

“A CASE FOR SAUL”
Reading 1 Samuel 13:8-14
Against the Grain

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By
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DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Susi Aperaamo, and our children, Andrew and Gloria Enoka,

To my parents Seuseu Aperaamo and Moana Faapale,

To my families and friends, both here in Samoa and abroad,

as well as the *EFKS* Poutasi and *EFKS* Gautavai for their unconditional love and support.

ABSTRACT

1 Samuel 13:8-14 narrates the conflict between Samuel and Saul over Saul's sacrificial act in Gilgal. Saul is once again condemned by the prophet for his actions. This appears to be a recurring feature of Saul's reign as he is always in the wrong especially when compare to other biblical heroes such as David and Solomon, and in this case even Samuel. This thesis will read against this grain in order to argue a case for Saul, to reveal that he is justified in his actions. Not only will this thesis attempt to interrupt the flow of this dominant pessimistic view of Saul, but also to encourage readers to critically assess the suppressed views which are normally unheard or unseen.

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since our Sunday school years we have become acquainted with a negative portrait of the character of Saul, king of Israel. Saul has always been portrayed as a disobedient servant towards God through the prophet Samuel, especially when compared to the great king David, whose life stories continues to amaze us. David: the humble shepherd boy killed wild animals with his bare hands to save his sheep; slew the Philistine giant Goliath; and made the people of Israel sing in praise of his victories.

How does Saul stand in comparison to this great warrior David? If this were not enough, David is also portrayed as the obedient and faithful servant, and while Saul demands his life, David spares Saul's life instead. Clearly, there appears to be an "everyone loves David and everyone hates Saul" theme; dominating the stories of the early monarchs of Israel. Samuel's rebuke of Saul's act of offering the sacrifice in 1 Samuel 13:8-14, appears to affirm this general understanding, and it confirms this dominant portrait of Saul as disobedient and rebellious.

However, there are always two sides to every story and it clearly appears that Saul's side is either irrelevant or of little importance to the biblical account of the early monarchs. In this thesis, I wish to read against this dominant theme and to present a case for Saul. That is, this thesis will argue that Saul acted justly in offering his sacrifice to the Lord. With this reading approach, it hopes to alleviate a rather unsympathetic perception which has tainted and marred the eminence view of the first king of the nation of Israel.

This paper will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will review scholarly assessments of the Samuel-Saul narrative and relationship. It will also take into account the various views regarding the conflict between the two characters in 1 Samuel 13:8-14. The last

part of this chapter will discuss this reading against the grain approach used in this thesis.¹ In this reading, I will appropriate various Literary Critical tools to exploit certain gaps, absences and contradictions;² which are inconsistencies from within the narrative that the writer fails to present for the intended audience. However, when these inconsistencies are taken into consideration, they may bear much on the mapping together of Saul's side of the story.³

The Second chapter shall contain the first part of the exegetical process. This part shall focus more on the roles and responsibilities performed by Samuel and Saul. The Third chapter will focus specifically on the conflict between Saul and Samuel over the sacrifice. Both chapters; Two and Three might provide concrete exegetical evidence to answer the many questions that I have regarding the text: Why did Samuel appear so late for the offering of the sacrifice? Is it a set up for Saul or not?⁴ Who will be the next man to offer the sacrifice if a prophet is not present? Why did Samuel label Saul's action as foolish? What command did Saul not abide with according to Samuel? More importantly: Was Saul wrong to do what he did?

This work shall present in the end its conclusions as well as possible implications from the study.

¹ This metaphor shall be discussed further in detail in chapter one.

² Gale Yee uses the same tools in her "intrinsic analysis" of the text/narrative to exploit certain ideological thoughts which are embedded in the text. Such would include narrative, form, structure, grammatical, and others which may assist in the task. This also provides possible indicators of ideologies which are undermined by the text/narrative; such as in the case of king Saul. see Gale Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale Yee, 146-170 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

³ Richard G. Bowman, "Narrative Criticism" in *Judges & Methods-New Approaches in Biblical Studies (2nd edition)*, ed. Gale Yee, 19-21 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel: Interpretation –A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Kentucky, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 99.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review & Reading Approach

This chapter has a two-fold purpose. The first deals with the review of the current scholarly literature available on this narrative as well as the focal issues of discussion. The second purpose is to provide a discussion of the chosen reading strategy chosen for this work, i.e. “reading against the grain.”

1.1 Literature Review

The purpose of this review is to discuss the different perspectives and viewpoints of academics regarding the Saul-Samuel narrative; highlighting in particular the various views regarding the relationship between the two, or more precisely, the conflict between them. Furthermore, these perspectives are of great importance to the core of this study, i.e. the conflict in 1 Samuel 13:8-14.

Walter Brueggemann makes the literary connection between 1 Samuel, chapters 9 – 11 and chapters 13 – 15. For Brueggemann, this literary unit demonstrates not only the rise to power of Saul but also his downfall. Chapters 9 - 11 describe the institution of Saul as Israel’s initial king. Each of these chapters portrays a successful Saul highlighting the legitimacy of his selection as the king of Israel.⁵ However, chapters 13 – 15 narrate his nullification. Chapter 12 is a warning from Samuel to both Israel and its king of the utmost importance of obedience to the Lord. Disobedience will result in failure and punishment. Thus, chapter 12 provides the pivotal point which sets the scene between success and downfall, i.e. it prepares the readers for the fall of the king which is to follow. The victory story in chapter 14 is framed by the two accounts of Saul’s

⁵ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 70.

failure and rejection in chapters 13 and 15. David Toshio Tsumura argues that the incident in chapter 13 is parallel to the incident in chapter 15; i.e. both accounts report Saul's cultic offense at Gilgal emphasising the importance of obedience to the word of Yahweh.⁶

On the negative front, Robert D. Bergen views king Saul's negative perception in the book of 1st Samuel as problematic, and he should be seen as an unfit king.⁷ Saul simply was a disobedient servant who disobeyed God through the prophet Samuel. In Bergen's own words, "Saul's failure is simple; the king was spiritually disloyal towards the Lord's word."⁸ Bergen argues that the seven days were not totally complete. This is a major claim against the biblical text (1 Sam. 13:8); however Bergen strongly suggests that Saul may have offered the sacrifice in the morning. Considering that sacrifices could be offered twice a day, Saul should have waited for Samuel to offer the sacrifice in the evening. Bergen also argues that Saul in his response to Samuel's questions shows how he lacks confidence as a leader towards Yahweh the God of Israel.⁹

Antony F. Campbell labels the narrative of Saul and Samuel as the "Saul-Samuel Conflict." This narrative according to Campbell reaches its climax in chapter 13 with the rebuking of Saul by Samuel.¹⁰ Like Bergen, obedience to God and his Word is the primary goal of any servant, anything else will have to settle for second.¹¹ Saul is again perceived to be a disobedient king, and this disobedience is the reason for the verdict which Samuel announces. Campbell also believes that Saul should have waited earnestly for Samuel that would also be a

⁶ David Toshio Tsumura, "Chapter 13 and Chapter 15-Two versions of the Same Incident" in *The First Book of Samuel*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007), 387.

⁷ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel: The New American Commentary (NIV) -An exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture – Vol 7*, (USA: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996).146-150.

⁸ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 146.

⁹ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 150.

¹⁰ Antony F. Campbell, "Chapter 5-The emergence of the Monarchy" in *1 Samuel-the Forms of the Old Testament Literature (Vol vii)*, ed. Rolf P. Knierim and Marvin A. Sweeney, 138 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003).

¹¹ Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 138.

sign of waiting earnestly for Yahweh. Despite the command in (1 Sam. 10:8) coming from the mouth of Samuel; Campbell agrees with the assessment of chapter 13 that they are the words of Yahweh and thus must be obeyed. The fact that Saul's failure is announced in a prophetic manner by Samuel (despite the absence of the prophetic formula, "thus says the Lord..."¹²), is a testimony that this is also the will of Yahweh, the God of Israel.¹³

Interestingly, Warren W. Wiersbe announces a distinct reason of Saul's loss of the kingdom. He argues that Saul was only swayed by the opinions of the folks. He was more concerned about the actions, thoughts and feelings of individuals, rather than the actions, thoughts and feelings of God.¹⁴

Apart from many commentators represented above, there are those who have a different perspective on the character of King Saul. This group shall be represented in our discussion by David Gunn and Walter Brueggemann. At the outset, Gunn criticizes the negative analysis of king Saul as a Christian view. He concludes that this hostile Christian view springs from the very fact that king David is championed by many Christians and commentators as the representative of Christ in the flesh and with spiritual significance. Thus, Saul's intentions of persecuting David, is also a persecution of Christ Himself. Therefore, "Saul's reputation is hardly an enviable one, at least in Christian circles."¹⁵

¹² "Thus says the Lord..." A standard form a messenger uses to deliver a message verbatim. The formula consists of three elements: (1) Thus says...followed by (2) the name of the one sending the message and (3) first-person speech: the messenger uses 'I' and 'me. see Thomas L. Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings and Scrolls*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 68. see also Bernard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 224.

¹³ Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 138 – 139.

¹⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *1 Samuel: The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: The Complete Old Testament in One Volume*, (USA: David C. Cook, 2007), 510-514.

¹⁵ David. M. Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story*, (England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 1989), 23-24.

However, more to the issue at hand, Gunn concludes that the events of chapter 13 highlight how Saul is finally caught in a trap that had been woven right from the beginning.¹⁶ For Gunn, chapter 8 is an introductory description of the downfall of Israel's first king. He notes Samuel's and Yahweh's response to the people's request for a king as a sense of displeasure towards the establishment of a monarchy. While Samuel's annoyance appears to be associated with the sharing of his privileged roles and responsibilities, Yahweh's words to Samuel also reveals a displeased Yahweh, when he was rejected as the only King of Israel. Thus, from the outset, the monarch appears to have caused feelings of resentment amongst two of the most influential figures of the story; Samuel and Yahweh. Furthermore, this tension also seems to forecast a future where the monarch would not always be in good terms with Yahweh and Samuel.¹⁷

Gunn, therefore, questions the true origin of Saul's condemnation in 1 Samuel 13:8 – 14. He concludes that the whole purpose of the conflict scene is to solidify that Saul is already doomed.¹⁸ In contrast to Bergen and Campbell, Gunn argues that Saul fulfilled the appointed waiting time as the text suggests. For Gunn, Saul unknowingly falls into the trap that awaited him. Finally, Gunn argues that the judgement or the declaration of Saul's failure is additionally ambiguous in that Saul could not have been able to cement his reign because a successor has already been chosen to replace him.¹⁹

In line with Gunn, Walter Brueggemann sees Samuel's arrival in Gilgal with his message of rejection already confirmed; he only required a reason for its announcement.²⁰ Like Gunn, Brueggemann also perceives Samuel's disapproval of Saul as a matter of overstepping the

¹⁶ Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 67.

¹⁷ Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 61. Gordon also feels that the dominate emotion of chapters 13-15 is that of failure and not success, see Robert. P. Gordon, "The Reign of Saul" in *1 & 2 Samuel-A commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 131.

¹⁸ Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 56.

¹⁹ Gunn, *The Fate of King Saul*, 67.

²⁰ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 100.

boundaries of power. Saul has already been condemned for personally taking the rights and power belonging to Samuel.²¹ Thus, for Brueggemann, Saul's failure is not due to his action, but because of Samuel's failure to delegate crucial social roles to king Saul. We are told that Saul was authorised to act as a judge (1 Sam. 7), he was allowed to prophecy (1 Sam.. 10:9-16), and chiefly to act as king and as a warrior. So why was he not allow to offer sacrifice?

Then, who will be the next person to offer a sacrifice? Brueggemann concludes that the conflict over the sacrifice was only a small matter and did not warrant the harsh penalty of transferring of power as announced by Samuel.²² This then could only mean that this was always an issue from the beginning. For Brueggemann, Saul's actions were only a result of two things, (1) Samuel's no-show, and (2) the war was about to start.²³ Thus, against Wiersbe's critique of Saul, Brueggemann sees it as strength, i.e. Saul's actions were valid with regards to time and the confrontation that was at hand and thus did not deserve the verdict he received.²⁴

1.1.1 Summary

In the literature review, two major arguments are represented. First, the majority condemn Saul and his actions and perceive him as a disobedient and unworthy king of Israel.²⁵ These claims are heavily based on theological readings and assumptions of the text and the story. John J. Collins provides further explanation for he sees the failure of Saul's kingship to be closely

²¹ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 97.

²² Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 102.

²³ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 99.

²⁴ James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel: The College Press NIV Commentary*, (USA: College Press Publishing Co, 2000), 177. According to Ignatius, the character of king Saul given within the narrative of chapter 13 and chapter 15 is a lot of or probably a 'foil' to exalt king David to the throne. see Peter Ignatius, *King Saul: A Villain Or a Hero? Revisiting the Character of Saul*, (Delhi: Alianz Enterprises, 2008), 3.

²⁵ Carl Laney, *First & Second Samuel-Everyman's Bible Commentary*,(Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1982), 45-47. Bruce C. Birch, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," in *The New Interpreters Bible –Vol 11 (NIB)*, (ed) Leander E. Keck, Thomas G. Long, John J. Collins, 1068-1071 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998). V. Philip Long, "First Samuel" in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary- Vol 2, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel*, ed. John H. Walton, 324-330 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

associated with the theological reading of the Deuteronomistic History.²⁶ This reading emphasises that “success comes from keeping God's commandments and failure from disobediences.”²⁷ Furthermore, as Gunn explains, the Christian communities also have a great influence in this type of reading. Second, others have supported Saul and his actions. Represented in the discussion by Gunn and Brueggemann, their stance explicate that Saul's character appears doomed from the very beginning. This alternative view to the Samuel-Saul narrative moves away from the consensus, and it offers a fair assessment of the situation, at least from the perspective of king Saul.

In this work, the author wishes to continue in the path already laid down by the second group, i.e. represented by Gunn and Brueggemann. The purpose is to build a case for king Saul whose side of the story seems oblivious and neglected by the normal interpretation. It is a reading against the grain strategy.

1.2 Reading Strategy: Reading against the Grain

“Reading against the grain” can be seen as a metaphorical language that comes from the world of carpentry. The ‘grain’ represents fine fabric lines on a piece of wood, which always falls along the same direction. If the piece of wood is plained in the same direction with the grain, then the grain remains smooth but if it is plained in the opposite direction, the grains will tear rather than lie smoothly.²⁸ Thus, to read against the grain simply means to go against the

²⁶ Deuteronomistic History – henceforth *DH* includes the Books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings. It is a concept in which Martin Noth in 1943, who firstly indentified these books as a literary entity and unity, located in the time of exile, the work of a single individual (Dtr). The purpose of DH, is to inform the exile community that being captured in the exile is Yahweh's just retribution for disobeying the laws. see Mark O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1983), 3-4.

²⁷ John, J Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 223.

²⁸ ‘What is the meaning and origin of go against the grain’, <http://www.thehindu.com/books/know-your-english/> (accessed 15 March 2014).

generally accepted practice, or societal norms or simply something that is unpleasant compared to the wider accepted view.²⁹ It is a way of creating a strong response towards a common interpretation of the text in any form of literature. This includes generating counter-questions to create alternative lines of reasoning; i.e. to assess inconsistencies which can assist in putting together the unmined or unheard side of the story.

Such an approach is not new in the world of reading and interpreting of the biblical text and narratives. It has already been used by other authors who have their own label and procedures of carrying out this type of reading. For this work I wish to discuss in particular two scholars whose works shall be fundamental in how I approach the text. David J. A. Clines also employs the same idea under the label of “Reading from left to right” which he appropriates in his assessment and analysis of the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:1-18).³⁰ Clines take this label as his metaphor to describe his reading and interpretation which goes against the norm. This metaphor is taken from the direction in which the Hebrew text is read, whereas the normal way to read the Hebrew text is from “right to left” for Clines to read from “Left to Right” is a reading against the norm.³¹

According to Clines, Reading from Left to Right requires readers “to step outside the conventions and beliefs that the text wants to impose on us.” Clines begin critiquing the notion that God actually spoke these words from the sky in the hearing of the Israelites. Clines assumes through the lens of reading from left to right, that the Decalogue is humanly produced and preserved in writing because it was in the interests of its framers/authors for it to be publicized. The question remains, whose interest are these commandments? To Clines, the commands were

²⁹ What does against the grain mean? <http://www.wisegeek.org>. (accessed 15 March 2014).

³⁰ David J. A. Clines, “The Ten Commandments: Reading from Left To Right” in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. D Clines and Phillip Davies, 26-45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, JSOT, 1995).

³¹ Clines, “The Ten Commandments: Reading from Left To Right”, 26.

normally accepted as it was given for the Israelites. Thus, in reading Exodus 20: 1-17 from left to right, Clines concluded that the existence of the Decalogue was not to any Israel, but particularly to the wealthier and healthier group. This means that there is a sidelining of women, resident aliens, slaves, children, the unmarried, and the elderly. The narrator glosses over the landless, the dispossessed, and the day workers. In other words, there is no mention of the type of authority structures. In particular, the narrator hides any conflict between Israelite males whose social dominance the narrator upholds, and all the other groups, which the narrator marginalizes.³² So we can clearly see that there are many untold stories and narratives.

Gale Yee also runs against the norm when she attempts to present a case for the lower class societies, especially the agrarian community in contrast to the royal ideology of the king and elite which appears dominant at the time. Although Yee argues on the basis of a social historical conflict, what is important for this thesis is the procedure she employs under the label of “intrinsic analysis” in which she uses various literary critical tools to unveil the ideology embedded in the text. She argues that any text has absences and gaps which are not presented because normally they contradict with the author’s ideology. These gaps and absences in any text must be obtained in order to visualise the hidden voices in the story. Moreover, intrinsic analysis of any text enables the readers to reassess how the text portrays individual characters and specific plots in which the story presents. In the same way, the author wishes to approach the Saul-Samuel narrative in order to exploit the inconsistencies, gaps, etc., which are in the text.³³

³² For a more detailed explanation of Clines concept of “Left to Right”, see David J. A. Clines, “The Ten Commandments: Reading from Left To Right” in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. D Clines and Phillip Davies, 26-45 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, JSOT, 1995). According to J. Cheryl Exum this is referred to as “proper reading” of a text. J. Cheryl Exum, “Feminist Criticism” in *Judges & Methods-New Approaches in Biblical Studies (2nd edition)*, ed. Gale Yee, 68-70 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

³³ Gale Yee, “Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body” in *Judges & Methods-New Approaches in Biblical Studies (2nd edition)*, ed. Gale Yee, 138-143 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

In this manner, the thesis aims to reassess the character of Saul as portrayed in the Samuel-Saul narratives particularly on 1 Samuel 13:8-14. In doing so, the thesis will focus more on gaps and inconsistencies or contradictions in between the lines of the narrative. This work will also appropriate the functions of a ‘close reading strategy’³⁴ during the exegetical process in chapter two and chapter three.

³⁴ ‘Close Reading’ is a common strategy in reading that focuses on understanding the text base. A method involves paying attention to what is printed on the page by rereading and analysing particular part of a text. Sometimes it also covers a wide range of issues, including discerning a word’s particular meaning or the syntactic construction of a sentence, to thematic progression, author’s craft, or a view of the world that a text might offer. It involves almost everything, from the smallest linguistic items to the largest issues of literary understanding and judgment. see Danielle S. McNamara, ed, *Reading Comprehension Strategies: Theories, Interventions, and Technologies*, (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 479-480.

CHAPTER TWO

Exegesis Part 1

The Narrated Roles of Samuel & Saul

It is noticeable in the story that the conflict between Samuel and king Saul is with regards to Saul's act of offering the sacrifice. This act triggers Samuel's anger and words of rejection towards the first king of Israel. This conflict thus raises questions pertaining to roles and responsibilities. Does Saul have the authority to carry out such rituals and acts? According to Samuel, he does not possess this privilege. However to follow the utopian nature of this work, the thesis will explore the narrated roles and responsibilities of these two characters, in order to draw appropriate conclusions. This chapter's function is not only to provide a viewpoint of this paper on the question above, but will also form a foundation to assist in the discussions of Samuel's agenda in the following chapter. The chapter will commence with a study of Samuel followed by the analysis of Saul.

2.1 Samuel

The story of Samuel is reported in the first 25 chapters of the book bearing his name. His emergence in Israel ends a divinely ordained condition of barrenness for his mother Hannah (1 Sam. 1: 1-:5).³⁵ According to Marvin A. Sweeney, the birth narrative of Samuel parallels with the birth stories of Isaac to Sarah and Joseph and Benjamin to Rachel because each birth narrative echoes a barren-wife motif found in many Old Testament stories. This barren-wife motif states that children born from barren mothers will become leading figures in the history of

³⁵ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 58.

Israel.³⁶ In this respect, it is obvious that Samuel also appears destined by Yahweh to be a leader for the Israelites; which in-fact he does. As a leader, his roles are not limited only to religious duties, but also the socio-political spheres of the life of the Israelites.³⁷

2.1.1 Religious Roles

(1) Priest

Following the death of the high priest Eli, the story turns its focus to the character of Samuel while Eli's descendants and lineage are now more passive and gradually fade away from centre stage. While Samuel's role as priest is normally assumed by his succession to the office of Eli his predecessor, it still does not mean that he upheld the priestly office according to the Israelite understanding. The tribe of Levi and their descendants were officially the priests of Israel (Deut.18:2, Josh. 13:33) whereas Aaron and his sons – who are also descendants of Levi – upheld the office of the high priest. Was Samuel a Levite? According to the Chronicler's³⁸ Levitical genealogy (1 Chr. 6:30-34), Samuel is in fact a Levite. Here, the Chronicler traces the relationship of Samuel to the Kohathite family (1 Chr. 6:22-29).³⁹ However, despite this internal information, there is no real consensus on Samuel's status as a Levite priest.

³⁶ Marvin A Sweeney, "The Book of Samuel" in *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 210. Dumbrell on the other hand believes that 1 Samuel 1-3 describes Samuel as Yahweh's leader to rule over Israel after the period of judges. see W. J. Dumbrell *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus*, (Oregon: Baker Books, 2001), 60.

³⁷ Martin Sicker, *The First Book of Samuel: A Study in Prophetic History*, (Bloomington: iUniverse Company, 2011), 100-112.

³⁸ Chronicler: I am referring to the author of the book of Chronicles

³⁹ Merrill justifies Samuel's functioning as a priest arguing that Samuel is a Levite by lineage but an Ephramite by residence. To Merrill, Samuel's relationship into the Levites family can be obtained by reading the genealogies of Levi as mentioned in 1 Chronicles 6: 30-38. see Eugene H. Merrill, '1 Samuel' in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed, John F Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, 432-433, (Colorado Springs, David C. Cook, 1983). Price also comments that Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the father of Samuel was of the house of the Levi through Kohath. see Lynn F Price, "Elkanah" in *Every Person in the Old Testament*, (Springville: Horizon Publishers, 2007), 188.

James E. Smith argues that: first, the appearance of the name Samuel in the genealogy of 1 Chr. 6:30-34 seems to be an error during scribal transmission of sources from time to time or verbal communication to written sources. Second, the name Samuel in 1 Chr. 6:30-34 shows a genealogical selectivity of the author. In other words, the Chronicler adapts the name Samuel to the Kohathite family⁴⁰ to signify the ruling power of priests after exile.⁴¹ Furthermore, James T. Sparks argues that the Chronicler does not mention Samuel performing any priestly function throughout the Book of Chronicles. For Sparks, the Chronicler describes Samuel more as a prophet (2 Chr. 35:18), and seer (1 Chr. 9:22, 26:28, 29:29) rather than a priest. Third, the Chronicler also supports the idea of Aaron, and his sons to perform priestly functions as describe in details in Exo, 28-29 and Lev. 8-10 (1 Chr. 6:49). Fourth, Sparks conclude that 1 Chr. 6:30-34 stresses the status of Samuel's sons - Joel and Abjah - as Levites, not the character of Samuel.⁴²

Samuel's status as a Levite continues to be debated. In this work, both options will be considered and their bearings on the argument. First, if it is true that Samuel is not connected to the Levitical priest, then the case appears to be closed, i.e. Samuel does not possess the authority to uphold the high priestly duty of offering sacrifice. The fact that he does continue to be priest through adoption can be seen as necessary due to the lack of sufficient and worthy personnel to uphold the priestly responsibility. Second, if we consider Samuel as a Levite, it will be important to discuss the specific roles of the priestly families, especially that of the Levite priests.

In the history of the priesthood institution, the Levites belong to one of the three sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Elkanah is portrayed as a descendant of Izhar (also known

⁴⁰ Second son of Levi (Gen. 46:11), ancestor of Moses (Exo. 6:16-20; Num. 3:17, 19; 1 Chr. 6:1-3). His descendants, the Kohathites, one of three divisions of the Levites, comprised four families (Num .3:17-20, 27-31), see David Noel Freedman, Gary A. Herion, David F. Graf, eds, "Kohath" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary: Vol 4, K-N*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 95-97.

⁴¹ James E Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 36-37.

⁴² James T. Sparks, *The Chronicler's Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles 1-9*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 97-99.

as Amminadab) the son of Kohath. Izhar's brother Amram is the father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Exo.6:16-20). So it is clear that all descendants of Levi are known as Levites. However, the priesthood structure is consecrated around Aaron and his sons who were officially ordained to become the high priesthood (Lev. 8). It is clear that while all priests are normally Levites, not all Levites can be high priests.

The high priests performed various duties such as, (1) to oversee the Levites (Num. 3:32, 4:28.32), (2) to protect the sanctuary from intrusions by outsiders (Num 3:38), (3) to pronounce the priestly blessings (Num. 6:22-27), and (4) to carry out sacrificial duties connected with the altar and all functions in the inner sanctorum (Num. 18:5-8). On the other hand, the Levites in general worked under the high priest for the tabernacle and assisted in duties not connected with the altars or sacrifice (Num. 1:50, 3:6-8, 18:3-4, 6, 23).⁴³

It is obvious that conducting sacrificial offerings are the main task for any high priest who is a descendant of Aaron. Samuel although he is a Levite, he is not a descendant of Aaron and thus, does not have the authority to offer sacrifices. So once again, Samuel seems to improvise in his action, i.e. he indeed performs what is needed of him at any particular time.

(2) Prophet

The term prophet carries three main functions that are individually important: first, *nabi* which means to declare or announce, second, *ro'eh* meaning 'one who sees' or translated 'seer' and third, *hozeh* which means 'to see', but usually connected with divine visions, e.g. Ezekiel 13:

⁴³ Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 144-147. Herbert M. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1991), 204. Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 277-279. Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, (USA: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 152.

16, 23.⁴⁴ A prophet is also known as a man of God; usually called by Yahweh for his/her mission. This divine revelation signifies Yahweh's own choice. Prophets are also portrayed as God's mouthpiece or the messengers of God. Their main function is to deliver Yahweh's divine Word for God's people. Sometimes prophets work as diviners to discover hidden things. They inquire information from God for a particular need or purpose.⁴⁵

Samuel's life of service portrays the fulfilment of most of these prophetic criteria. He is divinely called to service (1 Sam 3:10-21). He speaks for Yahweh as a messenger of God in many occasions. He acts as an intercessor for the people's demand to include the incident in Mizpah (1 Sam 7:8). In 1 Sam 9:15, Samuel also notifies Saul about his lost donkeys (1 Sam 9:20). He is also a king-maker; he anoints Saul as king after receiving the revelation from Yahweh (1 Sam 10:1ff) and later on anoints David as king (1 Sam 16:1-13). Samuel does work as a prophet and may have been seen clearly by people as a prophet instead of a priest. This is a point which is upheld by some such as Smith.⁴⁶

(3) *Nazarite*

In the history of Israel, there are also those who are not Levites who have appeared to perform sacrificial offerings in the presence of Yahweh. De Vaux⁴⁷ writes:

In the period of the Judges and at the beginning of the monarchy, not all priests were Levites, Micah, a man of Ephraim appointed his own sons a priest (Judge 17:5). Samuel, too, was an Ephraimite (1 Samuel 1:1) but he was attached to the sanctuary at Shiloh, wore a priest's loincloth (1 Sam 2:18), and offered sacrifices (1 Sam 7: 9, 9:13, 10:8),.....Abinadab was a man of Qiryth-Yearim,

⁴⁴ Paul L. Redditt, "Introduction to Prophetic Literature" in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn, John W. Rogerson, 482, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003).

⁴⁵ John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*, (England: Lion Books, 2000), 169.

⁴⁶ William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard and Frederic Wm. Bush, "Prophets and Prophecy" in *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of the Old Testament*, 2nd edition, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 226.

⁴⁷ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institution*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co and Dove Booksellers, 1997), 361.

but his son Eleazar was appointed to be the priest in charge of the Ark (1Sam 7:1). In the lists of David's chief ministers, the sons of David are mentioned as priests and they belonged to the tribe of Judah (2 Sam 8:18). Ira the Yairite, who belonged to the clan of Manasseh (2 Sam 20:26) is also called a priest.....

In the same manner, Hannah's description of the child Samuel's early life sees him as a Nazarite,⁴⁸ i.e. one separated to God (1 Sam 1:11). The vow states that he shall not drink wine nor cut his hair. These observances are part of the Nazarite life (Judges 13:4-5). Under the guidance of the high priest Eli, Samuel the Nazarite performs priestly duties in the sanctuary at Shiloh. Such duties include, guarding the Lord's ark (1 Sam 3:3) and offering sacrifices for Israel before heading into battle (1 Sam 7:7-10).⁴⁹ This life of service as a Nazarite gives Samuel the authority to offer sacrifices something which his priestly status cannot. In other words, when Samuel offers sacrifices, he acts under the title of Nazarite rather than priest.

2.1.2 Socio-Political Roles

As a leading figure in society, one would normally be responsible to his socio-historical environment. Likewise, Samuel had Socio-Political roles to fulfil. He was a judge, lawgiver, and military leader.

⁴⁸ A Nazarite vow separates oneself for the Lord for a length of time upon his or her own choosing. The Nazarite vow consisted of grooming guidelines, dietary restrictions and religious practices. (1) Grooming Restrictions: The Hebrew word for Nazarite literally means an unpruned vine or vine undressed. When a vine is unpruned or undressed, it is because it has been neglected. This implies that a Nazarite would neglect the body and its desires in order to separate themselves unto the Lord. This is signified by the cessation of the maintenance of the hair and beard. To allow the hair to grow during the days of the consecration is a visible sign of their consecration. (2) Dietary Restrictions: The Nazarite had to avoid anything that comes from the vine. Vine in those days, was the source for wine and strong drink. These lead to intoxication and loss of self-control, which leads to sin. The restriction of the vine demonstrates the Nazarite's separation from fleshly desires and lusts. (3) Religious Practices Restrictions: the last restrictions concern the separation from the dead bodies. This restriction illustrates separation from family and worldly concerns. see Roderick L. Evans, *Samson, the Nazarite: A Brief Expository of God's Strong Man*, (New California: Kingdom Builders Publishing, 2009), 4-8.

⁴⁹ David F. Payne, *I & II Samuel*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982), 23.

(1) Judge and a Military Leader

It is made clear to us in the scriptures that Samuel was indeed a judge – “*Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life*” (1 Sam. 7:15). First, the roles of a judge were of juridical nature such as our modern understanding of judges. The Hebrew term שֹׁפֵט means ‘judge or govern’ implies that judges were also lawgivers, giving out laws for the society.⁵⁰ They were responsible for administering of justice amongst the community. From the era of judges, Tola and Jair (Judg. 10:1-5), Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (Judg. 12:8-15) performs such roles.⁵¹ Moses himself is also seen as a judge and his appointment of the 70 elders was for this very purpose. It was this role of administering justice being delegated and while the elders were given jurisdiction over small matters, Moses himself would personally oversee matters of great importance (Ex.18, 24; Deut.19, etc...). With God being the source of all justice, judges were given this power to judge people on behalf of the God of Israel.

Second, the Book of Judges describes judges as local leaders responsible for any military action such as defending the territory clan of his people.⁵² As military leaders, judges’ roles are to deliver Israel from her enemies. This is evidently portrayed in the book of Judges. Othniel saves Israel from plunderers (Judg. 3: 7-11), Ehud saves them from the Moabites (Judg. 3:12-30), Shamgar (Judg. 3: 31), Jephthah (Judg 11), and Samson (Judg. 13-16). In Judges 6-8, Gideon commands a small band of men to defeat the Midianites, similarly, Deborah and Barak also defeats the Canaanites (Judg, 4-5).

⁵⁰ “שֹׁפֵט” in *BDB*, 1047.

⁵¹ Neils Peter Lemche, “Judge” in *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Israel*, (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 176-177. Gordon D Fee, Robert L, Hubbard Jr, “Judge” in *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Com, 2011), 205-206.

⁵² Paula M. McNutt, *Reconstructing The Society of Ancient Israel*, ed. Douglas A. Knight, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 98-99.

Samuel's role as a judge does not appear among the Judges of Israel as mentions in the Book of Judges but Samuel performs such roles. In his military role, Samuel leads Israel in battle and defeats the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:13-14). As a juridical leader, Samuel judges Israel to refrain from worshipping other gods (1 Sam. 10:3-6). On the other hand, Samuel documents legal descriptions of the ways in which kings are prone to refer to as regulations (1 Sam. 10:25).

To this point, Samuel's status as a judge before the monarchy falls in line with Yahweh's purpose of raising judges to deliver Israel from her enemies.

‘Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them.’ (Judg. 2:18)

Indeed, judges bring success in fulfilling their roles because of Yahweh's presence. Similarly, Samuel successfully leads people spiritually in the covenant renewal ceremony at Mizpah and leads Israel politically into battle and gain victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:3-14).

The above discussion of the character of Samuel reveals that Yahweh Himself authorises Samuel to perform these religious and socio-political roles. As a result, Samuel frequently conveys victory and success for the people of Israel. Success and victory usually proves Yahweh's authority.

2.2 Saul

Saul will always be remembered as the very first king of Israel. He is briefly introduced as the son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin. Furthermore, the story also describes him as a tall and handsome man (1 Sam. 9:1-2). This paper shall now look at Saul's many roles and responsibilities as a leader of Israel.

2.2.1 Socio-Political Roles

(1) King, Military Leader & Judge

The establishment of the Israelite monarchy is ignited by the people's request to Samuel, following their clear observation that Samuel's sons are unfit to uphold his office after him.

You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations."... and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles. (1 Sam. 8:5, 20)

For the people, their requested king has two primary functions. First, they requested a king to "govern" מְשֹׁל which also means "to judge" them. We may take note at this point that such a request may have indeed been a painful experience for Samuel who has been 'judging' the tribes since he took office. Second, the king was also to be their military leader, one who goes out before them and fight their battles. For Israel, the roles of the military leader and judge were now to be unified under the institution of the monarchy. This understanding is also obvious in Yahweh's words to Samuel.

Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be ruler over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the suffering of my people, because their outcry has come to me. (1 Sam. 9:16)

Another important point which can be drawn from these words is the fact that Yahweh remains to be the power behind the appointed king. Before the introduction of kings, Yahweh has always been Israel's one and only King, in other words Israel is a theocratic nation,⁵³ i.e. living under the direction of Yahweh. 1 Sam. 10:9, 11:6 describes how the Spirit of the Lord

⁵³ The term theocratic simply means the rule of God. This phrase, therefore speaks of God's rule over a temporal, human kingdom...Even more specially, it refers to God's rule over the nation of Israel. This aspect kingdom was established at Mount Sinai when Israel entered into a covenant relationship with God and agreed to keep God's law...see Ronald Youngblood, *The Heart of the Old Testament: A Survey of Key Theological Themes*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 62.

transforms Saul into a real leader and commander (refer also Judg. 3:10, 6:34, 11:29). It is the Lord's doing and this is evident in Saul's ability to bring together all tribes of Israel to fight the Ammonites. Accordingly, people instantly obey and that is a clear sign of the power of the authority behind Saul's word, i.e. Yahweh. Their victory is once again a sign of Yahweh's presence. Saul and the Israelites defeat the Ammonites. While Saul's position is presented positively here, Samuel suggests that monarchs also have their weaknesses, i.e. they tend to turn out more as tyrant rulers who seem to care about nothing else except for profit and for themselves alone (1 Sam. 8:11-18).

The establishment of the monarchy can pose a threat to the theocratic system; however this is inconsequential because Yahweh is still in control. It should be Yahweh's reign that remains established amongst the people. The earthly king should represent Yahweh's rule on earth. However, while the character Saul is shown to have undertaken all of these roles, he is heavily criticized by Samuel as being disobedient to Yahweh. This indicates that Samuel sees Saul as failing in his role as a king; i.e. an insufficient representation of Yahweh's reign on earth.

2.2.2 Religious Roles

We have seen in the discussion of the king how the role has a religious dimension to it as representing Yahweh's kingship on earth. "The Lord's anointed" was the ordinary phrase for the theocratic king (1 Sam. 12:3; Lam. 4:20). This is evident in his anointing by Samuel;

Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him; he said, "The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around. Now this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you ruler over his heritage (1 Sam. 10:1)

(1) Anointed one

The Hebrew term for “anoint” מָשַׁח also carries the connotation of “smear” or to “rub” (Isa. 21:5; Jer. 22:14), thus the idea of smearing or rubbing with oil to the body is referred to as the practice of anointing.⁵⁴ Anointing is a religious act and usually it signified the sanctification of three types of leadership; (1), prophets, (1 Kings 19:16), (2), priests (Ex. 28:41), and (3), kings (1Sam. 10:1, 16:3, 1 Kings 1:39, 2 Kings 9:6, 11:12).⁵⁵ Historically, kings were the only leaders anointed in Israel but the anointing of priests became popular when the priests became the dominant leaders of Judah after the exile. Although the institution of the monarchy gradually but unsuccessfully struggles to immediately revive itself after exile, the anointing tradition continues to be popular; i.e. it continues through the anointing of the high priest and then to all priests who at this time had emerged to be the leaders of the returning exiles.⁵⁶

The prophets are normally seen as responsible for the anointing process, i.e. not only anointing kings but also other prophets themselves. We see how Elijah is instructed to anoint Hazael, the king of Syria, Jehu the king of Israel and the prophet Elisha (1 Kings 19:15-16). Likewise, Isaiah presents himself as an anointed prophet of Yahweh in Isaiah 61:1. In both cases, the word ‘anoint’ appears as a confirmation of authority granted to prophets for conducting their tasks. In this case, the word ‘anoint’ is used metaphorically; i.e. it functions to signify the authority and God’s own initiative behind the chosen ones and as a result, people obey and follow their ways.

⁵⁴ Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns, eds. “Messiah” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 466-472.

⁵⁵ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, “מָשַׁח” in AMG’s Annotated Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary in *James Strong, LL. D, S.T.D., Strong’s Complete Word Study Concordance: Expanded Edition*, ed. Warren Baker, 1910 (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2004).

⁵⁶ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institution*, 104-105.

Anointing in the Old Testament meant three things. First, anointing sets a person or objects apart as holy and consecrated for divine purposes (1 Chr. 29:22). We may take note that before Saul, the only other people spoken of as the anointed are the priests, especially those of the Aaronic lineage. Second, anointing symbolises the authority granted to the anointed one (1 Sam. 10:6, 16:13).⁵⁷ Third, no one was permitted to bring any harm to the anointed of Yahweh (1 Sam. 24:10, 26:9). Here the king is also empowered by Yahweh to perform particular roles including religious acts; one act in particular is the offering of sacrifices. Later, David is seen offering sacrifices (2 Sam. 6:13, 17-18, 24:25), and even Solomon during his reign (1 Kings 3:4, 15).⁵⁸ Lawrence Boadt also affirms kings did offer sacrifices in their time.⁵⁹ In general, sacrifices could be offered either individually or publically. Here we note that sacrifices are also a responsibility of any individual while it is normally a practice for the high priest to perform.⁶⁰ In this respect, it is evident that the act of offering the sacrifice is not restricted to any other individual. In the context of public worship, the high priest would be fitting to offer the sacrifice on behalf of the people. However the question remains; whose role is it to offer the sacrifice if the high priest is not around? Shouldn't it be any individual?

2.3 Summary

The study above reveals that Yahweh endorses both Samuel and Saul as destined leaders of his people Israel. We may note that while in charge, Samuel acts as a priest, judge and a prophet. Saul on the other hand becomes the first king of Israel who under his office also has

⁵⁷ Leland Ryken and others, eds., "Anoint" in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, (USA: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 3.

⁵⁸ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institution*, 104-105. see also, Vermon K. Robbins, *Who Do People Say I Am?: Rewriting Gospel in Emerging Christianity*, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co), 76.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Boadt, "Priests and Levites" in *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 277-278.

⁶⁰ T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, "Sacrifices and Offerings" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, (England: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 706-732.

authority to judge and prophesy, to be the military leader the people long for. Additionally, Saul carries out religious acts – namely sacrifices for our purposes - especially in his role as Yahweh’s anointed.

Focussing on the issue of sacrifice which is at the centre of the conflict, a few things can be said about both characters and their relation to the ritual. First, Samuel whose Levitical status is still debated really has no proper authority to offer the sacrifice which is restricted to the Aaronic lineage. Even if he were a Levite through blood, he still does not possess that authority as he is not a son of Aaron. However, it is evident in Samuel’s case that improvising was an essential requirement. After all, Eli’s sons who by blood were the rightful heirs to the high priestly office were condemned unfit by Yahweh for the job. This leaves the door wide open as to who then will continue the role of high priest, there is no one else other than Samuel. Although we may also assume that Samuel may have possessed the right through the understanding that any individual may offer sacrifices, the sense of improvising is quite strong as he moves in to uphold the office left vacant by Eli. His status as a Nazarite also allows him to offer sacrifices and this authority allows him to uphold the high priestly office.

Saul on the other hand is Yahweh’s anointed and is seen to have initiated the act of offering sacrifices in which his successors David and Solomon follow. As the anointed, the king is also assigned priestly and religious roles as it is only within the religious context anointing takes place, i.e. the anointing of the priests and the religious objects such as the tabernacle, etc... Thus Saul may have assumed he had such an authority to offer sacrifices not only through the status of being anointed, but he could have also drawn from the understanding of individual sacrifice.

Thus, the only person then to have an issue with Saul’s action is Samuel. The question is why? If Saul’s sacrifice was valid then why does Samuel disapprove? Or better yet, is Samuel’s

harsh reaction towards Saul related to the sacrifice at all? If not, what is really bothering Samuel? These questions are the focus of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Exegesis- Part 2

1 Samuel 13: 8-14

3.1 The Text - 1 Sam13:8-14

8. He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people began to slip away from Saul. 9. So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. 10. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and salute him. 11. Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were mustering at Michmash¹². I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of the LORD'; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." 13. Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, 14. but now your kingdom will not continue; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart; and the LORD has appointed him to be ruler over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."⁶¹

3.2 1 Samuel 13 - Conflicts

1 Sam 13 opens and closes with Israel engaging the Philistines in battle. This narrative consists of three main sections: (1) v. 1-7, (2) v. 8-14, (3) v. 15-23. The text in focus (vv.8-14) provides a break in the conflict story between the Israelites and the Philistines. These two sections can also be seen as providing a certain backdrop describing a thematical mood of the entire chapter, i.e. while sections one (vv.1-7) and three (vv.15-23) narrate the conflict between Israel and the Philistines, (vv.8-14) focuses on a more civil conflict between Samuel and king Saul.

⁶¹ Extracted from the New Revised Standard Version- *NRSV*.

3.3 Saul and the Sacrifice

The conflict in Gilgal is over Saul's offering of the sacrifice. Samuel eventually labels him as disobedient and foolish. The event corresponds with Samuel's command in 1 Sam 10:8;

And you shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."

Some commentators⁶² blame Saul for not waiting long enough for the prophet to arrive. This is based on the understanding that sacrifices could be offered in the morning and in the evening (Num. 28:1-6).⁶³ However, Saul does not have the luxury of time on his hands. Other arguments see the decision to offer the sacrifice before the arrival of Samuel as lack of faith on Saul's part and thus makes him unfit for the role of king for Israel.⁶⁴

A few things can be noted in the narrative of the character of Saul. First, if we take into consideration Samuel's command, it is obvious that Saul's failure or disobedient act is evident in his act of offering the sacrifice and not Samuel. However, we must not be too hasty to assume ignorance on Saul's part because he is reported to have fulfilled the first part of the command; which is to wait seven days for the prophet. Second, Saul does appear to provide valid reasons for his actions (v.11-12). (1) Samuel fails to show-up. (2) The notion of slipping away (v.8) in Hebrew פָּרֵץ means "to scatter" or "be dispersed."⁶⁵ As a Hiphil verb, both the object and the subject are active, and the event tends to be occasional or one-time.⁶⁶ Therefore, the cause of the

⁶² D. Owen Kaiser, *King David: You Are the Man!: A Story of the Heart and life of David*, (Indianapolis: Dog Ear Publishing, 2011), 7. Tamás Czövek, *Three Seasons of Charismatic Leadership – A Literary-Critical and Theological Interpretation of the Narrative of Saul, David and Solomon*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 69.

⁶³ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 150.

⁶⁴ Peter R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel: The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible*, (New York: Cambridge Press, 1999), 104.

⁶⁵ "פָּרֵץ" in *BDB*, 806-807.

⁶⁶ Arthur Walker-Jones, *Hebrew: For Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 116-117.

people's scattering occurs at that particular point in time. What is the cause? As the subject of the verb it is evident that the people cause themselves to disperse, through fear and loss of heart as the Philistines are fast approaching Gilgal (vv.11-12). More interestingly, the secondary subject in Hebrew is literally מֵעָלָיו "from upon him" although the *NRSV* substitutes the name "Saul." This would mean that Saul also plays a role in causing the people to scatter. What exactly has Saul done? According to the story, Saul is "waiting" for Samuel (v.8). In other words, in the eyes of the people, Saul as their leader is doing nothing and it is his inactiveness which is also the cause of the peoples' action. This for Saul is tragic given the odds they are facing, as Saul merely has two-thousand men (1 Sam. 13:2) while the Philistines put together a great army (1 Sam. 13:5). He could not afford to wait for Samuel any longer and needed to act to reassure and reaffirm the people's faith in their cause. (3) Saul acknowledges that appeasing Yahweh is an imperative if Israel were to have any chance of victory against this great foe (v.12). According to Von Rad, Holy Wars for Israel are religious in nature; therefore, offering a sacrifice symbolizes full consecration for a divine favor aiming to gain victory for a liberation movement of Israel from foreign domination such as Philistine.⁶⁷ It appears that they may have been running out of time as the Philistines may have drawn near. Thus, the sacrifice needed to be offered immediately.

The third point about Saul is that his actions are genuinely for the well-being of his people and himself. Victor P. Hamilton argues that Saul oversteps boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of a prophet and a king. For Hamilton, the act of offering the sacrifice is attributed to the Levitical priest.⁶⁸ Chapter Two has established that Saul was well aware of the

⁶⁷ Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, ed. Marva, J. Dawn, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1991), 41-42.

⁶⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books: Joshua-Esther*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 243-245.

boundaries he was about to cross. In his explanation to Samuel, Saul concludes that he had “forced himself”⁶⁹ to offer the sacrifice. The Hithpael form of the verb **פָּעַן**⁷⁰ implies an inner struggle in the character of Saul; i.e. struggling between offering the sacrifice due to the timeframe, furthermore, incurring a negative reaction from Samuel or taking the risk of waiting for Samuel and be totally annihilated by the approaching Philistines. Seeing no other way out, Saul is forced to abort waiting for Samuel and forces him to offer the sacrifice. Here we can see that Saul is mindful and respectful of their respective roles and responsibilities, but given the circumstances, improvising via an unorthodox approach at this point of time appeared to be the right thing to do.

3.4 Samuel’s Reaction

Samuel on the other hand clearly interprets Saul’s action in a very different manner.

You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you. The LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever (1 Sam. 13:13)

Upon arriving late to Gilgal, Samuel criticizes Saul’s actions as being “foolish” because he has failed to keep the commandment of Yahweh. At this point, two questions will be asked, first; what commandment of Yahweh has Saul failed to keep? We may take note that the text does not mention any commandment from Yahweh. However, there is a general assumption that the commandment which Samuel is referring to is the instructions given to Saul following his anointing (1 Sam. 10:8). While one may assume that these words belong to Yahweh conveying through his prophet Samuel, the command lacks the prophetic formula, “*Thus says the Lord...*”

⁶⁹ The same verb is used to describe the same action of Joseph in Gen. 43:31 and 45:1 when he ‘restrains himself’ before his brothers.

⁷⁰ **פָּעַן** in *BDB*, 67. see also Weingreen, ‘Lesson 57- Hithpael’ in *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew-2nd edition*, 118-123.

which represents the authority of Yahweh over His divine message. For Brueggemann, these words are strictly Samuel's word and should be interpreted as such. Thus, is failure to obey Samuel's words equivalent to violating Yahweh's commandment? Brueggemann indicates that Samuel is really reacting to Saul's failure to obey him and his words rather than Yahweh. Samuel's outburst is the reaction of one whose authority has been challenged.⁷¹

We may take note that Samuel and Saul are two distinct leaders who represent an important development in the history of the people of Israel. They represent the transition from the period of judges to the era of the kings. They represent the switch of leadership from one to another, the switch from tribal form of administration to the reign of a monarch. This period of transition also sees the transformation in the social and religious environment of Israel, furthermore, changes in social roles and responsibilities of its leaders.⁷² Such a period would definitely have serious impacts on the people of the time especially the leaders.

From the outset, Samuel is portrayed in the Samuel-Saul narrative (1 Sam. 8 – 31) as rebellious to the idea of a monarchy (1 Sam. 8:6). It is evident that although the people's request for a king had been endorsed by Yahweh, Samuel remains reluctant to the idea but eventually anoints Saul upon Yahweh's command (1 Sam. 8:1ff). During this three-way encounter, it is noticeable that while the people and Yahweh clearly state the implementation of a monarch with the use of the noun מֶלֶךְ meaning "king" (1Sam. 8:5, 6, 7, 9, 19, 20, 22), Samuel's use of the word is merely from a pessimistic point of view (1 Sam. 8:11, 18). Furthermore, Samuel is portrayed as anointing Saul as a מְנַיֵד "ruler" and not as a מֶלֶךְ "king" (1 Sam. 10:1). For Moshe Reiss, the

⁷¹ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 99.

⁷² Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 1-3.

social difference between the two roles maybe unclear but believes that the use of words clearly relay Samuel's attitude towards the institution of the monarch (1 Sam. 8:11-17).⁷³

I believe that Samuel's actions clearly reveal that he has an issue with leadership and the authority that accompanies it. From a narrative perspective, Reiss makes an important point by referring to Hannah's prayer; in particular, her assumption that her son will be a future king for Israel (1 Sam. 2:10).⁷⁴ The text does not speak of any future meetings between Hannah and Samuel while growing up; however, it is obvious that Samuel was destined for great things. Whether or not Hannah's idea of her son being king found its way to Samuel, definitely Samuel grew up with the expectation that he was destined for great things. This may have been confirmed to him in his encounter with Yahweh in his early years with the High Priest Eli (1 Sam. 3). Now at the height of his career as Israel's leader, he represented the only authority which mattered to the people of Israel, i.e. the authority of Yahweh. However, through this authority, Samuel sometimes jumps to conclusions without Yahweh's approval, i.e. this is evident in the story of David's anointing as king (1 Sam. 16). Furthermore, Reiss blames the ambiguity of Samuel's words for Saul's failure in the annihilation of Amalek (1 Sam. 15). Whilst Samuel is portrayed as the representation of Yahweh's authority to the Israelites, he can be seen to abuse this role at times.

This I believe is also the case in this conflict; we may take note that Yahweh remains passive while the active voice is that of Samuels. His conclusion that Yahweh will not prolong Saul's reign (vv.13-14) is once again problematic, i.e. are these really the words of Yahweh? Or is Samuel using Yahweh's authority to pursue his own personal interests? While Saul's actions

⁷³ Moshe Reiss, "Samuel and Saul: A Negative Symbiosis", in *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol32. No 1, (2004), 39.

⁷⁴ Reiss, *Samuel and Saul: A Negative Symbiosis*, 36.

are portrayed genuine for the well being of the people of Israel, Samuel on the other hand definitely has a hidden agenda which needs to be revealed.

Like Brueggemann, this paper believes that Samuel continues to struggle with the issue of authority. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Samuel played multiple leading roles, as priest, acting as a prophet, but also judge and a military leader. Furthermore, Samuel has every intention that his sons would succeed him in the office (1 Sam. 8:1). Thus, for the people to request for a king and testifying to the unfit nature of his sons to succeed him would definitely be a painful experience for the old man Samuel. Why?

Firstly, the words of the people mirror Yahweh's very words regarding the downfall of the house of Eli (1 Sam. 3:11-14). It was due to the sins of his sons and the reluctance of Eli to put his house in order, similarly, the people also say this indirectly, "*you are old and your sons do not follow your ways...*" (1 Sam. 8:5). In other words Samuel's sons are unfit to succeed him and thus like Eli, deserves to lose the privilege of being leader. For Samuel, these words were to be the beginning of the fall of his household.

Secondly, the request for a king also symbolized the people's disapproval and rejection of his leadership. Thirdly, the implementation of a monarch also spells the loss of authority. As we noted in chapter two, the roles of judge and military leader were later assumed under the monarch, therefore, in Samuel's case, all he was left with was his religious responsibilities. Thus, Saul's sacrificial act in the eyes of Samuel would appear to be the final nail in his (Samuel's) coffin.

In general, we note that Samuel's attitude and relationship with Saul is dominated by disagreements and conflicts where Samuel is portrayed as playing the superior role by criticising Saul like a father to son, like a leader to one under his control. Although Saul is anointed king over Israel, Samuel continues to act as if the king is under his command and leadership.

Samuel's pessimistic attitude towards Saul is also understandable as Saul embodies this challenge to his authority. In other words when Samuel looks at Saul, he does not see a king, but rather he sees the people's rejection of his leadership as well as an authoritative challenge to his roles.

Finally this may help us understand his late arrival. Robert Polzin believes that Samuel's delay was deliberate as he was waiting for the perfect time to undermine Saul's rule.⁷⁵ The text does not mention anything about Samuel's whereabouts; the only thing that is clear is that he shows up immediately after the sacrifice. For Brueggemann, Samuel's message of rejection was already predestined and he was merely awaiting the opportunity to lash out at Saul.⁷⁶

3.5 Summary

Saul in my opinion provides valid reasons for his actions. Firstly, Samuel fails to show up. Secondly, the army had already begun to scatter from him and thirdly, the Philistines had approached and they were on the verge of commencing their assault given the odds. What else was the king to do? His inactiveness as he waits for Samuel plays its part in the scattering of the army, was he to continue being inactive and watch as the people desert him? Given also the fact that he is forced into reacting the way he did testifies to his respect of their roles and responsibilities. In other words, Saul had no intention to offend Samuel by taking over his priestly roles although he did have the right to offer the sacrifice. He delayed his actions as long as he could, up to the point where he felt that he had no choice but to act. As a good leader we see that he improvises in order to uphold his duty and to his calling to be a saviour to his people

⁷⁵ Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist-A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History, Part 2, 1 Samuel*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 129-131.

⁷⁶ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 99. Furthermore, Jobling also sees the incident in Gilgal as a 'set up' for Saul. see David Jobling, *Berit Olam-Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry*, ed. David W. Cotter, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 100.

(1 Sam. 10:1). For Saul, any reaction from Samuel would be inferior to Yahweh's purposes for him. Furthermore Saul realizes that there is no one else who can achieve victory for them other than Yahweh. Despite Samuel's disapproval, he does not offer another sacrifice which implies that Saul's offering is a valid offering. Furthermore, given the purpose of such sacrifices before battle, Saul was seeking to appease Yahweh in order to gain favour and victory in the battle ahead,⁷⁷ the fact that Yahweh gives the Israelites that victory implies that Saul's sacrifice was received well by Yahweh.

Samuel on the other hand is seen as a religious leader whose judgment is clouded by personal interests and gain. Samuel from the outset was never comfortable with the idea of Israel having a king and it is clear in this conflict that he continues to struggle with the acceptance of this role. The introduction of the king represented the partial loss of authority and power Samuel had upheld and probably enjoyed since his takeover after Eli. It is clear that his intentions were that his household would continue to uphold the leading office, unfortunately, the people had other ideas and they disapproved of Samuel's sons. In this transition, the roles of judge and military leader of the nation Israel were now the responsibilities of the king, Samuel was merely left with his religious duties. Thus, to arrive and see Saul offer the sacrifice would have been seen as Samuel losing the final bit of authority he had left. Samuel may have always intended for Saul to fail miserably in his task as king, it is also possible that he set up Saul to fall.

It is clear in the conflict that while Saul portrays genuine actions, Samuel's agenda is more personal.

⁷⁷ “הָלָה” in *BDB*, 318.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we return to the question of whether Saul's action of offering the sacrifice is justified. This paper believes that Saul had every right and authority to react in the way he did. As the anointed of Yahweh, sacrifices were part of his responsibilities. However, Saul does not abuse this authority and privilege but insists to wait for Samuel which is a testimony to his character as a leader who respects the duties appointed to each individual. His reaction to finally offer the sacrifice was forced upon him by the desperate situation and circumstance at hand. I believe if the circumstances were different and that time was on Saul's side, i.e. the Philistines were yet to make a move, the people may have not scattered - Saul in my opinion would have continued to wait for the prophet Samuel. .

It is evident that Saul's sacrifice is valid due to the following reasons. First, despite the unfavourable odds against them, Yahweh grants Saul and Israel victory signifying that the burnt offering to appease Yahweh served its purpose. Second, while Samuel's disapproval of Saul's actions are made clear in the text, the text does not report Samuel offering a substitute sacrifice to replace or to account for any invalid practices which may have occurred, thus, this also means that there was nothing wrong with Saul's sacrifice. Samuel's negative reaction although it may have been triggered by the offering of the sacrifice, had nothing to do with the sacrifice itself. Samuel's pessimism towards Saul is understandable because Saul represents to Samuel the people's rejection of his leadership. Samuel's outburst in the story emerges then from personal agendas.

Implications of Study

This thesis presents the following implications. First, “Improvising” – the irony in the Samuel-Saul saga is both characters are portrayed to have appropriated this practice of improvising. Samuel who is not a High Priest improvises following Eli’s death and takes up the responsibility. While he sees it fit for him to improvise, he condemns Saul for doing the same. The Congregational Christian Church Samoa – henceforth *CCCS* - is a very conservative church, i.e. members are obsessed with maintaining traditions and ways of doing things despite the changing society. The danger it poses is that the church can fall into the extreme stage of inactiveness and failure to respond to the many problems and challenges of the modern world; e.g. for many years, statistics report the numbers of church members continuously decline. People continue to leave the church for all sorts of reasons. Shouldn’t this consistent decline initiate action and response? I believe so, unfortunately, the church makes no effort to improvise let alone address the issue.

Second; the issue of struggling for “power and authority.” We see in the character of Samuel how power and authority can become dangerous elements. Due to his intentions and obsession to regain power and authority, we have revealed how the messenger can influence the message of Yahweh. Climbing the hierarchical order of the *CCCS* has become the obsession of many “faifeau”⁷⁸ and such struggle for power and authority has created tensions amongst the church leaders and sometimes these tension filters down to church members. Generally, with power and authority in the *CCCS* comes wealth and prestige. Great extremes have been breached by some in order to achieve these personal interests and agenda. In many cases the pulpit has become an instrument or tool for such purposes. The Word preached to the people has

⁷⁸ The word “*faifeau*” is Samoan for the church minister.

become tainted with a lot of personal motives behind it. Furthermore, some have even used God's authority to serve their own propagandas. Theologically, the reality is that those whose duty is to save the people are in fact only concerned about saving themselves.

Finally, seeking God's help can never be wrong given any situation or circumstance. Saul was criticized for his unorthodox approach; however the sacrifice had served its purposes. We may never know the difficulties and obstacles that await us in the future, we may also never know when or where, what we do know is that God will help anyone who desperately shows faith and reliance on God for help, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Recommendation

It is the hope of this thesis that by reading this story "against the grain," readers can be enlightened to voices and actions which are normally suppressed in stories. We may have become too obsessed with the theologies which have been embedded in us from understanding Biblical narratives and constantly continue to dominate our thinking; this in turn leads us to lose out on the many important lessons and messages from the unheard stories of the so-called villains of the bible stories. I suggest that we think twice before relying on any inherited presupposition we may have gained of exactly who the hero and the villain of the story may be.

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