

Lecture 16: Saul, Samuel, David, Solomon.

Reading:

Saul: 1 Samuel 9-12 (Samuel selects Saul as king);

1 Samuel 15 (Saul annihilates Amalek; break between Saul and Samuel);

1 Samuel 28 (witch of Endor);

David: 1 Samuel 16-18 (David's youth and selection by Samuel; David and Goliath; David and Saul);

2 Samuel 11-12 (David and Bathsheba);

2 Samuel 21:15-22 (who really killed Goliath?);

Criticism of Solomon: 1 Samuel 8 (extravagant ways of the king; rebellion against God);

Royal ideology of Davidic kingship: 2 Samuel 7 (God builds David a house);

The glory of Solomon: 1 Kings 3 (wisdom of Solomon);

1 Kings 5 (opulence of Solomon's court; dealings with Hiram of Tyre);

1 Kings 10-11 (opulence; queen of Sheba; worship of other gods and the rise of Jeroboam).

Kugel 474-505.

Topics:

- Why did Samuel reject Saul?
- Do you think that David was better than Saul?
- Why does David seem to be cut more slack than Saul?

Master narrative:

- orderly conquest and apportionment of the land of Canaan (Joshua);
- followed by period of disorder (Judges);
- followed by emergence of charismatic monarchy (Saul) and prophecy (Samuel);
- followed by emergence of dynastic monarchy (David and Solomon).

Story of Samuel, Saul, and David in 1-2 Samuel:

- Dtr incorporates pre-existing compositions and creates a narrative;
- Many bumps and inconsistencies, esp. in 1 Samuel; apparently 1 Samuel was not fully edited (e.g. 1 Sam. 17:55-58, which makes little sense after 16:14-23; see also JSB note on 1 Sam 11:1).

Samuel is a pre-literary prophet who fulfills many functions:

- a clairvoyant, a holy man: 1 Samuel 9:9: Formerly in Israel, anyone who went to inquire of God would say, "Come, let us go to the seer"; for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer." Receives gifts;

- ♦ Not a miracle worker (contrast Elijah and Elisha) but seems able to summon/predict an out-of-season thunderstorm (1 Sam 12);
- ♦ The narrative also refers to ecstasies, possessed by the spirit (1 Sam 10);
- has a priestly function: he is a servant at the central shrine of Shiloh and is commissioned there (1 Sam 3); sacrifices to God (1 Sam 7:9); no one eats of a *zevah* until the holy man has blessed it (1 Sam 9:13, 10:8); Saul sins by not waiting for Samuel to officiate (1 Sam 13);
- a circuit judge (1 Sam 7:15-17);
- a military man (1 Samuel 15:33) ;
- reproves the people (re kingship, 1 Sam 8 and 12);
- controls kings: selects and anoints Saul and David; reproves Saul (1 Sam 13 and 15), even after his own death (1 Sam 28);
 - ♦ strong connection between prophecy and monarchy;
 - ♦ Nathan is a court prophet (2 Sam 12); literary prophets seem to be anti-institutional figures;
- predicts the future (the destruction of the house of Eli, 1 Sam 3; Saul will not have a dynasty, 1 Sam 13 and 15; Saul's death);

Kingship: strong anti-kingship elements in the narrative:

- Relying on king means failure to rely on God (1 Sam 8:7, 12:9) even if God accedes to the people's wishes (1 Sam 8:22);
- People want a king like all the nations (1 Sam 8:5) ;
- Long list of the abuses that a king will inflict (1 Sam 8:11ff, seems to refer to Solomon);
- How to reconcile this with Deut 17:14-20 is not clear.

Saul is charismatic king: tall, strong, a military leader, an ecstatic.

David is all these plus the founder of a dynasty:

- 2 Sam 7 the charter of the Davidic dynasty: the king is God's son; eternal kingship; God will build a house for David;
- After the failure of the Davidic monarchy biblical writers elaborate conditional character of the dynasty (1 Kings 9:4-9; Ps. 132).

Both David and Saul are flawed heroes; narrative not explain why Saul is cut so much less slack than David:

- Dtr seems interested in covering up or minimizing Davidic misdeeds (Kugel), but plenty still shines through;
- Modern historians supply explanations (Saul weak leader from a weak tribe; David is a cunning power hungry warlord; etc.).

Folkloristic elements in the story of the rise of David:

- David plus seven brothers;
- The youngest;
- a shepherd;
- David vs. Goliath!

Like other heroes, David seems to have absorbed the stories of other, lesser figures (who slew Goliath? David or Elhanan ben Yaarei orgim (2 Sam 21:19; see note of JSB).

David's power base was always his tribe (Judah in the south): conquers Jebus/ Jerusalem, makes it his capital; transfers the ark there; Solomon builds temple.

- Both temple and prophecy are appendages of monarchy;
- Prophecy would continue and develop in the north, but not the temple;
- Monarchy splits into two, probably a result of persistent tensions between the southern and the northern tribes, and maladministration by Solomon (Kugel);
 - ♦ Dtr explains the revolt as punishment for Solomon's sin.

MBS debate the glory and power of David and Solomon (Kugel).