

“I Am the Seer”: Objective and Subjective Elements of Samuel’s Relationship to Saul and the Monarchy in I Samuel 8-16

I. Introduction

THE FIRST SEVEN CHAPTERS of the Book of Samuel cast the prophet Samuel as a perfect individual and leader, completely in sync with God’s will. His prophecy is impeccable (3:19-20);¹ he travels throughout the country to judge the people thereby inspiring a national repentance (7:3-4, 16-17); and he attains military victory against the Philistines by praying on Israel’s behalf (7:7-11). Had Samuel been immortal, he may have been Israel’s consummate leader for all eternity. Alas, he grew old, forcing Israel to rethink its mode of leadership.

Prophets are often viewed as passive receptacles and communicators of God’s will. However, the Sages maintain that all prophets aside from Moses have prophetic experiences that combine the objective encounter of God with subjective elements of their personalities:

“I saw the Lord’ (Isa. 6:1) [is to be understood] in accordance with what was taught: All the prophets looked through a dim glass, but Moses looked through a clear glass” (*Yevamot* 49b)²

This dichotomy between objective and subjective components in prophecy

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plays a significant role in chapters 8-16, where Samuel must create a monarchy despite his strong opposition to that institution; and later when he must anoint a successor for the rejected Saul despite the prophet's love for the king. One *midrash* captures the tension between the prophet who objectively represents God's word and the prophet with his own subjective feelings:

And even Samuel—who was likened to Moses and Aaron—because he said “I am the seer” (9:19). God said to him “you said ‘I am the seer’, by your life tomorrow I will show you if you are indeed a seer. As it is written, “Fill your horn with oil and set out; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have decided on one of his sons to be king” (16:1). When he arrived it is written, “When they arrived and he saw Eliab, he thought: “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands before Him” (16:6). God replied, “you are the one who said ‘I am the seer’! ‘Pay no attention to his appearance’”. . . (16:7) (*Tanhuma Buber Mikketz* 6).

This *midrash* appears to suggest that Samuel's vision was somewhat colored from the outset of his relationship with Saul and the institution of monarchy until Samuel's error when anointing Saul's successor. By proclaiming “I am the seer,” i.e., by injecting his own personality into his prophetic leadership, Samuel blurred the boundaries between God's word and his own on several occasions. In this essay, I explore the intricate relationship between God's will and Samuel's will—where they intersect and where they might differ in these pivotal narratives in the history of Israel's leadership.³

II. Chapter 8

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons judges over Israel. . . . But his sons did not follow in his ways; they were bent on gain, they accepted bribes, and they subverted justice. All the elders of Israel assembled and came to Samuel at Ramah, and they said to him, “You have grown old, and your sons have not followed your ways. Therefore appoint a king for us, to govern us like all other nations” (8:1-5).⁴

Samuel is growing older, and expects his justice-subverting sons to succeed him.⁵ That Samuel would support his unworthy sons is surprising, as he would resemble his predecessor Eli who was rejected precisely for allowing his sinful sons to remain in office (2:27-36; 3:11-14). As late as Saul's second coronation, Samuel still insists that his sons would be preferable to a king:

Then Samuel said to all Israel, “I have yielded to you in all you have asked of me and have set a king over you. Henceforth the king will be your leader. As for me, I have grown old and gray—but my sons are still with you—and I have been your leader from my youth to this day” (12:1-2).

Noting that God never criticizes Samuel for failure to rebuke his sons, Ibn Caspi and Abarbanel maintain that Samuel must have been unaware of their corruption. Nevertheless, the elders’ statement to Samuel, “you have grown old, and your sons have not followed your ways” (8:5) indicates that the prophet likely was better informed.

Samuel was displeased that they said “Give us a king to govern us.” Samuel prayed to the LORD, and the LORD replied to Samuel, “Heed the demand of the people in everything they say to you. For it is not you that they have rejected; it is Me they have rejected as their king. Like everything else they have done ever since I brought them out of Egypt to this day—forsaking Me and worshipping other gods—so they are doing to you. Heed their demand; but warn them solemnly, and tell them about the practices of any king who will rule over them” (8:6-9).

Based on the narrator’s excerpting from the elders’ statement, Samuel is disturbed by the request of “a king to govern us” (*melekh le-shoftenu*).⁶ Since Samuel is the *shofet*, and has appointed his sons as *shofetim*, it appears that he is reacting in part from personal motivations. God confirms this reading by telling Samuel not to take the elders’ request as a personal rejection, indicating that Samuel perceived it as such.⁷

Though God likens the request of monarchy to idolatry, God still orders Samuel to grant the people’s request. There appears to be a divergence between God’s and Samuel’s perspectives on the monarchy. God espouses a complex view that kingship is dangerous yet necessary.⁸ Much of Samuel’s response parallels God’s concern that God’s kingdom will be threatened by a human monarch. However, the element of personal rejection may have pressed him to unequivocal opposition to the monarchy. Thus, God’s response incorporates both sides of the human debate: Samuel opposes monarchy, whereas the people endorse monarchy.

When Samuel heard all that the people said, he reported it to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed their demands and appoint a king for them.” Samuel then said to the men of Israel, “All of you go home” (8:21-22).

After God instructs Samuel to heed their demands, the prophet does not inform the elders that God has approved. Instead, he sends everyone home! This response may reflect tension between what Samuel wants and God's command.⁹ Attempting to mitigate this disparity, Malbim and Kiel interpret Samuel's response to mean "go home until God gives me further instructions." However, the ensuing narrative is a textbook example of divine providence as Saul "coincidentally" arrives in Ramah searching for his father's missing donkeys. It appears that absent such providence, nothing more would have occurred.

III. Chapter 9

Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed the following to Samuel: "At this time tomorrow, I will send a man to you from the territory of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him ruler of My people Israel. He will deliver My people from the hands of the Philistines; for I have taken note of My people, their outcry has come to Me" (9:15-16).

As Saul approaches Samuel, God informs the prophet that a king will alleviate the people's suffering. God casts kingship as an act of mercy, rather than a concession to an illegitimate request. As noted above, God both supports and is threatened by monarchy. This verse reflects the positive aspect—and precisely what the elders want—of the monarchy.

IV. Chapter 10

Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah and said to them, "Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: 'I brought Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and of all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' But today you have rejected your God who delivered you from all your troubles and calamities. For you said, 'No, set up a king over us!' Now station yourselves before the LORD, by your tribes and clans" (10:17-19).

At Saul's first coronation, Samuel publicly condemns the people's request for a king as sinful. This declaration doubtlessly had a devastating effect on Saul's monarchy. Was this denunciation a verbatim transcript of God's will or did Samuel add words of his own? Samuel quotes God as saying that God delivered Israel in the past (v. 18), but then refers to God in the third person when he says that the monarchy is sinful (v. 19).¹⁰ The

NJPS translation cited above follows this lead by closing God's quotation after verse 18. If Samuel is blurring the boundary between God's words and his own, the speech that likely undermined some of the monarchy's initial authority emanated more from the prophet than from God.

V. Chapter 12

Then Samuel said to all Israel, "I have yielded to you in all you have asked of me and have set a king over you. Henceforth the king will be your leader. "As for me, I have grown old and gray—but my sons are still with you—and I have been your leader from my youth to this day. Here I am! Testify against me, in the presence of the LORD and in the presence of His anointed one: Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken? Whom have I defrauded or whom have I robbed? From whom have I taken a bribe to look the other way? I will return it to you" (12:1-3).

After Saul's decisive victory against Ammon in chapter 11, the people hold a second coronation. At this ceremony—Samuel's final recorded public address to the nation—Samuel casts the monarchy as a rejection of himself and his sons. The parallel of "I have been your leader" (*va-ani hithalakhti lifnekhem*) as opposed to "henceforth the king will be your leader" (*ve-atah hinneh ha-melekh mithalekh lifnekhem*) further demonstrates that Samuel feels personally rejected.¹¹

Samuel surveys Israel's history to teach that God always saved Israel, so why do they rebelliously demand a king? He concludes his censure by successfully praying for a storm:

"Now stand by and see the marvelous thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. It is the season of the wheat harvest. I will pray to the LORD and He will send thunder and rain; then you will take thought and realize what a wicked thing you did in the sight of the LORD when you asked for a king." Samuel prayed to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel. The people all said to Samuel, "Intercede for your servants with the LORD your God that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins the wickedness of asking for a king" (12:16-19).

At his second coronation, Saul hears the nation admit that kingship is sinful, and the storm indicates divine support for Samuel and his staunch opposition of the monarchy.¹²

Thus, the most unequivocally negative statements against monarchy (10:19; 12:17) come from Samuel in his direct speech. In contrast, God upholds a complex view of monarchy by both endorsing the people's request for a king and answering Samuel's prayer for the storm. Internalizing God's complex position, the people now concede that while they want a king, monarchy poses a serious spiritual hazard. Prophecy, on the other hand, would acknowledge the positive aspect of monarchy only after Samuel. Kiel observes that later prophets condemn the sinful behavior of kings but do not oppose the institution of monarchy itself.¹³

VI. Chapters 13-14

“. . . After that, you are to go down to Gilgal ahead of me, and I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Wait seven days until I come to you and instruct you what you are to do next” (10:8).

He waited seven days, the time that Samuel [had set]. But when Samuel failed to come to Gilgal, and the people began to scatter, Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the sacrifice of well-being”; and he presented the burnt offering. He had just finished presenting the burnt offering when Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and welcome him. But Samuel said, “What have you done?” Saul replied, “I saw the people leaving me and scattering; you had not come at the appointed time, and the Philistines had gathered at Michmas. I thought the Philistines would march down against me at Gilgal before I had entreated the LORD, so I forced myself to present the burnt offering.” Samuel answered Saul, “You acted foolishly in not keeping the commandments that the LORD your God laid upon you! Otherwise the Lord would have established your dynasty over Israel forever. But now your dynasty will not endure. The LORD will seek out a man after His own heart, and the LORD will appoint him ruler over His people, because you did not abide by what the LORD had commanded you” (13:8-14).

Saul's failure to wait for Samuel was motivated by imminent danger and also by the religious concern that he should not enter battle before an offering was brought. Nevertheless, this error cost Saul the throne. Moshe Garsiel has demonstrated that chapters 13-14 contrast Jonathan favorably with Saul.¹⁴ Jonathan defeats the Philistines against all odds with faith and courage. While Saul has faith, he falls short of the prophetic standards demanded of him.¹⁵

Aside from his failure to wait until Samuel arrives, Saul inappropriately aborts an inquiry of God (14:17-19).¹⁶ Later, Saul neglects inquiry of God until Ahijah the priest encourages him, and then God does not respond (14:36-37). In contrast, Jonathan seeks a divine omen and takes initiative because “nothing prevents the LORD from winning a victory by many or by few” (14:6-10).¹⁷ Saul’s military caution is eclipsed by Jonathan’s superior faith and heroism.

Saul makes three rash oaths (14:24, 39, 44), all of which backfire. By ordering his army to fast, the soldiers were famished and ultimately ate plundered animals in a manner against Torah law. It is evident that Jonathan’s critique of his father was correct:

“My father has brought trouble on the people. . . . If only the troops had eaten today of spoil captured from the enemy, the defeat of the Philistines would have been greater still!” (14:29-30).

Even worse, however, are Saul’s oaths that he will execute the person who caused God to reject his inquiry:

Saul said, “Thus and more may God do: You shall be put to death, Jonathan!” But the troops said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, after bringing this great victory to Israel? Never! As the LORD lives, not a hair of his head shall fall to the ground! For he brought this day to pass with the help of God.” Thus the troops saved Jonathan and he did not die. Saul broke off his pursuit of the Philistines, and the Philistines returned to their homes (14:44-46).

Saul almost executes Jonathan on the basis of a misguided oath. But Saul’s soldiers threaten him and save Jonathan.

As a result of Saul’s errors in judgment, the Philistines escape. The narrator appears to conclude that had Saul led his nation in Jonathan’s style, Saul could have ended the Philistine threat and would not have been rejected from the monarchy.

While Garsiel’s analysis is convincing, there appears to be another dimension in this narrative as well. Yairah Amit eloquently articulates the operative literary principles when there is a conflict between the narrator or God and other characters:

My first argument is that the narrator’s reliability and that of God’s image in biblical narrative are axiomatic. My second argument is that every other character, including God’s human representatives, the prophets, can prove to be unreliable. My third argument is that the reli-

able images of the narrator and God can serve as a judgmental criterion for the reliability of the other characters. A character whose statements are consistent with those of the narrator or of God becomes reliable, while in the reverse situation he becomes unreliable.¹⁸

In chapter 13, the narrator stresses that Saul in fact waited seven days and Samuel arrived late (13:9-10). In the meantime, Saul's troops were deserting. Only 600 men, or 20% of Saul's original army, remained (13:15). Finally, Saul and Jonathan were the only soldiers with real weapons (13:19-22). When Saul justifies himself to Samuel, his claims are entirely corroborated by the objective prophetic narrator.

Moreover, there is a redundancy between Saul's rejection in this narrative and in chapter 15 when he sins in the battle against Amalek. Radak (on 15:28) suggests two resolutions: first, in chapter 13, Saul lost his dynasty but still would remain as king. In chapter 15, Saul himself was rejected. Second, Saul had an opportunity to repent after chapter 13, but the decree was sealed irrevocably after chapter 15.

However, if there were no chapter 15, chapter 13 would have been understood as a permanent rejection of Saul and his dynasty. Perhaps the following can serve as a more likely resolution. Since God never speaks in chapter 13, and the objective narrator supports Saul, it is unclear if Samuel is conveying a received prophecy or if he is speaking on his own.¹⁹ This ambiguity may be contrasted with chapter 15, where God explicitly tells Samuel that Saul has forfeited the kingship (15:10-11). It is possible that Saul *really* loses the monarchy only after God's rejection in chapter 15, but believes that he has lost it already with Samuel's rejection in chapter 13.

Samuel's post-death rebuke of Saul supports this reading:

The Lord has done for Himself as He foretold through me: The LORD has torn the kingship out of your hands and has given it to your fellow, to David, because you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His wrath upon the Amalekites. That is why the LORD has done this to you today (I Sam. 28:17-18).

Significantly, the prophet does not mention Saul's failure to wait at Gilgal.²⁰ Perhaps Samuel in chapter 13 truly believes that Saul should be rejected at this point, even if God did not convey any such message to Samuel.²¹

Moreover, while Jonathan is a hero, he initiates battle without coordinating with his father and later publicly defies his father's oath. The narrator justifies Jonathan's insubordination by relating that the people were distressed by their hunger. However, once the soldiers are emboldened by

Jonathan, they eat meat in a manner against Torah law and even threaten Saul's life. When Saul later expresses apprehension about preventing his troops from plundering Amalek (15:24), he makes a valid point. There is little doubt that Jonathan would have made a better king than his father. However, Jonathan's asserting himself against his father undermines Saul's reign and almost leads to a mutiny.

The primary level of the text continues to support Garsiel's thesis that Jonathan is superior to Saul. However, another layer has both Samuel and Jonathan—Saul's two most important pillars of support—undermining Saul's authority with their own subjective personalities.

VII. Chapter 15

The word of the LORD then came to Samuel: "I regret (*nihamti*) that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from Me and has not carried out My commands." Samuel was distressed and he entreated the LORD all night long (15:10-12).

Although Samuel opposes monarchy, he has loved Saul from the beginning of their association, even kissing him after anointing him (10:1). Saul is the type of person Samuel would want as king, if there had to be a king.²² Once Saul is rejected by God, Samuel sinks into mourning. Initially committed to his own sons despite their unworthiness, Samuel now stands by his beloved disciple Saul despite explicit divine rejection.

This dichotomy between God's will and Samuel's also may be manifest regarding whether God can change His mind:

And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you and has given it to another who is worthier than you. Moreover, the Glory of Israel does not deceive or change His mind (*ve-lo yinahem*), for He is not human that He should change His mind" (15:28-29).

Samuel never saw Saul again to the day of his death. But Samuel grieved over Saul, because the Lord regretted (*niham*) that He had made Saul king over Israel (15:35).

When speaking to Saul, Samuel stresses that God does not change His mind (15:29). How does this declaration jibe with the words of God (15:11) and the narrator (15:35), where God *does* regret having appointed Saul (the Hebrew root *n-h-m* is used in all three instances)?²³ Following the

Targum's lead, Rashi suggests that God regretted choosing Saul but would not strip the kingship from David now that it had been promised to him. Alternately, this contradiction again may blur the boundaries between what God says and Samuel's personal views.²⁴

VIII. Chapter 16

And the Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and set out; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have decided on one of his sons to be king." Samuel replied, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me" The LORD answered, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord'" (16:1-2).

Samuel's mourning over Saul continues to the point where God must order Samuel to anoint a successor. Many commentators assume that Samuel's anointing the next king would be perceived as an act of rebellion and therefore Samuel's fears are warranted.²⁵ Alternatively, Abarbanel maintains that Samuel is merely stalling, since he does not want Saul to be replaced. Abarbanel likens Samuel's response to Moses' excuse, "how then should Pharaoh heed me" (Ex. 6:30), though God previously had assured him that Pharaoh would listen.

". . . Invite Jesse to the sacrificial feast, and then I will make known to you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I point out to you". . . When they arrived and he saw Eliab, he thought: "Surely the LORD's anointed stands before Him." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Pay no attention to his appearance or his stature, for I have rejected him. For not as man sees [does the LORD see]; man sees only what is visible, but the LORD sees into the heart" (16:3, 6-7).

Given that God ordered Samuel to wait for God's instructions before selecting a king, why does Samuel act prior to receiving prophecy? Radak and Kiel assert that the tall Eliab reminded Samuel of Saul, whom he loved. Samuel desperately hoped that this surrogate Saul would be the successor to the throne.

Now approaching the end of his public prophetic career, Samuel the seer cannot see, and his subjective personality is exposed. The *midrash* cited earlier comes full circle:

And even Samuel—who was likened to Moses and Aaron—because he said "I am the seer" (9:19). God said to him "you said 'I am the seer', by

your life tomorrow I will show you if you are indeed a seer. As it is written, “Fill your horn with oil and set out; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have decided on one of his sons to be king” (16:1). When he arrived it is written, “When they arrived and he saw Eliab, he thought: “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands before Him” (16:6). God replied, “you are the one who said ‘I am the seer!’ ‘Pay no attention to his appearance’”. . . . (16:7) (*Tanhuma Buber Mikketz* 6).

R. Yeshayah of Trani and Yehudah Kiel *ad loc.* maintain that this *midrash* has validity in *peshat*.²⁶ God deliberately delayed revealing God’s selection of David so that Samuel would err and recognize that his will is not identical to the will of God.

Thus, Samuel’s love of his sons—and later of Saul—color his vision so that his objective prophecy and subjective personality blur throughout his relationships with God, the nation, Saul, and the institution of monarchy. The multifaceted presentation of the prophetic narrative encourages readers to discern various facets and layers of Samuel’s religious character—a singular privilege given Samuel’s exalted status as one of Israel’s greatest prophets and leaders ever.

NOTES

1. Cf. Rambam, *Hil. Yesodei HaTorah* 10:2. For analysis of the parallels between Moses and Samuel, see Amnon Bazak, *Makbilot Nifgashot: Makbilot Sifrutiyot be-Sefer Shemuel* (Alon Shevut: Hegyonot, 2006), 24-37.
2. Translations of passages from the Talmud and Midrash Rabbah (with minor modifications) are taken from Soncino. For discussion of this talmudic passage and its implications, see Hayyim Angel, *Through an Opaque Lens* (New York: Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2006), 15-20; Amos Hakham, “The Superiority of Moses’ Vision as Opposed to the More Limited Vision: A Study of Numbers 12:6-8”, in *Sefer H.M.Y. Gevaryahu: Studies in the Bible and Jewish Thought*, vol. 1, ed. B.Z. Luria (Jerusalem: The Society for Biblical Study in Israel, 1989), 60-67.
3. For this essay, I have consulted the classical commentators: Rashi, R. Yosef Kara, Radak, R. Yeshayah of Trani, R. Yosef ibn Caspi, and Ralbag are taken from *Mikra’ot Gedolot HaKeter*, ed. Menahem Cohen (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1993); R. Yitzhak Abarbanel (Jerusalem: Torah VaDa’at, 1955), Malbim, and Yehudah Kiel (*Da’at Mikra: Samuel* [Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1981]). Contemporary scholarly works consulted include: Robert Alter, *The David Story* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Shemuel Avramsky & Moshe Garsiel, *Olam HaTanakh: I Samuel* (Tel-Aviv: Dodzon-Iti, 1996); Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Mikra LeYisrael: I Samuel* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved Publishers Ltd., 1996); Moshe Garsiel,

- The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat-Gan: Revivim Publishing House, 1985).
4. Translations of biblical passages are taken from *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia & Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).
 5. Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani quoted Rabbi Yonatan, saying that Samuel's sons did not accept bribes but, rather, were guilty of not traveling around the country to judge as did their father (*Shabbat* 56a). However, several commentators, including Radak, Abarbanel, Malbim, and Kiel, accept the plain sense of the text and assert that Samuel's sons indeed perverted justice. See discussion and survey of rabbinic responses to this talmudic passage in Yaakov Medan, *David and Bathsheba* (Alon Shevut: Hegyonot, 2002), 7-24.
 6. Samuel does not appear bothered by the aspect of "like all other nations" raised by the elders in 8:5.
 7. Cf. Rambam: ". . . Why was God upset when the people asked Samuel for a king? Because they asked inappropriately; they did not ask because they wanted to fulfill the commandment but because they were rejecting Samuel's leadership" (*Hil. Melakhim* 1:2). See also Malbim on 8:6; Yehudah Kiel, "Notes on the Chapters about Saul and David", *Sinai* 49 (1961), 289-292.
 8. Coupled with the additional complexity in the Torah's formulation of the laws of monarchy (Deut. 17:14-15), it is not surprising that the nature of the Israelite monarchy has been debated throughout the ages. See surveys and analysis in Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Devarim*, 175-180; Elhanan Samet, *Iyyunim be-Parashot ha-Shavua*, first series (Ma'alei Adumim: Ma'aliyot, 2002), vol. 2, 348-363.
 9. Cf. Alter, *The David Story*, 45; Bar-Efrat, *Mikra LeYisrael*, 130.
 10. Cf. Bar-Efrat, *Mikra LeYisrael*, 148.
 11. Cf. Bar-Efrat, *Mikra LeYisrael*, 162; Garsiel, *A Literary Study*, 69.
 12. Although the plain sense of the text supports Radak and Ralbag, it is noteworthy that Rashi maintains that Samuel's primary motivation for producing the storm was to demonstrate the efficacy of his own prayers, rather than God's displeasure with the monarchy (12:16-17).
 13. Kiel, *Da'at Mikra*, 111. For a survey of prophetic passages, see Moshe Elat, *Samuel and the Establishment of Monarchy in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 60-65.
 14. Moshe Garsiel, "The Battle of Michmas: A Historical-Literary Study", in *Iyyunei Mikra u-Parshanut I: Studies in Memory of Aryeh Toeg*, Uriel Simon & Moshe Goshen-Gottstein eds. (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1980), 15-50.
 15. In this regard, the conflict between Samuel and Saul resembles that of Isaiah and Hezekiah regarding the king's alliance with Egypt. See Hayyim Angel, "Differing Portrayals of Hezekiah's Righteousness: Narratives and Prophecies," in *Through an Opaque Lens* (New York: Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2006), 226-242.
 16. I Chron. 10:13-14 lists several of Saul's sins: "Saul died for the trespass that he had committed against the LORD in not having fulfilled the command of the LORD; moreover, he had consulted a ghost to seek advice, and did not seek advice of the LORD; so He had him slain and the kingdom transferred to David son of Jesse." Kiel suggests that "did not seek advice of the LORD" likely refers to his telling Ahijah to abort the inquiry. Cf. *Midrash Samuel* 24.
 17. "Rav said: 'An omen which is not after the form pronounced by Eliezer, Abraham's servant, or by Jonathan the son of Saul, is not considered a divination'" (*Hullin*

95b). Rambam rules in accordance with the simple reading of this passage, that this form of divination is forbidden (*Hil. Avodah Zarah* 11:4). Ra'avad criticizes Rambam for interpreting the talmudic passage as prohibiting divination, rather than just describing it as unreliable information (*ad loc.*). His disagreement is based on the fact that Abraham's servant and Jonathan were righteous (and successful in their respective missions): "How could [Rambam] impute a sin of this magnitude to these righteous men!?" Cf. Radak, Ralbag, and Kiel on I Sam. 14:10; and Rabbi Yosef Karo's comments on Rambam's ruling (*Kesef Mishneh*), who all justify Jonathan.

18. Yairah Amit, "The Glory of Israel Does Not Deceive or Change His Mind': On the Reliability of Narrator and Speakers in Biblical Narrative," *Prooftexts* 12 (1992), 205.
19. Cf. Alter, *The David Story*, 73; Amit, "The Glory of Israel Does Not Deceive or Change His Mind'," 209.
20. Sensitive to this omission, Abarbanel suggests that "because you did not obey the LORD" refers to Saul's failure to wait at Gilgal; "and did not execute His wrath upon the Amalekites" refers to a separate sin against Amalek. However, this is not the smoothest reading of the verse.
Cf. *Yoma* 22b, which also ignores Saul's failure to wait at Gilgal: "Rav Huna said, '... Saul sinned once and it brought [calamity] upon him, David sinned twice and it did not bring evil upon him.' What was the one sin of Saul? The affair with Agag. But there was also the matter with Nob, the city of the priests? [Still] it was because of what happened with Agag that Scripture says: I repent that I have set up Saul to be king."
21. See further in Moshe Greenberg, "Jewish Conceptions of the Human Factor in Biblical Prophecy," in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson*, eds. Douglas A. Knight & Peter J. Paris (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 145-162.
22. Cf. Bar-Efrat, *Mikra LeYisrael*, 148; Garsiel, *Olam HaTanakh*, p. 87; Yehudah Kiel, "Notes on the Chapters about Saul and David", *Sinai* 49 (1961), 289-292.
23. For an excursus on God's repentance, see Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible, Amos* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1989), 638-679.
24. Cf. Alter, *The David Story*, 92; Amit, "The Glory of Israel Does Not Deceive or Change His Mind'," 209.
25. Cf. *Pesahim* 8b; *Yevamot* 65a; *Kiddushin* 39b. Rambam (*Shemoneh Perakim*, 7) also takes Samuel's statement literally, but considers Samuel's reservations as a flaw in the prophet's faith.
26. See also Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 94-98.