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Articles Studia Iuridica Lublinensia vol. XXVII, 4, 2018
DOI: 10.17951/sil.2018.27.4.51-70

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A Political Upheaval as a Form of Succession of the Royal Power in the United Monarchy of Israel. From Saul to Solomon

Przewrót polityczny jako forma sukcesji władzy królewskiej w monarchii zjednoczonej Izraela. Od Saula do Salomona

SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to analyse the issues related to a political upheaval as a form of the succession of royal power in the monarchy of united Israel in the period that started during the reign of the first king of the Hebrews – Saul – till the last years David spent on the throne. During the period analysed in this article, there were several unsuccessful attempts to seize power through a political coup. Due to the fact that the inheritance based on the principle of primogeniture was never unambiguously introduced in the Kingdom of Israel, the most serious upheaval, described as a palace revolution, took place at the end of King David's life. As a result, the younger son of David – Solomon – ascended to Israel's throne, despite the fact that there were no legitimate grounds for him to take power.

Keywords: monarchy; Bible; Israel; royal power; political upheaval; *coup d'état*; King David; Absalom; Adonijah; Solomon; anointment

INTRODUCTION

A political upheaval is a sudden change of those in power. Such a situation may concern the entire political system or only its part and may consist in the creation or abolition of a part of the state authority. There are two basic forms of political upheaval: (1) a *coup d'état* – carried out by a person or a group of people from the circle or layer of authority, whose technique is a military of paramilitary conspir-

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acy[1]; and (2) a putsch – an upheaval carried out by a person or group distant from the authority, "political outsiders"[2]. Both are characterised by the use of violence but without any major territorial or social consequences and without long-term armed activities.

Interestingly, as early as in Antiquity a political upheaval was considered more dangerous for the security of the state and its citizens than a war with external enemies. Plato refers to a political upheaval as a rebellion, describing it as "the most bitter of all wars"[3]. Typically, the reasons behind a political upheaval lie in the desire for profit, honours and, above all, power. Aristotle claimed that if those in power commit violent acts and chase profits, it leads to a rebellion both against those in power and the political system that allows them to do so, regardless whether their lust is directed at the private or state property[4].

In the history of our civilisation since the biblical times, there are many actual situations which are classified by scholars as a political upheaval – despite that the fact that in the past this term was known in its modern meaning[5]. Many examples of political upheavals can be found in Ancient Greece and Rome. In the Senatorial milieu in Rome and in the Roman army, resistance to the reigning regime was frequent. For the opposition and the potential counter-candidates of the "dynastic" ruler, the only way to seize power was to use violence[6].

For the purposes of this analysis, I shall adopt the modern concept of the forms of a political upheaval (*coup d'état*, palace revolution, putsch) and I shall sometimes use these terms interchangeably with a wider concept, namely the concept of rebellion, understood as rising against the authority, or even more broadly – as resistance against the authority. In view of the above, during the period of the united Israeli monarchy in question one may indicate: (1) an attempt to carry out a coup during the reign of the first king if Israelites – Saul, i.e. David's conspiratorial activity; (2)

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[1] In the past centuries, a form of a *coup d'état* was a palace revolution, which was usually a work of several people directly related (e.g. by blood ties) to the ruler, usually carried out without the use of violence. Palace revolutions were carried out in, i.a., Persia, Rome and Byzantium. In later times it happened only occasionally (e.g. the palace revolution of Catherine II in 1762). In addition, M. Bankowicz identifies an "auto-upheaval" (*autogolpe*), also known as a "white *coup d'état*". See M. Bankowicz, *Zamach stanu. Studium teoretyczne*, Kraków 2009, p. 30.

[2] J. Baszkiewicz, *Wolność, równość, własność*, Warszawa 1981, p. 19.

[3] Platon, *Prawa*, Kraków 1960, 629d, pp. 11–12.

[4] Arystoteles, *Polityka*, Warszawa 1964, p. 202.

[5] It should be borne in mind that a political upheaval (*coup d'état*, putsch) differs from a revolution in that there are no transformations of the class base of the system. A political upheaval usually involves changes in the personnel structure (palace revolution), but in the case of a classical *coup d'état*, "this may also mean a one-off violation of the principles of the political system, after which everything returns to the old track". See J. Baszkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.

[6] A. Łukaszewicz, *Rok 41 – Rzym i Aleksandria*, [in:] *Zamach stanu w dawnych społecznościach*, red. A. Sołtysiak, Warszawa 2004, p. 115.

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the coop staged by Absalom, King David's son; (3) coup led by Sheba during the reign of King David; (4) the palace revolution staged by Solomon, King David's son, at the end of his father's life.

THE CREATION AND BEGINNINGS OF A UNITED MONARCHY IN ISRAEL

For a long time, the Hebrews did not organise a monarchy[7], and the rulers in the pre-monarchic period led war expeditions (Judgs 2:16; 3:10), ruled the state (Judges 10:3; 12:7) and administered justice (Judges 4:4)[8]. F. Tryl emphasises that:

> Designating the ruler was not a normal custom in Antiquity – it is documented only in the case of the Hittite rulers. There are also attempts to compare it with the way the Canaanite rules who were Pharaoh's vassals were designated – they were also appointed after the fall of the Egyptian rule. The rulers appointed in such a way were, in a sense, *primus inter pares*, and their power was to some extent limited. The success of the leader was related to his authority and charisma, and therefore it was the community which elected its leader and became dependent on him. At the same time, the leader was dependent on the community until his function became an institutionalised office[9].

However, in the eyes of the supporters of the royal power, the pre-monarchic period deserved reprimand and the reason was that much evil happened because "Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21:25). This meant, according to T. Hergesel, that royal power became necessary[10], which nevertheless does not actually explain the reasons why monarchy was created[11]. It seems that

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[7] J. Wolski (*Historia powszechna. Starożytność*, Warszawa 2002, p. 71) writes that "The creation of the kingdom was accompanied by internal battles, as a result of which the monarchy gradually developed".

[8] All references to the Old Testament come from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, www.biblestudytools.com/niv [access: 10.09.2018].

[9] F. Tryl, *Od Otniela do Saula. Początki państwowości izraelskiej*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 2005, nr 1, DOI: https://doi.org/10.21906/rbl.569, p. 21. In M. Kuryłowicz's (*Prawa antyczne. Wykłady z historii najstarszych praw świata*, Lublin 2006, p. 103) opinion "However, when discussing the historical development of Israel, it is difficult to talk about a clearly shaped, uniform concept of the state. The guiding idea was theocracy". Cf. G.P. Miller, *Monarchy in the Hebrew Bible*, "NYU School of Law, Public Law Research Paper" 2010, No. 10-76, DOI: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1694532, p. 7.

[10] T. Hergesel, *Rozumieć Biblię: Stary Testament*, Kraków 1992, p. 128.

[11] There is a well-known text of Samuel 8:4 which says that the sons of prophet Samuel distorted the old state system, which outraged the people. The Israelites found Samuel in the town of Armat and asked him "to appoint a king among them to govern the nation and to bring revenge on the Philistines, who had not yet paid the Hebrews for all the harm they had done". See J. Flawiusz, *Daw Dawne dzieje Izraela*, cz. 1, Warszawa 1993, 6, 35.

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the main reason the kingdom was created was the threat posed by the Philistines (1 Samuel 8:20) and also the Ammonites[12].

The unification of Israeli tribes into a real, strongly consolidated community was therefore aimed at resisting this danger[13]. W. Keller claims that already at that time, under the external pressure, a single Israeli nation was created. A. Lemaire has a different view and argues that it was only during the rule of David that we may first see the emergence of Israel as a nation. This is when a loose confederation of tribes obtained a strong leadership which was confirmed by the king, army, royal court, vast territory and relations with the neighbouring countries[14].

The choice of the first king of the Hebrews fell on Saul (ca. 1030–1009 BC), the son of Kish, who was a landowner from the tribe of Benjamin, famous for bravery and imposing physique. This considered to be a far-sighted decision as he belonged to the weakest tribe (1 Samuel 9:21) so his ascension to the throne was supposed to prevent possible strife between the stronger tribes which could have claimed the right to the throne[15].

As pointed out by J.B. Łach, the Holy Scripture, when describing the choice of Saul as the king, states that first a draw was held (1 Samuel 10:21–23). Its aim was to identify the candidate. The sacred lots *urim* and *thumim* ("light and perfection"), stored in the high priest's pectoral, decided who was to be anointed as the king, and in the Old Testament we come across three different traditions of the election of Saul as the first ruler of Israel[16]. In the later texts, God's will was expressed by the people, especially its older representatives, and they decided who was to serve the function of "Yahweh's Anointed"[17]. The role and the form of anointment itself will be discussed further in this article.

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[12] A. Piwowar, *Historia Izraela czasów Starego Testamentu. Od patriarchów do podboju przez Rzymian*, Lublin 2013, p. 81.

[13] W. Keller, *Śladami Biblii. Stary Testament w świetle badań naukowych*, Kielce 1998, p. 180.

[14] A. Lemaire, *Zjednoczona monarchia*, [in:] *Starożytny Izrael: od Abrahama do zburzenia Świątyni Jerozolimskiej przez Rzymian*, red. H. Shanks, Warszawa 2007, p. 159. A similar view is presented by A. Piwowar, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

[15] W. Keller, *op. cit.*, p. 180. However, elsewhere Keller (*ibidem*, p. 193) writes that the formation of uniform state authority thanks to David let to the creation of a single nation from a loose union of tribes.

[16] The first tradition is included in 1 Samuel 9:3–10:16 (Saul searches for his father's sheep and goes to prophet Samuel, who anoints prince. Another tradition is included in 1 Samuel 10:17–27 (in Mizpah, Samuel throws lots to chose the king and Saul is selected). The last tradition is included in 1 Samuel 11–15 (Saul, commanding Israeli troops, saves Jabesh in Gilead threatened by the Ammonites and the people pronounce him king in Gilgal). In Piwowar's (*op. cit*., p. 85) opinion the last tradition is most credible form the historical point of view.

[17] J.B. Łach, *Księgi 1–2 Królów. Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu*, t. IV-2, Poznań 2007, p. 145.

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When adopting the institution of the kingdom[18], Israel also adopted its pagan theory and the ritual model of expressing it, allegedly widespread among all its neighbours, which in J. Bright's opinion meant that:

> […] the king was considered to be a divine or a semi-divine being which, when appearing on the occasion of the New Year as a god of fertility, dying and rising to life, recreated the struggle of creation and victory over the forces of chaos, sacred marriage and the God's ascension to his throne again. In this way, as it was imagined, the annual awakening of nature to life, the prosperity of the country and the king's place on the throne in the following year were ensured[19].

However, this author strongly expresses his opinion in this respect, stating that:

> There is no real proof of the existence of at least one such ritual model and the theory of kingdom in the entire ancient world and there is much evidence to the contrary. It is not possible that a structure essentially so pagan and so much incompatible with the normative Yahwism could be adopted in Israel without violent opposition. And it is precisely this topic that cannot be found in prophets' statements, even if they are subjected to the most thorough analysis[20].

The king of Israel is called a "son" of Yahweh but only – as emphasised by Bright – in an adoptive sense (Psalm 2:7). The king, as Yahweh's governor, held the rule of God's choice and with God's tolerance, and was obliged to guard justice under the threat of punishment (Psalm 72:1–4, 12–14; 89:30–32). At the same time, the king was subject to the reprimands of Jahweh's prophets and he received them again and again. As Bright points out:

> It is of course quite possible that this outline of the royal ideology was borrowed; after all the Israeli monarchy was an innovation, which did not have domestic precedences. A country which absorbed thousands of Canaans, which largely based its bureaucracy on foreign models and whose national temple was built in the Canaan fashion undoubtedly borrowed both the features of its cult and its ideal of kingdom. However, all the borrowings were harmonised, at least in the official milieus, with normative Yahvism[21].

The king became a symbol, which – as Bright writes – led in Israel to the expectation of the Messiah which had a tremendous impact on the formation of Israel's faith and history in the following centuries[22]. On the other hand, the integration of the state and worship and the imposition of divine sanctions on the state had

[18] However, D. Fleming points out that "It is not clear that the Israelite material for Saul even identified him as a »king«, so that the Bible may preserve no Israelite account of how its own monarchy arose as an institution". See D. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition*, Cambridge 2012, p. 175.

[19] J. Bright, *Historia Izraela*, Warszawa 1994, p. 231.

[20] *Ibidem*.

[21] *Ibidem*, s. 232.

[22] *Ibidem*, s. 233.

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consequences which turned out to be not entirely positive[23]. Furthermore, some people, idealising the old order, rejected the new order as a rebellion against God (1 Samuel 8:12). However, it was not possible to return to pre-monarchic relations and probably not many people expected such possibility. It should be emphasised that monarchy was not an institution all Israelites were ready to adopt as something natural. There were still people in Israel who remembered the time when it had not existed and had witnessed its establishment. It thus remained a problematic institution which faced divergent judgements in Israel[24].

It is difficult to determine precisely how long King Saul's rule lasted. According to 1 Samuel 13:1 it was a period of 2 years whereas according to 1 Samuel 27:7 it lasted for 1 year and 4 months. However, as pointed out by A. Piwowar: "[…] some commentators correct the text and state that he ruled for 22 years"[25].

After the first king of Israelites died in the battle of Gilboa, David was anointed king over the tribe of Judah (2 Samuel 2:2–4). David had served as a mercenary in the army of the Philistines, who were the greatest enemy of Israel. J. Warzecha even claims that David became a vassal of the Philistines:

> During the reign of Saul, David not only showed loyalty to him but also took steps aimed at seizing power. Undoubtedly, it was the aim of the cooperation with the Philistines (as a vassal), marring Saul's daughter Michal, benefits to Judah's generation and economic independence from the tribes. These circumstances made it considerably easier for him to take up and perform the function of king and, after some time, over all generations[26].

Piwowar draws attention to the thesis put forward in the relevant literature that supposedly "David was the leader of the opposition against Saul's rule and that most probably he appeared in his court as a young and gifted soldier whose achievements and fame soon surpassed the king himself"[27], which led to David's exile as he was considered a personal enemy of the first king of Israelis.

After Saul's death, David used the fact that he was a respected hero and military leader with a high status to become the king of Israel[28]. M. Grant points out that "David's huge successes seemed to indicate that Yahweh showed him special favour.

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[23] *Ibidem*.

[24] *Ibidem*.

[25] A. Piwowar, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[26] J. Warzecha, *Historia dawnego Izraela*, Warszawa 2005, p. 156. Cf. W. Dietrich, *The Early Monarchy in Israel: The Tenth Century B.C.E.*, Atlanta 2007, pp. 178–179; P. Śpiewak, *Klęska Saula*, „Tygodnik Powszechny" 2017, nr 27.

[27] A. Piwowar, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[28] Cf. H. Ewald, *The Rise and Splendour of the Hebrew Monarchy*, London 1871, pp. 109–110; P. Śpiewak, *Dawid królem*, „Tygodnik Powszechny" 2017, nr 39.

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This created a situation which the king fully exploited, interpreting his royal status in religious categories and claiming that his power was granted by God's grace"[29].

Initially, David tried to win the favour of the house of Saul. He even married – as mentioned above – Saul's daughter Michal[30]. He also invited Meribbaall (Mephibosheth) – a cripple who was the heir of Saul – to his table. Finally, however, David abandoned Michal because "she had no children to the day of her death" (2 Samuel 6:23). When David then allowed the Gibeonites to take revenge on the seven descendants of Saul, reconciliation between the two families, David's and Saul's, was no longer possible (2 Samuel 21:1–14).

The Old Testament describes David's reign in detail (1 Samuel 16 – 1 Kings 2:11). His long rule ("he ruled Israel for 40 years, seven and a half years in Hebron and 33 years in Jerusalem" – ca. 1009/1001–969 BC) was later considered to be the "golden age" in the history of Israel and David as a model king and the ideal of the ruler[31].

KING'S DAVID REIGN: THE REBELLIONS OF ABSALOM AND SHEBA

From the perspective of the subject of this analysis, the most important events in the period preceding the seizure of power by Salomon – David's son – are two attempts at a political upheaval (rebellion), whose aim was to split the monarchy unified under David's rule[32].

The first, and the most serious crisis[33], known as Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 13–19) was initiated by Absalom, a son of David and an Aramaic princess from Geshur, Talmai's daughter (2 Samuel 3:3). The event that started the conflict between David and Absalom was the rape on David's daughter Tamar, committed by her step-brother Amnon (Absalom and Tamar had the same mother), David's eldest son. However, the conflict that the Bible describes had its source, according to S.L. McKenzie, in the personalities of David and his sons: Amnon and Absalom[34]. Absalom waited for 2 years for the suitable moment to take revenge for his

[29] T. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-dynastic Ideology*, Berlin–New York 1977, pp. 56–57; M. Grant, *Dzieje dawnego Izraela*, Warszawa 1991, p. 103.

[30] D.L. Jacobson, *And Then There Were the Women in His Life: David and His Women*, "World & World" 2003, No. 4, pp. 404–405.

[31] A. Piwowar, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

[32] However, as Ł. Niesiołowski-Spanò (*Pisanie dziejów Izraela*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 2003, nr 2, p. 87) points out "The great state and its monarchs (David and Solomon) are not mentioned in any non-Biblical sources".

[33] P.R. Abramson, *Politics in the Bible*, New Jersey 2011, p. 68.

[34] S.L. McKenzie, *Dawid. Król Izraela*, Poznań 2014, p. 245.

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disgraced sister, while David did not take any steps to punish Amnon for raping Tamar. According to Mckenzie, David did not ignore the crime committed by his eldest son. He was outraged by the event but loved his firstborn son so much that he could not force himself to punish him[35]. As a result, Absalom decided to punish the rapist himself. However, he did not do so immediately. He pondered revenging his sister for 2 years. Finally, when he made the decision, he lured Amnon by inviting him to a reception outside Jerusalem, where he ordered to kill him and then escaped the capital (2 Samuel 13:23–37a).

Absalom spent 3 years in exile in his mother's country and was allowed to return after another 2 years when thanks to kind mediation of Joab and a "wise woman from Tekoa" (2 Samuel 14:1–24) he was finally forgiven by David. Having been permitted to return to Jerusalem, Absalom, impudent because his killing of Amnon was forgiven, started to conspire in order to seize the throne. Undoubtedly, he hated David for not punishing Amnon and then condemned him for the deed which he could, as it was generally felt, have forgiven him. Although he apparently received forgiveness and was probably the oldest living son, he was undoubtedly aware of the fact that his father would ignore him when transferring power in the future[36].

Absalom needed 4 years to make the preparations and to secure the people's support by taking advantage of their resentments and establishing contacts in the whole country (2 Samuel 15:1–12). One should note that not only the northern tribes supported Absalom's rebellion. He also gained the favour of a part of the Judah tribe. Piwowar points out that such wide support of Israeli tribes gained by Absalom could have been caused by their unfavourable assessment of David's rule and a revenge for the harm done to them by the kingdom's administration[37].

Once the conspiracy plans were ready, Absalom went to Hebron where he had himself anointed, started the rebellion and headed his numerous troops to Jerusalem. As McKenzie points out, Absalom's choice of Hebron was "conscious and symbolic" since it was in that city that Davis had been crowned for the first time and, moreover, he had been crowned twice there – as the king of Judah and then the king of Israel[38]. When attempting to seize power through a political upheaval, Absalom chose Hebron as the place where the conspiracy was organised, imitating his father, who seized royal power in that city[39].

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[35] *Ibidem*, p. 247. Elsewhere McKenzie (*ibidem*, p. 253) puts forward a thesis that David could have been ready to kill Amnon because he raped Tamar, but the reason for this might have been the fact that David saw his eldest son as a threat to his own authority. Amnon's mother was Ahinoam, who could have been Saul's wife earlier, suggesting that the removal of Amnon from the way to the throne at the same time eliminated the last traces of Saul in succession.

[36] J. Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

[37] A. Piwowar, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

[38] S.L. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

[39] *Ibidem*.

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David was completely surprised and forced to escape from the city. He fled to the east of Jordan, probably because of the military units stationed there and friends and vassals he could rely on (2 Samuel 17:27–29). Despite the great support for Absalom's rebellion mentioned above, the majority of the court remained loyal to David (2 Samuel 15:14–29)[40]. Those who did desert David and joined Absalom included the counsellor Ahitophel[41] – the Old Testament does not explain why he betrayed the king. Ahitophel was a Judaean whose son served as a member of David's guard of honour. Ahitophel wanted to carry out an immediate attack on David (2 Samuel 17:1–4)[42]. Absalom rejected this advice, deciding instead to take Hushai's advice and wait till he would be able to lead a larger force into combat (2 Samuel 17:5–14). When Absalom was idle with his troops in Jerusalem, Joab led his troops into a quick victory over Absalom's units and Absalom's himself suffered a disgraceful death at the hands of Joab, despite David's order to spare his son in the event the battle was won (2 Samuel 18:5)[43].

McKenzie, in turn, puts forward a thesis that even if David took part in the assassination of Absalom, suspecting him of betrayal, the reason for the assassination of Absalom was certainly the rebellion. The arguments for this thesis may be supported by the fact that the story does not contain any details on the basis of which we could presume that David tried to punish Joab for killing Absalom. Joab followed the orders and did not oppose them. So the rebellion fell. People from all over Israel tried to conclude peace with David as soon as possible and restore the throne to David[44].

The root cause of new coup (known as Sheba's rebellion) was the dissatisfaction of a part of the state of the Israelites, namely the part inhabited by the northern tribes, which felt disdained by the fact that David, when demanding that he be declared the ruler of Israel, went with this demand to the southern tribes first[45]. It was remembered that David had acted generously towards Absalom's followers, refraining from repression and granting amnesty even to those who were very seriously involved in the conspiracy (2 Samuel 19:11–30). David tried to win the support of the elders of Judah, who were strongly involved in Absalom's conspiracy, using friendly words and a promise that Amasa, the leader of the rebels, would replace Joab as the commander of the army[46].

However, for the northern tribes, this kind of favourable behaviour of David was a blatant favouritism of Judah, which only fuelled their sentiments of dissatisfaction

[40] *Ibidem*; J. Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 213.
[41] Cf. P. Śpiewak, *Doradcy Absaloma*, „Tygodnik Powszechny" 2017, nr 48.
[42] See K. Bodner, *The Rebellion of Absalom*, New York 2014, pp. 79–80.
[43] Cf. P. Śpiewak, *Śmierć Absaloma*, „Tygodnik Powszechny" 2017, nr 50.
[44] S.L. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 257.
[45] A. Piwowar, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
[46] See W. Bruce, *The First Three Kings of Israel*, London 1879, p. 354.

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(2 Samuel 19:41–43) and led to a new rebellion. This rebellion was an attempt to end the union of northern Israel with Judah under the sceptre of David. Uncertain nature of this rebellion ultimately led to the breaking of ties.

The leader of the rebellion – Sheba ben Bichri, a member of the tribe of Benjamin – might have been Saul's relative[47]. Heading towards Jerusalem, David immediately sent Amasa to demand a military contingent from Judah. And when Amasa took more time than expected, David sent his own troops. When Amasa finally arrived with these contingents, Joab, having pierced him with his sword, took over the command himself[48]. The rebel Sheba apparently did not have much support since he withdrew as far as possible to the north and hid in the town of Abel-beth-maacah. Joab, who besieged the town, demanded that its inhabitants surrender the rebel, threatening to destroy the city. As the inhabitants were not enthusiastic about the rebellion and afraid of the fate of the town, they cut Sheba's head themselves (2 Samuel 20:22)[49]. In this way, the rebellion ended and the throne of David was no longer under threat. It should be stressed that the decisive role in the suppression of this rebellion was played by the professional forces of David[50].

The importance of the participation of personal units (personal guard) in the suppression of Sheba's rebellion is nothing exceptional. In later centuries, the success of a coup was often determined by armed forces which were directly subordinate to the usurper. An excellent example is the Roman Praetorian Guard. Let us remember that the main duty of the soldiers of this formation was to serve directly beside the ruler. The task of protecting the Emperor and the members of his family was the main reason why Augustus decided to organize the Praetorian Guard. Thus, the Praetorians were to fight all kinds of conspiracies and coups, which were directed against the ruler. Their task was also to maintain law and order in Rome and Italy[51]. Interestingly, Praetorians themselves – according to I. Łuć – started, from 60 AD onwards, to take part in coups. By their behaviour, they violated the fundamental principle of fidelity (*fides*), which was the essence of a military oath (*sacramentum*)[52].

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[47] J. Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[48] See W. Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

[49] P.R. Abramson (*op. cit.*, p. 69) notices that "Sheba's rebellion may be a minor precursor to a successful rebellion by Israel against King Rehoboam after King Solomon's death".

[50] J. Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[51] I. Łuć, *Udział gwardii pretoriańskiej w zamachach stanu w 69 i 193 r. n.e.*, [in:] *Zamach stanu w dawnych…*, p. 134. The author (*ibidem*, p. 143) points out that "The Praetorians took part in the *coup d'état* of 15 January 69 AD. As a result of this *coup d'état*, Emperor Servus Sulpicius Galba was overthrown. About one hundred and twenty soldiers of the Praetorian Guard could have taken part directly in the overthrow of Galba". The first coup which was the sole responsibility of the Praetorian Guard was the overthrow of Emperor Pertinax. This ruler was killed on 28 March 193 AD. See *ibidem*, p. 144.

[52] *Ibidem*, p. 134.

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SEIZURE OF ROYAL POWER BY SOLOMON

The aim of this section is to analyse the events that took place around 961 BC, related to the handing over of power by King David to one of his sons, Solomon. As we know, half-Israelite Salomon was not a natural successor because according to Israeli customs, the oldest living son, Adonijah, was the heir. The young Israeli state formed by David had no law regulating the succession the throne, and two sons of the king, who were preparing for a palace revolution, remained among the pretenders to David's throne[53].

The existing Israeli practice of selecting a charismatic leader from among confederated tribes and electing him a king by acclamation of tribal elders and anointment – as K. Pilarczyk emphasises – "could have threatened *raison d'état* of the reformed and enlarged state, which could not afford a long period of interregnum or disputes over the throne between several rivals since the king, who was the head of the army, ensured the integrity of the empire"[54]. This meant that the only solution that would not threaten the state would be for King David to appoint his successor.

Unfortunately, King David refrained from taking a position on this matter. Furthermore, David at that time barely controlled his body and mind. He felt cold all the time despite the fact that the servants covered him with additional clothes. According to Flavius Josephus. the king's doctors gathered and decided that a particularly beautiful virgin who would sleep with king and heat him with the warmth of her body should be found in the country. The idea was obviously not so much to heat the old king but to check his masculinity[55].

According to 1 Kings 1:4, the king attempted to have sexual intercourse with Abishag, an exceptionally beautiful Shunammite who was brought to him. However, the result of the test was unfavourable for the king, who proved to be impotent. As J.G. Frazer points out, a ruler existed in the consciousness of his people only as long as his life had value; "his life is only valuable as long as he discharges the duties of his position by ordering the course of nature for his people's benefit"[56]. Once the ruler fails in this respect, "the devotion, the religious homage which they had hitherto lavished on him cease and are changed into hatred and contempt"[57]. In such a situation, the king is deprived of his position. As Frazer points out, this kind of behaviour is very logical because since the king is a god, he should look

[53] K. Pilarczyk, *Salomon królem starożytnego Izraela – zamach stanu czy zmowa pałacowa?*, [in:] *Zamach stanu w dawnych…*, p. 16. Cf. S.S. Montefiore, *Jerozolima. Biografia*, Warszawa 2011, p. 27.

[54] K. Pilarczyk, *op. cit.*, s. 16.

[55] This event is interpreted in a different way by P. Śpiewak, *Król Salomon*, „Tygodnik Powszechny" 2018, nr 1–2.

[56] J.G. Frazer, *Złota gałąź*, t. 1, Warszawa 1971, p. 218.

[57] *Ibidem*.

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after them and if he does not do so, he must give up a place to one who would[58]. Such is the situation in the case of the end of David's life described above. The king, therefore, had to be a symbol of strength and vitality symbolizing the strength and vitality of his nation, and thus Israel could not have an impotent king, which meant that it was time to find a successor[59].

Having heard about David's impotence, his eldest son Adonijah declared himself king. He started to elevate himself by saying "I will be king" (1 Kings 1:5), thus suggesting his entourage that he deserves the throne[60]. He got chariots and horses ready, with 50 men to run ahead of him[61], and then prepared a supper outside the town, "by the spring spouting in the royal garden"[62], to which he "invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah" (1 Kings 1:9). Joab and the high priest Abiathar, who supported Adonijah's claim to the throne, feasted with him.

Prophet Nathan, from a faction supporting Solomon[63], informed Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, about the supper and Adonijah's proclamation to be king, announcing her that Adonijah intended to hold royal power and advising her to see King David and tell him about Adonijah's conspiracy and also that he had promised to make Solomon, her son, king after him (1 Kings 1:13)[64]. However, as Łach points out: "It is probably a promise that David made to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother in the past. The Bible does not mention it before. It was apparently some personal promise which only Prophet Nathan knew about"[65].

Bathsheba went to see David and told him about the supper organized by Adonijah, mentioning the invited guests – Adonijah's followers: the chief priest Abiathar, Joab and others. She also drew the King's attention to the fact that in this situation

[58] *Ibidem*.

[59] S.L. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 266. This author puts forward a thesis that the trick, i.e. the test of David's masculinity, could have been his son Adonijah, who was next in the succession line.

[60] See B.O. Long, *A Darkness Between Brothers: Solomon and Adonijah*, "Journal for the Study of the Old Testament" 1981, Vol. 6(19), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/030908928100601904, pp. 79–94.

[61] Previously, Absalom used chariots in a similarly ostentatious manner. It was a clear symbol that pursued a royal title. See S.L. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 253–254.

[62] According to Łach (*op. cit.*, p. 141) "Today, there is Job's well here; it is identified with the Rogel spring, which etymologically probably means either a field of a fuller or a stream of water. Zohelet stone means literally a snake stone. This place is unknown. Most probably it was located at the intersection of the Kidron Valley (Wadi an-Nar) and the Valley of Hinnom, around 400 m south of the Siloe fountain. There was probably a sanctuary because Adonijah made sacrifices of pigs, cattle and fattened calves".

[63] J. Bodner, *Nathan: Prophet, Politician and Novelist?*, "Journal for the Study of the Old Testament" 2001, Vol. 26(1), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/030908920102600103, pp. 43–54.

[64] Cf. S.M. Koenig, *Isn't Bathsheba?: A Study in Characterization*, Eugene 2011, pp. 86–91.

[65] *Ibidem*, p. 143.

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"all people are looking forward to the king chosen by David"[66], and warned him that if "Adonijah embraces the kingdom after his death, he will certainly kill her and her son Solomon"[67]. After she had left, Prophet Nathan asked to see the king and confirmed Bathsheba's words. This plan – to tell king twice about the seizure of power – was plotted by Bathsheba and Prophet Nathan. These two opinions about Adonijah persuaded David to make a decision to appoint Solomon as a candidate for the king[68]. King David did so by addressing Prophet Nathan and Bathsheba with the following words: "I swear by Almighty God, that your son Solomon shall certainly be king, as I formerly swore; and that he shall sit upon my throne, and that this very day also"[69].

After this announcement King David sent for High Priest Zadok and also Benaiah – who was the commander of his personal guard – and ordered them to take Prophet Nathan and the warriors staying at the court with them and have Solomon mount the royal mule and then go to Gihon to anoint him with sacred oil and declare king (1 Kings 1:32–34)[70]. As Łach emphasises, having the hair to the throne ride David's mule was tantamount to a symbolic transfer of power from the king to his son. It was also a symbol of elevating Solomon as only the highest dignitaries were allowed to mount mules and donkeys[71].

In McKenzie's opinion, Prophet Nathan and Bathsheba manipulated David to proclaim Solomon to be his successor. He emphasises that "the individuals whom David supposedly summoned and commanded to anoint Solomon were all listed earlier as Solomon's supporters. The conspirators simply took over the government. David had nothing to do with it and probably no idea what was going on"[72].

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[66] "My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him" (1 Kings 1:20). Cf. J. Flawiusz, *op. cit.*, 7,350.

[67] "Otherwise, as soon as my lord the king is laid to rest with his ancestors, I and my son Solomon will be treated as criminals" (1 Kings 1:21). Cf. J. Flawiusz, *op. cit.*, 7,350; G.G. Nicol, *Bathsheba, a clever Woman?*, "The Expository Times" 1988, Vol. 99(12), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/001452468809901203, pp. 360–363.

[68] J.B. Łach, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[69] "What I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place" (1 Kings 1:30). Cf. J. Flawiusz, *op. cit.*, 7,353.

[70] According to the Old Testament, David ordered that after the anointment, Solomon should by proclaimed king with the formula: "Long live King Salomon!" (1 King 1:34). Bright (*op. cit.*, p. 215) emphasises that although the people enthusiastically reacted to the *fait accompli*, proclaiming Solomon king by the people was a fiction since Solomon could not even claim the fiction of charismatic gifts. M. Weber noticed the theme of charismatic gifts and charismatic reign who described the latter as based on the faith in the sanctity of what is unusual. The author emphasises that no matter how the problem of the succession to the throne is solved, this always started the existence of some kind of rules. This meant that the ruler reigned on the basis of the very act of election. See M. Weber, *Szkice z socjologii religii*, Warszawa 1995, p. 146.

[71] J.B. Łach, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[72] S.L. McKenzie, *op. cit.*, s. 267.

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Ultimately, therefore, Solomon's supporters, who were better organised and better at coordinating the course of events, surprised Adonijah and carried out a coup.

Łach emphasises Prophet Nathan's fears concerning the fate of the young monarchy in the situation when the matter of the succession of the throne was not settled. According to the author, in such a situation it was very likely that after David's death there would be a bloody battle for the throne, which Solomon might not win. In such a situation, Nathan and Solomon with his mother would be in danger of losing their life. Prophet Nathan deliberately realised his plan of a palace revolution, which would ensure the victory of Solomon's faction, using Bathsheba at the same time[73].

Thanks to the conspiracy of Prophet Nathan and David's wife Bathsheba, the fate of the throne was settled. Adonijah's supporters dispersed and Adonijah himself, fearing for his life, exercised his right to asylum and took hold of the horns of the altar, which "protected the avenger from a hasty murder"[74]. Thanks to the conspiracy of Prophet Nathan and David's wife Bathsheba, the fate of the throne was settled. Solomon ordered to bring him to the palace, having promised him to save his life under oath, and said to him "Go to your home!" (Kings 1:53), which meant the end of the political struggle for the succession of the throne, won by Solomon – the son of David and Bathsheba and the pupil of Prophet Nathan.

Ultimately, therefore, Solomon ascended the throne as his father's co-regent, without bloodshed, because, as we have seen, Adonijah and his supporters humbly lay down their weapons. However, David died soon afterwards and Solomon began to hastily remove all those who might threaten his authority (1 Kings 2:13–46). Obviously, number one enemy was the pretender to the throne – Adonijah – who after David's death asked to grant him Abishag as a wife, who, as we know, was David's guardian at the end of his life (her task was to "watch and care for him"), and, after David's death, as a member of the royal harem, was transferred with the whole harem to the legitimate successor[75]. As stressed by Łach, the act of the transfer of the harem to a new ruler confirmed the full right of the new ruler to the throne of his predecessor, since it was this act of the transfer of the harem or its part that gave the right to succession[76].

Adonijah's request, which he sent to Solomon through his mother Bathsheba, was interpreted by King Solomon as a questioning his right to the throne and an

[73] J.B. Łach, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[74] *Ibidem*, p. 148. See also K. Sójka-Zielińska, *Drogi i bezdroża prawa. Szkice z dziejów kultury prawnej Europy*, Wrocław 2010, p. 30.

[75] Cf. R.K. Harrison, *The Matriarchate and Hebrew Regal Succession*, "Evangelical Quarterly" 1957, Vol. 29(1), pp. 33–34.

[76] J.B. Łach, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

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attempt to resume fighting[77]. This meant that Adonijah did not intend to give up his claim to the throne[78]. Indeed, during his conversation with Bathsheba, he suggested that he deserves to be king, both on account of his elder age and the will of the people ("You know that the kingdom is mine and the whole Israel expected my rule. And yet it was transferred to my brother, according to the will of God"). However, he also confirmed that if, according to God's will, royal power was seized by her son Solomon "he was contented to be a servant under him, and was pleased with the present settlement"[79].

Solomon announced Adonijah's death sentence in the form of a biblical curse (1 Kings 2:23), in which the king first called upon himself evil if he did not keep the promise of Adonijah's death, and then ordered Benaiah, Jehoiada's son, who was the commander of the personal guard (1 Kings 2:25), to execute the sentence.

After Adonijah was murdered, further political opponents of the new king – supporters of Adonijah – were murdered, Abiathar's life was spared thanks to his merits for King David but he was sentenced to life banishment. Joab did not have so much luck. Although he took refuge near the altar of holocaust seeking asylum, he was deemed to be a deliberate killer, which meant he was not entitled to asylum[80], and was then murdered. Another victim of Solomon's political revenge was Shimei, Saul's relative, who had cursed David at one time, calling him "a criminal and perpetrator of many rogueries". Shimei was ordered not to leave Jerusalem, and then, under the first pretext of disobedience, he was executed.

In this way, Salomon strengthened his power by eliminating the last centre of backlash in the form of his closest enemies from the period of the palace revolution. During Solomon's reign, there was one attempt at a political coup directed at the ruler, who by that time had largely confirmed his power. The attempt was made by Jeroboam, Nebat's son, an Ephraimite. He came from the circles of power closest to King Solomon and, by royal nomination, held the office of being "in charge of the whole labour force of the tribes of Joseph" (1 Kings 11:28).

In the light of the Biblical account, his efforts to seize power were triggered by the construction works carried out to complete Solomon's grand projects. Apart

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[77] Cf. T. Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel: Studies in Biblical Historiography*, Leiden 1999, pp. 131–132.

[78] F. Thieberger (*King Salomon*, New York 1947, p. 127) notices that "This behaviour on Solomon's part can be understood only if we realize that Adonijah's request for Abishag was the sign of a new move on the part of the opposition, which had rallied its forces after David's death".

[79] J. Flawiusz, *op. cit*., 8,4.

[80] According to Exodus 21:14 the right of asylum protected an inadvertent killer, but the privilege was denied to a deliberate murderer ("But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death"). Łach (*op. cit.*, p. 155) emphasises that Joab was recognized by Solomon as a deliberate murderer because "during King David's reign, he deliberately murdered Abner, Ner's son, commander of the Israeli army and Amasa, Jether's son, the commanding officer of the army of Judah".

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from that, however, Jeroboam's attempt to overthrow the king was primarily influenced by prophet Ahijah. According to 1 Kings 11:29–32 he once met Jeroboam making before his eyes a symbolic gesture of tearing his cloak into 12 pieces and handing 10 of them to Jeroboam. This act symbolised Solomon's loss of power over 10 tribes and the promise that Jeroboam would ascend the throne and establish an eternal dynasty, which apparently resulted directly from the words of the God of Israel, told by Ahijah: "I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes… […] But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant… […] I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes" (1 Kings 11:31–35). As I. Jaruzelska points out, "placing an episode with the tearing of a cloak between the mention of lifting his hand against Solomon and Jeroboam's flight to Egypt could indicate that the prophet inspired the division of the monarchy and also influenced Jeroboam's ascension to the throne of Israel"[81], which, however, took place after Solomon's death, during the reign of his son Rehoboam.

THE LEGITIMISATION OF A POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

To conclude this article, I would also like to discuss the issue of anointment as one of the forms the legitimisation of royal power. Its "legitimisation" should be understood as its "legitimacy", i.e. proving that given authority exists legally on the basis of adopted and generally accepted norms[82]. Such a form of legitimisation concerned both to the legitimisation of power gained through the legal succession of the throne and through an illegal political upheaval.

In Antiquity, perpetrators tried to obtain a sanction justifying their actions, e.g. Peisistratos, who staged the epiphany of the goddess Athena[83]. A woman named Fye, who was almost 1.80 m tall and exceptionally beautiful, was characterized as the goddess and brought to the city in a cart[84]. The heralds in front of her called upon the Athenians to recognize Peisistratos, whom Athena herself led back to Acropolis. The Athenians, seized by pious fear, agreed to it. Religious sanction,

[81] I. Jaruzelska, *Prorocy a zamach stanu w królestwie Izraela (X–VIII w. p.n.e.)*, [in:] *Zamach stanu w dawnych…*, p. 24.

[82] For more about the legitimisation of power see i.a. J. Kostrubiec, *W kręgu problematyki prawnej legitymizacji władzy*, „Studia Iuridica Lublinensia" 2003, t. 1, pp. 97–110. About the modern ways of legitimising a political upheaval in more detail see M. Konarski, *Zamach stanu w perspektywie prawno-historycznej na przykładzie Rewolucji Francuskiej 1789–1799*, [in:] *Przestępstwa przeciwko bezpieczeństwu i porządkowi publicznemu*, red. W. Lis, Lublin 2017, pp. 58–61.

[83] Arystoteles, *Ustrój polityczny Aten*, Warszawa 1973, p. 23.

[84] N.G.L. Hammond, *Dzieje Grecji*, Warszawa 1994, p. 212.

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or at least its appearance, was as necessary to carry out a bloodless *coup d'état* as the demonstration of force[85].

The religious sanction was also applied earlier. The institution of divine legitimisation of power gained in a way other than succession within a dynasty is documented in the case of the ancient Middle East. It often involved the intervention of prophets and it was expressed as the legitimisation of the rule of usurpers by designating them as rulers as a result of, i.a. a gesture of anointment.

The custom of anointment did not have Hebrew origins. The Israelites borrowed it either from the Egyptians or from the Syrians. For that reason, the rituals of selecting the king and his gaining power seem to include accents characteristic for areas outside Israel: emphasising some special relations with God (1 Samuel 10:1) and prophetic qualities (1 Samuel 9:27)[86].

Anointing was the most important act – a test of choice, and at the same time of God's appointment of a king or priest. As Łach points out, the word *masah* ("to anoint") means to rub out something with your hands, smear liquid, oil or paint on something; it also means to anoint objects, or persons such as a prophet, a priest or a king[87]. Through the act of appointment, the person became blessed, which constituted some important change. This blessing or consecration manifests itself in two ways: in the possession of a "spirit" and in immunity[88]. Once Saul was anointed, Samuel promised him that there would be a number of extraordinary events, and among others, the "spirit of Jehovah" would take possession of him and Saul would prophesy (1 Samuel 10:1–6). Similarly, Jehovah's spirit came upon David also when Samuel poured a horn of oil on him (1 Samuel 16:13). The rite of anointment could be repeated several times. David was anointed as many as three times. The first anointment was done by Samuel in secret (1 Samuel 16) and the next by the Judah elders (2 Samuel 2:4) who asked David to become the king of the Judah tribe. The last anointment gave him power over everyone (2 Samuel 5:3–5).

As I mentioned above, the anointment of a king was of a highly religious nature. The anointing ritual was accompanied by a prophet's speech, in which the best qualities of the king and his tasks he should complete for the people were presented. This act was followed by a ceremony of ascending the throne and taking over objects symbolizing the royal power. The enthronement was accompanied by the sounds of trumpets, general joy, clapping hands and a ceremonial march performed

[85] G. Malinowski, *Zamach stanu i strach przed nim w demokratycznych Atenach*, [w:] *Zamach stanu w dawnych…*, p. 35.

[86] J. Łach, *Księgi 1–2 Samuela. Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu*, t. IV-1, Poznań–Warszawa 1973, p. 528.

[87] *Ibidem*, p. 526.

[88] *Ibidem*.

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in a dance step. The king, who took possession of the throne, received other signs of power at the same time: the royal crown, sceptre, robes and weapons.

The king, through the act of anointment and enthronement, acquired a specific relationship with God, becoming His Anointed. Thus, in the case of the act of anointing Solomon, David's son, we are dealing with the legalisation of power acquired through a political upheaval – a palace revolution[89]. This act of legalisation was in no way different from the legalisation of a king who ascended the throne through customary succession.

There is no doubt that Solomon ascended the throne as the successor of David in a way that was completely new but not free from suspicion (through a palace revolution)[90]. In comparison with his father, who had come to power by God's nomination, this was a considerable difference, but yet, as Bright points out, the authors of ancient stories try to make it clear that Solomon's palace revolution had a legitimate character[91].

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[89] Łach (*op. cit.*, p. 146) believes that Salomon was proclaimed king twice and was probably "anointed" again, together with Priest Shadok. In the light of this thesis, the second ceremony related to the king's anointing ended with playing the horn and exclamation: "Long live King Solomon". Solomon's third act of ceremonial seizure of power involved a procession to the royal palace, joyful songs and shouting in honour of the newly created king. The final stage of this procession was Solomon's solemn ascension to the throne, symbolizing his takeover of power and authority over Israel.

[90] Ishida (*History and Historical…*, p. 134 ff.) highlights the role David's last will ("David's Testament") in the legitimisation of the upheaval. In turn, Rost (*The Succession to the Throne of David*, London–New York 2015, pp. 71–72) indicates to the betrayal of David's last will by Solomon, who committed political murders after the death of the former.

[91] J. Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

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STRESZCZENIE

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza zagadnień związanych z przewrotem politycznym jako formą sukcesji władzy królewskiej w monarchii zjednoczonej Izraela w okresie panowania pierwszego króla Hebrajczyków – Saula, po czasy ostatnich lat pobytu na tronie Dawida. W okresie, który został poddany analizie, miało miejsce kilka nieudanych prób przejęcia władzy królewskiej w drodze przewrotu politycznego. W związku z faktem, iż w królestwie izraelskim nie wprowadzono w sposób jednoznaczny dziedziczenia tronu na zasadzie primogenitury, doszło pod koniec życia króla Dawida do najpoważniejszego przewrotu, określanego jako przewrót pałacowy. W następstwie tego wydarzenia na tron Izraela wstąpił młodszy syn Dawida – Salomon, mimo że nie było uzasadnionych podstaw do przejęcia przez niego władzy.

Słowa kluczowe: monarchia; Biblia; Izrael; władza królewska; przewrót polityczny; zamach stanu; król Dawid; Absalom; Adoniasz; król Salomon; namaszczenie