Mephibosheth (Person)

1. Introduction

In 2 Sam, there are two figures, a son and a grandson of Saul, who are both called Mephibosheth (MT *Mĕpîbōšet*). The meaning of the name is a matter of debate, as is the case with Ishboshet. Is it a composition of the word for "mouth" (*peh*) with a theophoric element *bšt*, in Akkadian *bāštu* ("protective spirit," recently Schorch: 599–600), or is the second element *bōšet* (shame) a dysphemic way of avoiding the name Baal (recently Müller: 111–12)? The name *Mĕrîb Baʿal* (either "Baal is my advocate" or "impugning Baal") in 1 Chr 8:34; 9:40a or *Mĕrî-Baʿal* (baal is my lord/sweet) support the latter option. Matters are made more complicated when examining 2 Sam in the Greek which not only has Μεμφιβοσθε, but also Μεμφιβααλ (GL). For this reason, some scholars have claimed that the original name was *mĕpîbaʿal* ("Baal is speaking"; Stoebe: 146). Others claim that *mĕpîbaʿal* was the name of Saul's son (2 Sam 21:8) whereas Jonathan's son was called *Mĕrî-Baʿal* before both names were conflated (Edelman: 697).

Bibliography: ■ Edelman, D. V., "Mephibosheth," *ABD* 4 (New York 1992) 696–97. ■ Müller, R., "Das theophore Element '-Baal' zwischen Samuel und Chronik," in *Rereading the relecture?* (ed. U. Becker/H. Bezzel; FAT.2 107; Tübingen 2014) 107–29. ■ Schorch, S., "Baal oder Boschet? Ein umstrittenes theophores Element zwischen Religions- und Textgeschichte," *ZAW* 112 (2000) 598–611. ■ Stoebe, H. J., *Das zweite Buch Samuelis* (KAT 8/2; Gütersloh 1994).

2. Son of Saul

In 2 Sam 21:8 (MT), a son of Saul called Mephibosheth is explicitly mentioned. He is one of the two sons of Rizpah, and is executed on behalf of the Gibeonites along with his brother Armoni and five nephews in order to end a long-lasting famine. In 2 Sam 4:1, 2, 12 LXX and 4Q51, he is spoken of as well – this is most probably due to an error (McCarter: 124). The fact that in 2 Sam 9aγ Saul is called his "father" and in 2 Sam 19:25 Mephibosheth is addressed as "son of Saul" (*ben-Šāʾûl*, cf. 2 Sam 9:9–10; 16:3) led Veijola to the hypothesis that a son of Saul was later turned into a son of Jonathan with the purpose of highlighting David's loyalty to the prince (Veijola: 74). Second Samuel 21:7, most probably a scribal gloss, clearly seeks to differentiate between both name-bearers. Nevertheless the entire passage of 2 Sam 21:1–14 appears to be a rather late and multi-layered addition to the

David-story (Bezzel: 199–206) which rather undermines the idea of establishing historical hypotheses on the basis of this chapter.

Bibliography: ▪ Bezzel, H., "Chronistisch beeinflusste Korrekturen am Bild Sauls in den Samuelbüchern," in *Rereading the relecture?* (ed. U. Becker/id.; FAT.2 66; Tübingen 2014) 183–214. ▪ McCarter, P. K., *II Samuel* (AB 9; Garden City, N.Y. 1984). ▪ Veijola, T., "David und Meribaal" [1978], in id., *David: Gesammelte Studien zu den Davidüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments* (SESJ 52; Helsinki/Göttingen 1990) 58–83.

3. Son of Jonathan

Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan, is introduced in 2 Sam 4:4, and mentioned again in 2 Sam 9; 16, and 19 (see "Mephibosheth [Son of Jonathan]").

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See also → David; → Jonathan (Son of Saul); → Mephibosheth (Son of Jonathan); → Saul