claim innocence and ignorance of the deed. Enter Joab."⁹⁰ Concerning the assassination of Ishbaal, McKenzie argues that the death of Abner has made the Kingdom of Ishbaal more powerless. He suggests that there was a division within the army of Israel and there may have been a part of Israel that favored David over Ishbaal as the successor of Saul. One of the reasons is the episode where the elders of Israel agreed to make David king (2 Sam 31: 17- 21). The assassins of Ishbaal are punished, their corpses displayed in Hebron, and David is claimed innocent by the biblical author. The deaths of Abner and Ishbaal will lead to the capitulation of the Israelite elders who anoint David in Hebron.

⁸⁹ McKenzie, *King David*, 120.

⁹⁰ McKenzie, *King David*, 120.

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I concur that the deaths of Ishbaal and Abner facilitate David's rise to power, however, David's direct involvement in the death of Ishbaal and Abner is up for debate. Firstly, the narrator describes three times that the meeting between David and Abner occurred in peace "וַיִּשְׁלַח" (v.21, 22, 23). The narrative assures that David was not aware of the conflict between Joab and Abner (v.26), he only finds out later about the murder. A cold-blooded murder of Abner while negotiating with David could tarnish David's political image. Therefore David would have not allowed his men to cold-bloodedly kill Abner because it will be seen as a public betrayal. David was a fine strategist who will do his best to achieve his goal of being king not only of Judah but also of Israel. In his strategic plan, he does not only want to convince his soldiers but also win the hearts of the people. David's rise to kingship shows how shrewd and clever he is. David uses the men around him to achieve his plan.

Under the attack of the Philistines, the region is greatly divided. As king of Judah, David wants to create more unity and peace in the region. After winning the consent of the Calebites through the political marriage with Abigail, he turns now to the kingdom of Israel. I suggest that David also wants to use his marriage with Michal, the daughter of Saul, as a strategy to win the throne. For McKenzie, David gains the throne of Israel because the kingdom of Israel was losing control of lands to the Philistines. Ishbaal has been moved to Mahanaim⁹¹ and made king over "Gilead, Geshurites, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin and all Israel" (2 Samuel 2; 8- 9). Despite the fact that David would like to win the war militarily (2 Samuel 3: 6), he uses his relationship with Michal as a strategy to force his opponent Ishbaal to abdicate. The goal of David and the promise

⁹¹ Ibid., 123. For McKenzie, Saul's capital has been at Gibeah, and Ishbaal was crowned at Mahanaim, the east of the Jordan River. In fact, Philistines have captured nearly all of Israel's territory in their defeat of Saul, so that Ishbaal was no longer secure even in Gibeah. And Abner moved east of the Jordan to regroup his forces and attempt to reconquer the lost territory.

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of God for him is to “establish the throne of David over Israel and over Judah from Dan to Beersheba.” (2 Samuel 3: 10).

A direct assassination of Abner by David would not help him to win the hearts of the people. Following the death of Abner, David is faced with a dilemma: either kill or punish Joab, losing a strong man of his army and dividing his own men, or, keep Joab alive and spoil his own reputation and his goal of unification. David’s final solution is to make a public, national and proper burial for Abner, inviting all to weep, mourn and fast. It is a bold strategic move, so that all the people may be “pleased with everything that the king did” (2 Samuel 3: 36). His actions and choices are directed towards that goal. David did not punish Joab, his general, because his intentions were both to maintain the unity in his army and in the kingdom. Through the national mourning given to Abner, David proclaims him as “the prince and great man of Israel”: “שָׂרֵן וְגִבּוֹר”

Concerning the assassination of Ishbaal, he used the same strategy. David punishes the assassins of the king in order to give not only an example of his righteousness but also creating more unity among the people through the death of Ishbaal. David gives Ishbaal a dignified burial. As is remarked in the text, he buries the head (2 Samuel 4: 12) and not the whole body, because he did not have access yet to the capital of Israel. Furthermore, the rebellion of the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the tribe of Benjamin and the assassination of their King Ishbaal, signify that David’s strategic plan of winning hearts has worked. Despite the fact that there were no stronger men than Abner, it seems obvious that David has won the hearts of many soldiers in the army of Abner. I do think that Baanah and Rechab have acted not only for some reward but also because they were convinced of the authenticity of the leadership of David, the one who will unite the

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Kingdom and win the lost territories. The Benjaminites were convinced personally by Abner that David is the right king for them (2 Samuel 3: 19).

In some ways, David convinces some of his adversaries to praise his deeds and support him. The anointment of David comes from the initiative of his adversaries belonging to the house of Israel. David does not rush to the city as soon as Ishbaal died, and does not make a military move. Diplomacy prevails for his coronation and negotiations take place: “when all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made an agreement with them there before the Lord and they anointed him king of Israel” (2 Samuel 5: 3). The strategic plan of David has been realized due to the unanimous acceptance of the elders to anoint him as King. Despite the duplicitous attitude of David, he still give room for negotiation and dialogue. It is an important point that leaders in Africa especially in Ivory Coast can learn and apply in their way of relating to their adversaries.

3.5.5. The divisions in the house of David

David’s treatment of his rebellious sons give us an example of his weakness and a warning about his lax, lenient, permissive and resentful behavior towards his sons. David is reluctant to meet his son Absalom or to punish him after his rebellion. He prefers to flee and abdicate the throne in order to avoid harming his son. When adversity comes from his family, David is permissive and allows his son to seize his throne. He is also reluctant to discipline his sons. The difficult interactions between David and his sons give many warnings about the lack of discipline or application of the rule of law to his partisans or supporters, and caution against intolerance and resentment.

The narrative of 2 Sam 13- 20 give us an account of the revolt of Absalom and Sheba. The episode talks about Absalom and Tamar who have the same mother, and Amnon their half-brother.

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Amnon, the firstborn of David (2 Sam 13: 21), tricks his half-sister and rapes her. Absalom prepares his revenge during two years and kills Amnon in the middle of a banquet he prepared. It took David three years to get over Amnon's death and he refuses to allow Absalom to be in his presence. David allows Absalom to return to Jerusalem without appearing in his presence for two more years. Since Absalom has been banned from the king's presence, he wants to get the attention of his father through his general Joab. He sets fire to the farms of Joab in order to compel him to mediate his case before the king. The reluctance of David to meet his son has an effect on Absalom's resentment and hatred towards his father. This is a clear notice for leaders to be eager to negotiate, meet and dialogue with their opponents for fear of exacerbating conflicts.

After the return of Absalom to the court of David, he plots against his father by giving promises to people, attempting to "steal away the loyalties of the people of Israel." (2 Sam 15: 6). Absalom will declare himself king at Hebron and lead a rebellion against his father, driving him out of Jerusalem. In a final battle against his own son, David explicitly ordered his army not to kill his son (2 Sam 18: 5). Joab will act against his instructions, killing Absalom, leaving a broken-hearted David to lament the death of his son. Though David did not kill directly Absalom, the lack of setting responsibility and punishing Joab denotes his tacit agreement of Absalom's death. This gives a warning against avoiding the application of the rule of law towards one's supporters. No one is above the law and all must be accountable to it. It is a great lesson of the importance of respecting the statutes, laws and constitution in African countries.

The episode of the rebellion of Absalom shows us another image of David. He is portrayed as a weak king, slow in punishing his sons. He is a father whose children have taken advantage of his gentle nature, and rebel against him. For McKenzie, the apologetic tone pervades the narration.

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First, David seems to be unaware of the trick of Amnon and the revenge of Absalom. Another element of the apologetic tone is David's innocence in the deaths of Amnon, Absalom and Amasa. McKenzie argues that David's refusal to participate in Absalom's banquet is suspect. The writer wants to avoid David taking the blame of complicity in the murder of Amnon. McKenzie thinks that David conspires against his own son Amnon and sends Absalom to Geshur whose king has a treaty with David.⁹² David's inability to discipline or punish Amnon and Absalom is also seen as apologetic defense of David's innocence. The story of the death of Absalom resembles the one of Abner and shares some similarities with the death reports of Saul and Ishbaal. McKenzie concludes: "If David had a hand in Amnon's assassination because he suspected him of treason, he surely had Absalom killed for rebellion."⁹³ David did not punish Joab for killing Absalom.

Absalom's coronation and rebellion against his father David gives us warning about how David treats his sons. After the murder of Amnon by his half-brother Absalom, David did not allow Absalom to meet him after a long time of 5 years. First Absalom flees to Geshur where he hid for three years (2 Sam. 13: 38) and later on, despite Joab's mediation, David did not allow Absalom to see his face for another two years (2 Sam 14: 28). David's decision of forcing his own son into exile and refusal of communication will increase the anger and hatred of Absalom. David lacks making room for his own son and it results in negative consequences: the burning of the field of Joab, the rebellion and usurpation of the power by Absalom. David could have avoid tensions and ease the divisions in his house if he has not kept the power for himself. In David's leadership, he

⁹² Ibid., 166. According to McKenzie, David had a treaty with Talmai, king of Geshur since there was marriage between Maacah, Absalom's mother and David. Talmai was Absalom's grandfather.

⁹³ McKenzie, *King David* ., 169.

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does not consult any of his grown children. He does not involve them in the management of the Kingdom though he knows their desires and weaknesses.

Another mistake of David is the lack of attention and accountability given to his sons. David seems not to be aware of the plot and conspiracy of his son Absalom, though he was fomenting the rebellion. He did not have a frank discussion with Absalom about the murder of his brother Amnon and did not take any measures to punish his behavior. David avoided making room for his sons or shown some compassion towards them. The encounter between Absalom and David, after five years, is described by the author in one sentence: “David sent for Absalom, and Absalom came. He bowed very low, and David leaned over and kissed him.” (2 Samuel 14: 33). David avoided talking about the issue and kissed his son as a sign of a public reconciliation. It gives us a lesson about the importance of understanding the reasons behind the events, opening a safe space where rival parties can talk about their feelings and propose common solutions. The mistake of David is the thought that he can maintain his ideal political image by distancing himself from his son Absalom. David was not opened for discussion, it is either his opinion and success or the political success of his son.

David’s response to the rebellion of his son Absalom is flight. For the narrator, the rebellion of Absalom is the punishment of David because of his adultery with Bathsheba. David is in front of a dilemma: either kill his son or retreat for some time to avoid unnecessary blood-guilt. Barbara Green explains the dilemma in these terms: “David’s first plan is escape for survival, avoiding both being slain by his son, while also preventing his son from slaying him.”⁹⁴ David’s weakness can be understood as an attempt to save his sons from murder. He tries to teach a lesson to Absalom

⁹⁴ Barbara Green, *David’s Capacity for Compassion*, 221.

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by sending him away for 5 years, sending one of his counselors and friend, Hushai the Archite, to remain close to Absalom and spy on him (2 Sam 16 : 32- 37). David arranges with the sons of the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, to be his informants about the things that will happen in Jerusalem (2 Sam 15 : 27- 30). David does not want to kill his son Absalom due to his affection for him, though he knows that Absalom would kill him (2 Sam 16 : 11). In the final battle against Absalom, David wants to participate and command his army, however, his men refused. David asks his men to “deal gently with the young man Absalom” (2 Sam 18 : 6). For Alter, the Hebrew particle adverb *וְגַם* (2Sa 18:5 WTT) means to cover, to protect. It shows how much David cares for his sons, not only Amnon but also for Absalom. David wants to open the door for reconciliation with his son Absalom, but Joab decided otherwise. The text does not tell us about the intention of Joab and his deliberate act of killing the king’s son, however, it tells us about Joab’s grudge towards Absalom because he burned his fields.

The above analysis helps us sketch the complexity of David’s character and his divine patronage. Though David was chosen by God to become king and unite the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, he did not allow his men to harm another divine elect like Saul. David is a man of ambition, looking for fame and fortune⁹⁵ (1 Sam 17 : 25- 27) but also feigning humility (1 Sam 18. 18- 19, 23). He is also a warrior and a shrewd political officer who is able to make concessions, renouncing his plans to kill the males of the house of Nabal (1 Samuel 25) in order to maintain a political image. David plays the role of double agent of Israel/ Philistia, while taking advantage in the killing of the descendants of Saul. He uses his diplomatic skills to seek refuge with the Philistines in order to reinforce his position as the king of Judah. David is also portrayed as a weak

⁹⁵ Noll, *The Faces of David*, 52.

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king because he allows his stubborn and rebellious son Absalom to threaten his life. David also does not discipline some of his adversaries like Joab when he kills opponents on his behalf. Though David sacrifices the sons of Saul (2 Samuel 21: 1- 14), it seems like he does not take any pleasure in the killing of his opponents. He mourns the death of Abner and the son of Saul, Ishbaal. He punishes those who take the life of the chosen of God. David also has a pleasing effect on the people, winning the favor of foreign kings like King Achish of Gath (1 Sam 27- 29), King Hiram of Tyre (2 Samuel 5: 11) and Ittai the Gittite and his troops (2 Samuel 15: 19- 22). The providence of God in the success of David is worth mentioning. God intervenes in the death of Nabal, he blocks Ahitophel's advice in 2 Samuel 17: 14 and recommends Samuel to get anointed in Hebron. Above all, I wish to reiterate that David deals shrewdly with his opponents and avoids harming those favored by God. David is certainly not a positive example in every aspect. However, he can be a model for political leaders in the sense that he leaves room for negotiations. Some of his actions are warnings for leaders who plot the killing of their opponents.

Part 3: Application of the insights and teachings of the biblical election to the case study of Ivory Coast

3.1.Lessons and warnings learned from the narrative of Joseph and David

The literary analysis of the narrative of Joseph and David provides us with various lessons and warnings on leadership and the treatment of the opponents. The stories of David and Joseph give valuable lessons that can be applied to both family and political settings. I will first give a summary of the warnings and lessons drawn in the leadership of David and Joseph, then discuss them with the areas of improvement in Ivory Coast. The last part will be a reflection on some of the findings that I find important for the success of the political leadership in Africa.

4.1.Warnings in the leadership

The exegetical analysis of the narrative of David gives us warnings about some traits of the leader, the relationship of the leader with adversaries.

Negative traits of a leader

Concerning the skills of the leader, David gives us warning on traits such as dishonesty, duplicity and shrewdness. David has been applying a double standard vis-à-vis Saul's family. He promised Saul not to kill his family, but later kill all his descendants. David won popularity by defeating the Philistines, but later on hid in the camp of Philistines and became an important military strategist of their army. In Ivorian politics, leaders often use duplicity to deal with their opponents. They are not trustworthy with their words, and their actions do not corroborate their promises. A duplicitous leader who tells lies and does not keep his promises create more enmity and hatred. In Ivory Coast and many other countries, winning has become the supreme and most important goal,

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and people used deceit and duplicity to achieve their success. Rather than vilifying and defaming opponents through media, I do recommend that political leaders in Ivory Coast pay more attention to their words and actions. Leaders in Ivory Coast cannot build unity and collaboration across ethnic groups and different nationalities if they continue playing a double-dealing and duplicity politics.

Another warning trait of David is hypocrisy. David tries to abuse his power by threatening the rich Nabal, while keeping an image of good leader by punishing the killers of Saul, Jonathan and Ishbaal. David sidelines with the Philistines, the principal enemies of Israel, in order to regain and defeat Saul. He makes alliance with his opponents for his own benefits. The social and political crisis of Ivory Coast has the same challenges. Political elected officials change easily their friendship to enmity because of their interests. I do recommend that elected officials in Ivory Coast privilege accountability and transparency in reporting events. Though truth can be sensitive in politics and can cause harm and endanger lives, it is important for politics to avoid manipulating the truth for their own sake, distorting facts and cover-up their failures in order to stay in power. Ivorian leaders have to publicly acknowledge their failures and be accountable for their mistakes. Partial truths or facts have been used to manipulate historical beliefs, fears and the opinions of the citizens. Leaders are encouraged to stop blaming their adversaries or opponents for the insecurity, and instability in the country. Getting rid of hypocrisy means also avoiding using the rhetoric of the victim of former colonial powers and take the responsibility to name the evils and fight against it. The hypocrisy or half-truth is denounced by the professor in the school of Governance at the University of Witwatersrand William Gumede, in these terms:

“Many African leaders have used the bogey of former colonial powers supposedly coming back to colonise their countries and wanting to destabilise their countries as the sole reason for their own lack of performance,

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mismanagement and corruption. These include the belief that former colonial powers will try to control the former colonies – whether their resources, stunting their development or undermining their leaders – in new disguised ways. This is of course only part true.”⁹⁶ In other words, truth, accountability and self-awareness are very important traits of a good leader.

Warnings on the relationship with opponents

On the relationship of the leader with his adversaries, David adopts the policy of rewarding friends and punishing his enemies. In Ivory Coast, it is almost the same. Political leaders avoid criticizing their supporters and apply laws according to a double standard. David was reluctant to punish Joab for killing Abner, however, he killed the murderers of Ishbaal and Saul to set an example. David is also resentful towards Absalom, unforgiving and do not show mercy to his political rivals. These attitudes are often adopted by political leaders in Ivory Coast who often send to exile their opponents or attempts to their lives. In democratic Ivory Coast, there is a need of applying the rule of law to all citizens, supporters and adversaries. No one is above the law. Ivorian leaders can construct more unity and tolerance if they punish the wrong actions of their supporters. They should commit themselves to economic transparency, declaring their assets or property publicly, and hold organizations and individuals accountable. The respect of the rule of law and constitution must be applied to all. Ivorian leaders tend to change the constitution to their own advantages. By doing that, they create more instability in the country. Through a politic of accountability, leaders

⁹⁶ William Gumede, “African leaders are masters at ‘post-truth’ politics”, in Works Foundation, April 20, 2017, <https://www.democracyworks.org.za/african-leaders-are-masters-at-post-truth-politics/> (accessed on April 14, 2023).

takes responsibility to the people of the country for “abiding by the laws and the constitution and delivering policies in the public interest.”⁹⁷

4.2.Positive lessons from the leadership of Joseph and David

Self-awareness of the leader

An authentic leader is one who is aware of their values, emotions, identity and goals. Without self-awareness, Ivoirian leaders cannot create tolerance and unity among their citizens. The knowledge of oneself is important to achieve one’s mission. The understanding of one’s own identity gives meaning and purpose to the way “the elected” treat their adversaries. The self-knowledge of Joseph and David was not a once-and-for-all event, it developed over time. The divine elect understand progressively that their lives had a purpose. In addition, the divine elect were not chosen because of their righteousness or innocence. In the lives of Joseph and David, we recognize that they are both complex characters, capable of good and evil actions. A leader is not an idealistic person, but a normal person with their strengths and flaws. The elect learned progressively that their selfish actions did not help them assert their authority but, rather, created enmity among people. For example, Joseph’s focus on his glory created and nourished enmity among his brothers. Self-awareness for political leaders is to recognize publicly their strengths and weaknesses, accept to work on it rather than forcing to stay in power.

An important feature of the self-awareness is the growth of a leader through the challenges. What made Joseph efficient as prime minister in Egypt is the maturity acquired through the different difficulties he encountered. At the beginning of their mission, Joseph shows signs of pride,

⁹⁷ Agnès Callamard, “Accountability, Transparency, and Freedom of Expression in Africa,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (December 2010): 1213.

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selfishness and carelessness. He does not care about people's feelings and sensibility. Then, he experiences rejection, treason and often attempts at his life. The adversities encountered open the eyes of Joseph for the need to grow in humility and care for others. The imprisonment and treason of his brothers helps him realize his mistakes and correct his behavior. Similarly, David, as a fugitive and a deserter, has to rely on others for his survival.

Another lesson subsequent is that the divine elect will face opposition and adversity. The adversity may come often from the close collaborators, friends or brothers and from the enemies. The reasons of the enmity can be diverse: the competition for the same position of leadership, their own selfishness. Ivorian leaders also will have strong opponents and adversaries. However, it is not by eliminating them that they will achieve their goals. Ivorian leaders should be opened to dialogue with true opponents who seek the common good of the people, rather than their self-interests.

Another lesson is that a leader is not almighty, powerful; he is chosen freely by God. In other words, he cannot act purely according to his own will, but according to God's. If an elect is chosen freely by God, there is a mission attached to it. It is not for his own sake or pride, but for a higher and divine purpose. The elected, whether divinely or democratically chosen, has the duty to follow the agenda of their master. The free choice of God manifests itself through the election of the youngest, the weakest. The preference shown to the youngest signifies that it does not require a demonstration of strength or superiority in age in order to be a leader. The meek and lowliest are chosen not only for their capacity to learn and grow but also for their humble character. Humility is one of the characteristics of biblical election, giving sense to the identity of the elect and also to their mission. Joseph and David are chosen among many others that are stronger, more powerful

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and older than them. They have some predispositions to live a humble life and learn from others. Humility constitutes one of the principal feature of the elect. This humble character puts sometimes the elect in a position of vulnerability and weakness. Ivorian leaders need to be humble and understand that the power is given to them by the people, it can be also taken away.

Moreover, the narrative of David enlightens us that kingship is originally divine. God is the sovereign king over all the nations of the world and God delegates authority to humans. This was the reason behind the choice of David over Saul. God can choose another king as he wants if he is not governing according to God's will. According to John Lee Wittington, "the earthly king is seen as God's representative for enacting justice, ensuring peace, and cultivating prosperity."⁹⁸ The divine elect is not chosen to do his *own* will, but rather to govern *like God*: with compassion and care for others, ensuring peace and unity among the people.

Values and qualities of the leader

Some traits appear as fundamental in the election of Joseph and David: humility, patience and honesty.

Humility is a quality that opens the divine elect to new learning. If the divine elect does not possess the humility before the beginning of his mission, he will acquire it along the way. The humility of the divine elect is closely connected to an intimate relationship with God. The more the divine elect recognizes the presence and action of God in his talents and experience, the more he is able to succeed in his mission. Humility helps the divine elect to be elevated to a position of leadership. In the narrative of Joseph, Joseph was originally boastful but later recognizes God as the source of

⁹⁸ J Lee Whittington, *Biblical Perspectives on Leadership and Organizations*, First edition.. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 111.

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his talents, the one who possesses the right interpretation of dreams. He increasingly credited God for his actions rather than taking the credit himself. Humility also means that the divine elect recognizes that all their talents are coming from God and they must be accountable for it. It is an invitation for Ivoirian leaders to collaborate with God in the exercise of their power. Political leaders must understand their fallibility and the need to give room to a free media to investigate their actions without fear. They must allow also civil society to report, question and denounce so that the citizens may have their say in decisions taken.

Humility can help Ivoirian leaders to understand their citizen's feelings, their opinions and be aware of their needs. Without humility, political elected officials are not able to communicate with their adversaries and make concessions to them. A lack of communication and openness to dialogue suggests a lack of humility. Joseph's leadership recommends us that political leaders may be opened to dialogue and communication, the easier he succeeds in his mission.

Another important quality of the elect is that of patience. A divine elect is only able to achieve his mission with patience. The elect goes through different challenges and his patience is tested. Blessing only comes through patience. Joseph will spend thirteen years as slave or prisoner before being considered as a free man in Pharaoh's court. David has to flee from the anger and rage of Saul for a long time, he has to hide in the desert as a rebel and spend some years in exile before becoming king. The success and accomplishment of the divine elect does not happen smoothly, it comes through hardships.

4.3.The vision or purpose of the common good

A leader or an elect is chosen for a specific goal or purpose. The elect does not know the purpose immediately, he discovers it progressively. The purpose of an elect is not self-oriented but people-

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oriented. As we have pointed out in the second part of our work, Joseph and David are chosen to serve others and contribute to the salvation of all. In the narrative of Joseph, it comes clearly that the elect is meant to accomplish God's agenda. The purpose entails the "survival of many people". The divine purpose is first the good of the people and their safety. Regardless of the selfishness of the elect, God will accomplish God's purpose. Since it is God who chooses and sends the elect, God's divine plan is that the elect becomes a source of blessing for their people.

Leaders in Ivory Coast must pursue the fulfilment of their citizens, provide general wellbeing and promote the common good. The common good can be defined as the conditions and resources that can help people to live a happy and fulfilled life. It encompasses, according to *Gaudium et Spes*, the "sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and effective fulfillment."⁹⁹ In the biblical context, the divine elect is chosen to achieve unity, peace, well-being and the salvation of the people. Political officials also have the duty to seek peace, justice and prosperity of their citizens. In a contemporary African context, this can only happen through the promotion of social justice and job opportunities for young people.

In Akan society, a large tribe in Ivory Coast, the common good is defined in terms of peace, happiness, justice, dignity and respect. These values contribute to human fulfillment and the good of all the community. On the one hand, leaders should support social justice and equality for the vulnerable and, on the other hand, must denounce acts of murder and cruelty. This is made possible only through the elimination of social inequalities linked to racial and ethnic divisions. Political

⁹⁹ Vatican II, « Pastoral Constitution On the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*," *The Holy See*, December 7, 1965, accessed 23 March 2023, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

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leaders in Ivory Coast can tackle racial inequality by integrating people of different ethnic groups in the public administration in the way that Joseph integrated his Israelite brothers into the governance of Egypt. National institutions should reflect the diversity of the population and in the different circles of decisions in the country. Officials should be recruited not based on their ethnic groups but on pure merit.

The common good also entails the establishment of laws, rules and regulations that protect both the people and the economy. Unlike King David who attempts to kill Nabal and inherits his properties to gain more power, Ivoirian leaders should respect the laws and the constitutions and should not change the limitation of terms according to their interests and benefit. The leaders of Ivory Coast can pursue the common good by setting up a fair method of wealth distribution. For example, the African socialism Ujamaa of the Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere recommends to change policies that govern distribution of wealth in order to reduce the gap between poor and rich.¹⁰⁰ Like Joseph who applies taxes to all Egyptian in return of access to grain, Ivorian leaders should set policies that grants to all citizens a “minimum dignified living standard” in order to live a decent life.

Divine sponsor

Divine patronage is another key feature to understand the actions and mission of the elect. The success of the divine elect depends on their openness and obedience to God’s work in their life. God is the main sponsor who guides the elect in their mission and knows the challenges he will endure. God acts like a coach who makes sure that their protégé follows the directive. The divine

¹⁰⁰ Ebenezer Obadare author and Wale Adebawale author, *Governance and the Crisis of Rule in Contemporary Africa: Leadership in Transformation*, African histories and modernities (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 77.

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sponsor's blessing helps the elect to overcome the challenges on the way. For example, in the story of Joseph, God's presence is not denied to Joseph even though he was not always attentive. The sponsorship of God does not depend on the success of the elect. Rather, it brings success to the elect. The divine presence defines the goal of the mission and his presence reassures the elect that he is on the right path.

Sometimes, the divine sponsor takes the blame for the wrongdoings of the elect. He plays the role of the advocate of the elect and carries justice on his behalf. In David's narrative, God strikes Nabal dead after the misunderstandings with David. God often comes to the defense of the elect, but also punishes the elect whenever he takes wrong decisions. Judiciary power in Ivory Coast should create checks and balance in order to hold officials accountable for their misdeeds and punish their wrong decisions.

Emotional sensibility

The leadership of the divine elect can be assessed through their ability to be sensitive in their treatment of others. The divine elect is able to understand people's feelings and emotions and respond to that in a positive way. During his interaction with his brothers, Joseph weeps seven times. His tears demonstrate not only his care for his younger brother Benjamin, but also the change that is happening in the hearts of his brothers. The divine elect is sensitive to the emotions of others and may show compassion. David also showed loving compassion for his rebellious son Absalom, and asked his men not to harm him. The capacity for the leader to grieve when his loved ones are killed reveals his unique vulnerability and his humanity. Compassion is a quality that is important in the way the elect treats others, especially his opponents. Despite the killing of the

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descendants of Saul, David shows mercy to the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth by sparing his life and allowing him to eat at his table, thus assuring his well-being.

Warnings in political leadership in Ivory Coast

In the first part of this thesis, we have pointed out the failures of leadership in Ivory Coast. We have investigated the involvement of the politically elected in the exacerbation of ethnic conflicts, unjust sharing of economic resources and the misuse of security forces in Ivory Coast. There is a strong connection between poor leadership, conflict and instability. Political leaders have played an important role in the distribution of resources, the ethnic conflicts and political agenda in the country. Their leadership is often organized around ethnic or tribal influence and it is often based on the cult of their personality and charisma.

The work of Maryke Botha gives a succinct summary of six leadership behavioural patterns that lead to conflict¹⁰¹: Firstly she names political deprivation - the different decisions made to prevent and restrict other political officials to participate in elections. As a result of political deprivation, some political opponents have been executed, detained and their rights abused. The second behavior is the patronage and clientelism which sees the accumulation of economic resources in the hands of the leader and helps them amass a personal fortune. With their fortunes, the leaders have the state and private sector as their clients and promote their collaborators according to friendship, kinship or ethnic belonging. The third behavioral pattern is the personalization of power, where presidents consider themselves to be the only people capable of

¹⁰¹ Maryke Botha, "African Leadership And The Role Of The Presidency In African Conflicts : A Case Study Of Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni", Thesis MA, Stellenbosch University, 2012, <http://scholar.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.1/20401?show=full> (consulted on 23 March 2023).

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solving the country's problems; silencing all opposition and censoring critics. The fourth behavior is the use of the military to conserve and maintain their power and dominance over civilians. The leaders manipulate ethnic groups to serve their interests and appeal to their kinsmen for support in the army. The army is ethnically polarized and serves as a means to keep power. The fifth behavior is the struggle of many leaders to stay in office despite the limitation of their terms. They are reluctant to leave office and usually thwart the constitution in order to become "presidents for life". The final behavior of weak political leadership is their engagement in actions that undermine economic and human development. Economic policies, especially ones concerning the granting of lands to a part of the population. Government leaders also fail to generate basic goods and provide employment for their citizens. Weak leaders also fail to establish laws against corrupt behavior of political officials.

In order to counter the political behaviors that weaken the leadership in Africa, and Ivory Coast in particular, we can apply some of the lessons drawn from the biblical analysis of the leadership of Joseph and David. Ivorian leaders must share the sole vision of the common good and well-being of their citizens, being accountable of their use of power and show mercy and compassion to their adversaries.

4.4. Interplay between divine elect and political elect

At this point it is important to consider the intersection of the political elect and divine elect in our contemporary society. Though these elect come from different contexts and backgrounds, they share similar features in terms of the delegation of their power, the goal of their mission and the qualities of their leadership.

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The political elect and the divine elect do not own their power. The power has been handed to them either by God (divine elect) or by the people (political elected). One cannot choose to become an elected official. One is given the power to rule over others and needs to be accountable for that. Some people are selected to accomplish a mission for the sake of others. Being an elect signifies being chosen and it entails some responsibilities and duties. Though a divine elect or a political elect may have more power than others, they are called to ensure the respect of others' rights. There is a necessity of being accountable and transparent to the power entrusted by the people.

The divine elect and political leaders also share a common goal: the welfare and well-being of the people. A good political leader should use their power to establish policies and make decisions that can have a major impact on the nation's well-being. Similarly, God entrusts the divine elect the mission of salvation of the people, unity among them, peace and justice. Divine elect and political elect should strive for the betterment of the people they are serving. The goal of their election is not for their short-term personal gains, but for the care of their community.

Essential qualities required for the work of a divine elect are humility, strong communication skills, attentive listening and patience in the face of challenges. A good political leader also needs to be a good communicator, a person who is able to listen to others, and communicate a vision. A political leader must also be a mature person who learns from their failures and challenges. In other words, there are many points that intersect between divine election and political election. Lessons from the biblical election of Joseph and David can give us more insights about how the political elect should carry out their missions and rule their countries.

4.5. The learning process of a political leader

One of the biblical lessons that we have mentioned earlier is the growth and maturity of the leader in their overcoming of challenges. Equally, in the Ivorian context, leaders can resolve conflicts better by learning from their mistakes, wrong choices or challenges they face.

A great challenge to Ivorian leaders is the public recognition of their weaknesses. In the first chapter, I pointed out that Ivorian leaders keep repeating the same mistakes and errors of their predecessors. For an authentic leadership in Ivory Coast, it is very important to cultivate a habit of self-evaluation and self-awareness. Ivorian leaders must understand that being elected is not merely a one-off event; it is “a never-ending work in progress that draws on continually maturing self-understanding.”¹⁰² Ivorian leaders tend to understand their election as a one-time achievement. They are not accountable to anyone and institutions must follow them. Though people criticize their leadership and call them to pay attention to the burning issues of society, they often do not listen to them. Constant self-evaluation and ongoing consideration of the necessary changes to society requires growth and maturity from the leader. Ivorian leaders need to understand who they are and what they value. Without self-awareness - as we see in the narrative of Joseph - it will be hard for Ivorian leaders to become aware of the injustices and inequalities they foster in society. For example, due to the growing effect of ethnic inequalities in the country, an Ivorian leader should be keen to establish policies that counter these inequalities, and be sensitive to their own speeches and actions that propagate such inequalities.

¹⁰² Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 20.

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Ivorian leaders can gain self-awareness by learning to become mediators. The work of reconciliation is not possible without acquiring skills of negotiation, mediation and patience. Ivorian leaders must learn how to communicate with other protagonists, listen to them and consider their ideas and remarks such as Joseph learns not only from his brothers but also listen to the remarks of Pharaoh. Most of the leaders do not cultivate their communication skills and then fail to resolve conflicts. Reconciliation should become an attitude cultivated by Ivorian leaders.

Moreover, only leaders who can both pinpoint to their weaknesses and the challenges of the country can conquer them. Most of the Ivorian leaders, those elected or those in opposition, rarely assume their vulnerability in a public space like David who often polishes his image. They often accuse others of being the source of their problems and rarely assess their own performance. Ivorian leaders can resolve conflicts in the country by creating the habit of continuous learning from their opponents, self-evaluating their performance and taking into consideration the criticisms of their opponents.

4.6.The African palaver, a way of managing conflicts

The African palaver, which seems close to Joseph's way of dialogue with his brothers, can be a model to manage and resolve conflicts in Ivory Coast among the different leaders. In the story of Joseph, we learn how Joseph tested his brothers and made room for discussion, allowing them to show their true intentions. In the political context of Ivory Coast, healing words of tolerance spoken in public spaces can help to resolve conflicts and enhance authentic leadership.

The palaver is a technical term, derived from Portuguese word "palavra" which means a discussion between tribal people and traders. It is a "participative community debate with the aim of finding

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solutions to pressing individual, family, and community issues.”¹⁰³ The palaver happens under a tree or in an open courtyard in order to allow the participation of all people in a public space. Under the palaver tree, words are privileged and people should respect each other. More than a mere informative and limited meeting, palaver goes further and discusses the root causes of the issues of the community, “lively discussions and binding resolutions.”¹⁰⁴ Unlike the discussion between Joseph and his brothers, the palaver is not led by the chief, but a group of wise elders who are respected, well-known and care for the well-being of the community. The community members have the opportunity to voice their sufferings and the leaders of the community should listen to them in order to safeguard and implement the necessary changes. Through the palaver process, community members become the primary custodians of community values.¹⁰⁵ In the Ivorian context, the African palaver can aid the reconciliation process through the use of healing words. Under the palaver tree, words are very sensitive and should promote the harmony of human relationships. Healing words help to diffuse conflicts and encourage equality, justice and peace. For Francis Oborji, “healing words are seen as abiding for the living because the community’s way out, through healing and reconciliation, depends upon them.”¹⁰⁶ The aim of healing words is to bring not only tolerance among the living but also the ancestors and create peace in the community.

As we have identified earlier in the life of David and Joseph, conflicts are part of the life of a leader. What makes a good leader is the way they manage and resolve conflict. Ivorian leaders lack this important approach, finding it difficult to make room for others and resolve conflicts. In

¹⁰³ Francis Anekwe Oborji, “The African Palaver Reconciliation Model and Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 109, no. 2 (November 2020): 226.

¹⁰⁴ Francis Anekwe Oborji, “The African Palaver Reconciliation Model and Mission,” 227.

¹⁰⁵ Richard K. Chelimo, *Reconciliation in the 21st Century: African Palaver as a Reconciliation Model* (Limuru, Kenya: Kolbe Press, 2013), 10–11.

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the political realm, it is easy to make opponents and adversaries. Opponents are also looking for opportunities of weakness to seize the power. Ivorian leaders need to learn from the behavior and strategies of their political opponents. Different attempts of mediation have failed because the leaders did not reveal their true intentions and their advantages. Leaders need to know their adversaries and test their intentions, while bringing them to the table of dialogue and discussion. As Joseph was testing his brothers to know their true intentions, political leaders need to test and examine their opponents and adversaries for their real intentions, in order to seek for the common good.

Ivorian leaders can manage conflicts by firstly defining the main problems in the country by collecting the facts through discussions with their opponents about the different solutions to the issues of the country. Joseph at the end of his life tells clearly his brothers that their harm was transformed by God into a blessing for all. Conflict management is impossible without an open communication and dialogue between the different protagonists. Such a dialogue will help adversaries to evaluate the various solutions to the issues in the country, decide on the suitable solution and then implement the necessary strategies. In the exercise of dialogue and discussion, healing words of reconciliation should be prioritized for the well-being of the community.

4.7. The journey of forgiveness

Another lesson from the narratives of Joseph and David that can help the political context of Ivory Coast is that tolerance and forgiveness among opponents is and should be an ongoing process. In the Ivorian context, many mediations were conducted to ease the tensions between political officials. These mediations have the goal to ease the anger of people immediately after elections. They are conflict-oriented. A true reconciliation targets the transformation of relationships and the

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commitment of protagonists to collaborate together for the common good despite their differences. Ivorian leaders often think about reconciliation as an achieved process that experts and mediators can help to attain. Robert Schreiter, professor of doctrinal theology, notices that the world's experience of reconciliation always seems incomplete because there are always people who have gone unpunished, those who are still mired in suffering, and the dead whom we cannot bring back. Drawing from the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, Schreiter sustains that full reconciliation will occur at the end of time when God will gather all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth (Eph 1: 9- 10). Full reconciliation is not attainable through human efforts, but only with God. For Schreiter, God initiates and fulfills the reconciliation process because the work of reconciliation ultimately surpasses human capacity.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the different attempts of mediation and reconciliation in Ivory Coast have been unsuccessful because people's needs were not met. Broken relationships can have far-reaching implications and all damage, small or serious, must be addressed. For Schreiter, social reconciliation often fails to grasp the nature and extent of the damage of conflicts, the reluctance of conflict parties to move to another stage and other external factors. There is a need to bring prayer into the process of reconciliation in Ivory Coast in order to listen and be more receptive to the sensibility within us and to the voice of God.

¹⁰⁷ Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, Boston Theological Institute series ; v. 3 (Maryknoll, N.Y. : Cambridge, Mass.: Orbis Books ; Boston Theological Institute, 1992).

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Conclusion

The exegetical analysis of the narrative of Joseph and David offers rich insights and lessons on biblical leadership, the mission and goal of the elect and some key traits needed for the success of the mission and the interaction with adversaries. Joseph and David teach us the divine elect is a person who is complex, both good and evil. They have been chosen not because of their ideal life or a good background, but for the sake of others. Their power comes from God, so they should be accountable to that. Similarly for the politics in Ivory Coast. The election of Joseph and David also emphasizes the importance of the self-awareness of the leader, the need of humility in order to evaluate oneself and learn from the challenges and conflicts occurring along the way. The biblical elect put the needs of other people before their own and pursue the ultimate goal of the unity, justice and peace. Joseph gives us powerful lessons of collaboration with people across national boundaries such as the Egyptians and the need to do the same in Ivory Coast among the different ethnic groups. Without tolerance and forgiveness, Joseph could have not lived with his brothers in Egypt. David gives us warnings about being resentful, unforgiving towards his rebellious son Absalom. We learn also from David that duplicity, deceit and dishonesty, impulsivity create more harm than unity among people. There is abuse of power when a leader is not merciful towards his political rivals like David towards the descendants of Saul. In Ivory Coast where leadership is often associated with the exercise of power and authority, biblical leadership reminds us that, rather than pursuing personal gain, the duty of the leader is to serve others and be open to dialogue and mediation with their adversaries.

Conflicts are the lot of a leader. Ivorian political leaders face different challenges and adversaries while carrying out their duties. Leaders do not shy away from conflicts but welcome them as an

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opportunity to reorganize their priorities and care for the welfare of their citizens. As seen in the narratives of Joseph and David, challenges help the elect to become mature and successful in their mission. Since leaders are not born with natural talents to manage conflicts, it is important that political leaders learn conflict resolution strategies and different ways to implement them. A safe space of dialogue and discussion is needed in order to build trust in adversaries and find solutions for all. What makes a successful leader is not that he is good or bad, rather, he learns from his mistakes and challenges and be open to dialogue, tolerance and collaboration with his adversaries.

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