

A.10.1. The Legitimacy of Kingship in Israel

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I. The Biblical Context for Kingship in Israel:

- A. A male offspring of the woman will one day put a death-blow to the head of the serpent, implying an end to hostility against God and his kingdom.
1. In light of the fact that the author of Genesis could specify when he wanted the term “seed” to be understood collectively (see the 3mp pronoun suffix in Gen. 17:9), the Hebrew 3ms suffix “his” in Gen. 3:15 suggests that the “offspring of the woman” is a male individual descendant of Eve (so Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note [Genesis 3:15]: Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *TynBul* 140 [1997]: 139–48).
 2. The imagery of “licking the dust” in 3:14 is used throughout the Psalms in the context of *royal* judgment, echoing the first reference in Gen. 3:15 (W. Wilfall, “Gen. 3:15—A Protoevangelium?” *CBQ* 36 [1974]: 363).
- B. Abraham anticipates a singular, royal, male offspring to overcome the enemies of God’s people and bring blessing to the world.
1. In a book devoted to two distinct family trees growing out of the “first-gospel” proclamation of Gen. 3:15, Abra(ha)m in the line of promise (i.e., offspring of the woman) was longing for an heir (Gen. 15:3), which the reader of Genesis anticipates has something to do with the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15. Intriguingly, this first use of the verb “believe” in the Bible occurs in a context where trust in God was being placed in respect to his promise of an offspring, who we learn will ultimately defeat evil and restore blessing on a world-wide scale (see #4).
 2. In Gen. 17:6 and 16 God promises both Abraham and Sarah that “kings will come forth from you.” That Sarah is spoken of suggests that at least with respect to the promise made to her, we are dealing particularly with the line that would go through Isaac and Jacob and *not* the offspring carried through Ishmael. In this context, the “kings” are in no way perceived of negatively but are rather part of the affirming work of God on behalf of his people (so DeRouchie, nearly completed article on the seed of Abraham in OT and Gal 3:16).
 3. The use of the 3ms suffix (“his enemies”) in Gen. 22:17b suggests that while “offspring” in Gen. 22:17a may be plural, the “offspring” of 22:17b–18 (conqueror of enemies and channel of blessing to the world) is an individual, who may legitimately be related to the “kings” promised in Gen. 17 (so T. D. Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *TynBul* 48 (1997): 363–67; cf. idem, “Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” *TynBul* 44 (1993): 255–70; idem, “Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 49 (1998): 191–212 *Tyndale Bulletin*). This text and Gen. 3:15 also help shape the background to Acts 3:25–26 and Gal. 3:16 (so DeRouchie and Meyer, “Christ or Family as the ‘Seed’ of Promise?” *SBJT* 14.3 [2010]: 36–48).
- C. In the “last days,” a king from Judah will arise to global dominance, establishing peace and conquering the enemies of God.
1. In Gen. 49:10, which is placed in the context of “last days” anticipations (49:1), the offspring promise of Genesis is further focused on Judah, the new “first born”

due to his older three brothers having forfeited the blessing. Clearly Jacob's proclamation includes royal imagery without a sinful context: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, not the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs [text problem], and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." There is nothing negative (i.e., sinful) portrayed about Judah's exaltation over all. We simply have the declaration that it will be so, all in the context of an anticipated offspring who will end evil and restore God's favor to the world.

2. Again in the context of "last days" prophecy (Num. 24:14), Balaam stresses (24:17–19): "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be a possession, Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession, while Israel performs valiantly. One from Jacob shall have dominion, and will destroy the remnant from the city." Again, I see no sense that this kingship is sin; rather the anticipated "star" will be God's intended channel for overcoming his enemies.
- D. Deut. 17:14–20 provides the paradigm for prospective Israelite kingship in the Promised Land. Strikingly, the *only* positive responsibility given to the king (vv. 18–20) is that he be a man of God's Word and thus a man under Yahweh's authority, who by his example would show what it means to have Yahweh on the throne of your life.
- E. The period of the Judges stressed the need for a king in the pattern of the Deuteronomic ideal.
1. There is a continual refrain in the conclusion of Judges that is always cast in a negative light and partially clarifies why the period of the Judges was so dark: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6; 21:25; cf. 18:1; 19:1).
 2. In the midst of this darkness, Hannah's prophetic announcement in 1 Sam. 2:10 provides hope: "Yahweh will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed." Far from portraying human kingship negatively, proper God-submitted and God-reflecting human kingship is viewed as positive and hopeful, for the anticipated God-oriented king will lead the people in a God-oriented existence and put an end to God's enemies.

II. Israel's request for a king in 1 Samuel:

- A. In 1 Sam. 8:5 the (almost!) word-for-word allusion to Deut. 17:14 calls the reader to read the covenant history in the light of the covenant constitution (i.e., Deuteronomy). What follows, however, is very clearly *not* what Deut. 17 anticipated as ideal. Rather than a king to represent Yahweh, Israel wants to replace Yahweh. They have rejected him as their highest king (8:7), and in doing so they have rejected their true protector (10:19) and provider (12:17–19). As they themselves proclaimed: "There shall be a king over us that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (8:19–20).
- B. Yahweh's problem with Israel's request for a king was *not* that they wanted a king but that they wanted a king to *replace rather than represent* Yahweh. At stake is the type of king, not the nature of kingship in general.
- C. In this Deuteronomic context, the stress on the people's "choice" of Saul (1 Sam. 8:18; 12:13) *for themselves* (cf. "for us," 8:5; "for yourselves," 8:18) stands in direct

contrast to David's being set apart by God *for God* ("for him/for me," 1 Sam. 13:14; 16:1, 3; cf. Deut. 17:15). Just as the echo of Deut. 17:14 in 1 Sam. 8 is designed to show how Israel has departed from God's portrait of a human king, so too the single reference to Saul's *divine* election (1 Sam. 10:24; cf. 9:17) occurs within a highly polemical context and must be read in relation to the two references of the people's choice of Saul that frame it (8:18; 12:13).

- D. The negative reality of Saul's kingship does *not* thwart Deuteronomy 17's ideal picture. Rather, in the context of covenant renewal, the prophet Samuel affirms the possibility of a king for Israel (1 Sam. 10:25; 12:14–15, 23), and Jesus is the ultimate king—he alone aligns with the Deuteronomic ideal in the clearest, untarnished way, and he alone can stand on behalf of God's people as their substitute (Isa. 53). He alone is shown to be the ultimate royal offspring of the woman and of Abraham, who puts an end to all evil and stands as the channel through whom the world is blessed.

A.10.2. David's Heart and Election as King

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In 1 Sam. 15.28, the prophet Samuel declares to king Saul, “Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is better than you*.” Then in the next chapter, God anoints David as Israel’s future king while rejecting David’s brothers. In explaining to Samuel his rationale, Yahweh declared of David’s oldest brother Eliab: “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For Yahweh sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). How are we to understand these statements regarding how David’s inner qualitative superiority? Did David somehow merit his election to kingship? The narrator emphasizes David’s sins of adultery, murder, and arrogance (2 Sam. 11; 24.1–10). With these, he also records David’s recognition of his own sin (2 Sam. 12.13; 24.10) and in two instances notes the words of the prophet Nathan who declares David’s actions to be “evil” (הָרַע) and to be an affront to the word of Yahweh (2 Sam. 12.9; cf. 1 Sam. 15.19). Was David’s heart truly different?

First, an emphasis on David’s proper motivation in contrast to Saul’s disloyalty would not be unique in the narrative. Specifically, in accordance with 1 Sam. 15.28 and 16.7, which together seem to highlight David’s covenant fidelity as greater than Saul’s, the narrator stresses in the immediate context (1 Sam. 15–2 Sam. 8) why David is more fit for kingship than his predecessor. It is not until the last third of the book after David has become king that his own faults are intimated. Marc Zvi Brettler has noted the following contrasts between David and Saul in the book’s *middle section*:¹⁵

1. David is successful militarily (1 Sam. 17), while Saul lives in fear and fails to lead in victory (1 Sam. 14.42; 17.11); “Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands” (1 Sam. 18.7; 21.12; 29.5).
2. In the book’s middle section, David is not a murderer (1 Sam. 24, 26; cf. 2 Sam. 1.11–16; 3.28–29, 33–37; 4.9–12), obeys God, is protected by him (1 Sam. 16.3, 18; 17.37; 18.12, 14, 28), and has frequent access to Yahweh through oracles (1 Sam. 23.2, 4, 11; 30.7–8; 2 Sam. 2.1; 5.19, 23); “David became greater and greater, because Yahweh God of hosts was with him” [2 Sam. 5.10]). Saul, in contrast, murders or attempts to murder innocent victims (1 Sam. 18.10–11; 19.1–2, 9–10, 11–24; 20.33; 22.16–19; 23–26), disregards the instructions of Yahweh (1 Sam. 15, 28), and is abandoned by him (1 Sam. 16.14).
3. David is considered a royal figure even before he is fully recognized as king, though he never assumes the role prematurely (1 Sam. 21.12; 24.7, 11, 15; 26.9, 17, 23; 2

¹⁵ M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995) 102–105. Brettler has identified a three part structure to the book as a whole with each section demarcated by the “cabinet officer” lists of 1 Sam. 14.49–51; 2 Sam. 8.16–18; and 20.23–26 respectively (97–100). He believes each of these sections present a distinct, conflicting picture of David. While this latter conclusion seems strained, I affirm his observation that the second unit in particular is pro-David in nature. 2 Sam. 8.15 provides a good ending formula for the book’s middle section: “So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people.” For an extended discussion of the antitheses between Saul and David within 1 Samuel, see Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat Gan: Revivim, 1985), 115–37.

Sam. 1.14, 16). Saul, on the other hand, continually acts in a non-royal fashion and is paranoid rather than strong and confident (1 Sam. 23.21; 28.5, 20).

4. The accounts narrating David's anointing and the dynastic promise, which fall near the boundaries of the section, emphasize his legitimacy.

Along with these contrasts in Samuel, there are numerous references in Kings that portray David as an ideal king who was *wholeheartedly* loyal to Yahweh (each with *לֵבָב/לֵב*) (e.g., 1 Kgs. 3.6; 9.4; 11.4; 14.8; 15.3). 1 Kgs. 14.8 is representative: "Yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and who followed me with all his heart (*בְּכָל-לֵבָבוֹ*) to do only that which was right in my sight."

David is clearly pictured throughout the DtrH as the king all others were to emulate. Therefore, one wonders why a sin like the "case of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Sam. 11–12; cf. 1 Kgs. 15.4–5) was actually retained in the narrative.¹⁶ Brettler rightly asserts that 2 Sam. 9–20 was included to warn all Israel to act properly, reminding them that God takes sin seriously and that sin has consequences, even when it involves the ideal king.¹⁷ It is also likely that the inclusion of David's sins was intended to show his humanness, to represent his model of repentance after sin, and to proclaim the grace of God in restoring him every time he cried out. Indeed, one of the key reasons David was a better choice than Saul was because after failure he always sought to reestablish Yahweh's supremacy in his own life (e.g., 2 Sam. 12.13–20; 24.10–25; Ps. 51; cf. Deut. 17.19–20).¹⁸ Finally, along with stressing David's humility before God, the negative elements of David's life were probably retained to emphasize the need for one greater than David—namely, the Messiah—whose will would be fully and lastingly aligned with Yahweh's will.

The narrative of Samuel–Kings tolerates an inward tension. Though written after King David committed his atrocities, the Deuteronomistic historian(s) picture(s) David before, during, and after his formal reign as the ideal royal figure and Israelite. David commits sin and yet is still considered the standard by which all other kings are weighed. This tension exists in the text whether one renders the prepositional idiom *כְּלֵבָבוֹ* in 1 Sam. 13.14 adjectivally or adverbially. As such, because even after great sins the narrator had no problem describing David as wholeheartedly loyal to Yahweh (e.g., 1 Kgs. 14.8), we should see no inherent problem ascribing to the "man" like-mindedness to Yahweh's heart in 1 Sam. 13.14.

Second, if David's "heart" set him apart from Saul and his brothers, does this mean that David merited his election?¹⁹ Robert P. Gordon notes, "Whereas Saul was impressed [*sic*] by his

¹⁶ For example, in the Chronicler's portrayal of David's reign (1 Chr. 20.1–3), he does not include in his retelling of the story David's adulterous act with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah.

¹⁷ Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, 99. Brettler here notes: "2 Sam. 9 and following is a theological unit, interested in showing the severe ramifications of serious sins, even when committed by David. Murder and rape beget murder, rape and almost the loss of the kingdom. The chapters illustrate the fundamental principle of measure for measure, though of course it is David who rapes, and his daughter (ch. 13) and concubines (16.22) who are raped. These chapters narrate fundamental theological rules using David as their protagonist, but these principles are presented to all Israel."

¹⁸ See too V. P. Long who asserts that the reason Saul's sins bring rejection whereas David's do not is probably to be found not in any distinct nature of the sins but "in a qualitative difference between his [Saul's] repentance and that of David" (*The Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence* [SBL Dissertation Series 118; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 156).

¹⁹ In seeing a theological tension in David's election to kingship on the basis of human merit, we are assuming two doctrinal tenets of OT Yahwistic faith: (1) that Israel viewed all mankind as totally depraved (e.g.,

physical appearance (1 Sam. 9.2; 10.23-24), the choice of David was based on a more profound evaluation (16.7).²⁰ Similarly, J. P. Fokkelman sees in 16.7 “a decisive value judgment” expressed in the contrast between “eyes” and “heart,” which he views as a metonymy for external versus internal or, more particularly, appearance versus being.²¹ He states: “God has

Gen. 6.5; 1 Kgs. 8.46; Isa. 59.1–15; Ps. 14.1–3; Prov. 20.9; cf. Rom. 3.10–18, 23; 8.7–8) from birth (e.g., Ps. 51.5; 58.3; cf. Eph. 2.3) with the elect being righteous only on the basis of the saving justice of God manifest on their behalf (e.g., Ps. 143 [esp. vv. 1–2, 10–11] with Gal. 2.16 and 3.10; Isa. 59.15–21 and Ps. 32 [esp. vv. 1–2, 10–11] with Rom. 3.21–4.25) and (2) that election to kingship in Israel should be viewed as paralleling election to salvation or communal participation. Three observations suggest that the latter connection is both justified and necessary.

First, Deut. 17.15 stresses that the king whom God would choose would be “from among your brothers,” which at the very least means that he would be from among the elect nation. Second, בַּחַר (“to choose, elect, select”) in Deuteronomy is used with no formal distinction for God’s election of Israel, the place of worship, the priesthood, and the king. Furthermore, outside of Deuteronomy these chosen entities are at times placed in parallel, which seems to suggest that God’s choice of them should be understood in a similar manner. For example, Solomon’s dedicatory prayer in 1 Kgs. 8.16 shows the close tie between the various Deuteronomistic elections: “Since the day that I brought (hi. צִיאָ) my people Israel from Egypt I did not choose (בַּחַר) a city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house that my name might be there but I chose (בַּחַר) David to be over my people Israel.” While the verb בַּחַר is only explicitly linked with the choice of the place of worship and the king, the phrase that speaks of the exodus from Egypt is a Deuteronomistic pointer to Israel’s election. Note, for example, Deut. 7.7–8:

A Not because you were more in number than any of the peoples

B did Yahweh set his affection on you and choose (בַּחַר) you—indeed, you were the fewest of all peoples.

A’ Rather, because of Yahweh’s love for you and because he was keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers

B’ he brought you out (hi. צִיאָ) with a strong hand and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

The B–B’ parallel highlights the close link between God’s choosing Israel and his rescuing them from Egypt. This association suggests that 1 Kgs. 8.16 may indeed retain a conceptual link between the choice of David and the election of Israel.

Similarly, 1 Kgs. 3.7–8 states: “And now, Yahweh my God, you have enthroned your servant after David my father, although I am a youth and do not discern going and coming. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you chose (בַּחַר)...” The verb בַּחַר is used explicitly here only for the election of the people, but Yahweh’s appointment of Solomon as king at the very least suggests that he was chosen by God as well (cf. 2 Sam. 7.12, 14, 15; 12.24–25).

Third, Israel’s election to salvation cannot be separated from their history—a history intimately linked to a promised *royal* redeemer. (On Israel’s royal seed see T. D. Alexander, “Royal Expectation in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology,” *TynBul* 49 [1998] 191–212.) From the early stages of Genesis the themes of זָרַע, “seed, offspring” and genealogy are linked “to highlight a single, distinctive, family lineage,” one that would eventually give rise to a royal dynasty and a single ruler who would conquer the enemies of God’s people and mediate God’s blessing to the world. (T. D. Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” *TynBul* 44 [1993] 260. For the view that Hebrew syntax suggests that the “seed” mentioned in passages like Gen. 3.15 and 22.17b denotes a single individual [rather than a collective or plural entity], see Jack Collins, “A Syntactical Note [Gen. 3.15]: Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *TynBul* 48 [1997] 139–48 and Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *TynBul* 48 [1997] 363–67.) Israel’s king was representative of Yahweh before the people and of the people before Yahweh. The king’s people were God’s people (1 Kgs. 3.7–8; 8.16; Pss. 28.8; 72.1–2), and this close tie fostered a heightened awareness in Israel of their “national election.” (G. Quell, “ἐκλέγομαι,” in *TDNT*, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967] 4:155)

While not conclusive, these observations strongly suggest that within Deuteronomistic theology election to kingship (cf. Deut. 7.14; 1 Sam. 10.24; 16.8, 9, 10; 2 Sam. 6.21; 16.18) should be understood as intimately tied to Israel’s communal election (cf. Deut. 4.37; 7.6, 7; 10.15; 14.2; 1 Kgs. 3.8). As such, one is justified in seeing a theological tension with any interpretation that suggests David merited his election.

²⁰ R. P. Gordon, “David,” in *NIDOTTE*, ed. W. A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 4:505.

²¹ J. P. Fokkelman, *The Crossing Fates*, vol. 2, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (Dover, NH: Van Gorcum, 1986), 124.

looked ‘into the heart’ of the sons of Jesse and has chosen one *on that criterion*.²² While the “heart” idiom in 16.7 likely points less to the king-elect’s “being” and more to his “motivation” or “will” (see above), a value judgment does appear evident in 16.7.²³ Although from human standards others looked ideal, Yahweh, who looks at the “heart,” rejected them and instead chose David, whose inward motivations, will, or thoughts (i.e., his “heart”) were more aligned (cf. “better than” in 15.28) with what God was looking for (i.e., his “seeing,” ראה in 16.1, 7).

This stated, Ralph W. Klein’s assertion that God’s selection of David was based on the king-elect’s “internal merit” is unhelpful,²⁴ for the only “merit” one could point to is David’s “heart” of surrendered dependence, which by its nature moves the focus from David to God, who supports and gives victory to his king (cf. 1 Sam. 2.10; 2 Sam. 22:51).²⁵ Both the immediate context and Deuteronomic theology caution too great a focus being placed on David, and these two aspects will be addressed together below.

Few will question that the introductory parallel stories of God’s helping Hannah and destroying Eli’s household clarify a foundational principle in the entire book: “Those who honor (כבד) me I will honor, but those who despise me will be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam. 2.30). Yet those who “honor” God are not the self-reliant or strong but the dependent, who by their living point to the greatness of Yahweh rather than themselves (cf. 2.3, 9, 29–30). The narrator’s stress is that David is great only because he recognizes that Yahweh is great—the very thing most of the Israelites failed to do.²⁶

This distinction between David and other Israelites is highlighted both in the nation’s request for a king and in the contrast between Saul and David found in 1 Sam. 15 and 17, the two chapters adjacent to the narrative of David’s anointing. Israel wanted a king “to judge” them “like all the nations” (8.5). By this clear echo of Deut. 17.14–20, the narrator of Samuel encourages the readers to evaluate all that follows in the light of this royal ideal, which stresses both that Israel’s king be “chosen” (בחר) by God and that he, by embodying Torah, represent

²² Ibid., 123; italics added. Fokkelman continues: “That fact is the complement of 13.14, for what ‘God sought’ was ‘a man after his heart’. Thus David’s interior, his real quality, corresponds to God’s interior.”

²³ In certain contexts נבט and ראה express acknowledging or realizing (e.g., נבט, Ps. 74.20; Isa. 5.12; Amos 5.22; ראה, Gen. 16.4; 1 Sam. 12.17; Ps. 106.44). However, while mental perception is at times denoted by the verbs, the NAB is not justified in rendering נבט (“to judge”) in 16.7: “Do not *judge* (hi. נבט) from his appearance or from his lofty stature.”

²⁴ R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 162.

²⁵ In the words of the Apostle Paul, God’s pattern has always been to choose “the weak things of the world in order to shame the things that are strong” (1 Cor. 1.27) and in order to show that “the surpassing power” comes from God rather than the human agent (2 Cor. 4.7).

²⁶ Growing out of the foundational principle in 1 Sam. 2.30, there is a fascinating wordplay on the root כבד in 1 Sam. 1.1–7.17. In a world where God is to be “honored” above all else (2.30), the high priest Eli has “honored” his sons over God, resulting in judgment. Eli’s own physical “heaviness” (4.18; cf. 2.29) is thus a picture of misplaced “honor,” and all who arrogantly attempt to live in God’s world their own way will be put down (2.3, 9, 30). Eli’s daughter-in-law’s proclamation “No glory!” is an accurate portrayal of Israel’s perspective at the time of Samuel (4.21–22). They took little account of the “weightiness” of God’s presence in their midst (cf. 2.12–17). In contrast, the presence of God instilled fear in the Philistines (4.7), and Yahweh’s “heaviness” against them (5.6, 11) ultimately resulted in their determination to give “glory” to God rather than become “heavy”-hearted like the Egyptians had (6.5–6). Upon the return of the ark to Israel, one last encounter with the divine presence finally resulted in Israel’s respect of Yahweh (6.20) and ultimately brought about national restoration and the renewal of God’s favor (7.3–14). ‘Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be lightly esteemed’ (2.30). The very nature of honoring God is to bring glory to him rather than to oneself.

Yahweh rather than replace him.²⁷ God saw Israel's desire for a king as a rejection of his own sovereignty (1 Sam. 8.7), for in contrast to the Deuteronomic picture, the type of king Israel sought was one that would replace Yahweh as Israel's ultimate protector and provider (8.19–20; 10.19; 12.17–19). This fact is further stressed in Saul's own lack of concern for Yahweh's honor, for he fails to surrender to God's word in relation to the destruction of the Amalekites (15.22–23) and he lives in fear rather than trust with respect to Goliath and the Philistines (17.11). In contrast, David trusts in God's greatness and openly proclaims Yahweh's supremacy, first to Saul and then to Goliath: "Yahweh who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (17.37); "This day Yahweh will deliver you into my hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that Yahweh saves not with sword and spear, for the battle is Yahweh's, and he will give you into our hand" (17.46–47). Clearly, the narrator is showing that the "heart" God is looking for is one that depends on him and trusts in him.

Significantly, the Book of Samuel does stress that Yahweh upholds his loyal ones and shows himself blameless to those who stand above reproach (1 Sam. 2.9; 2 Sam. 22.26). However, it also stresses that God himself is the very one who brings about such blamelessness (2 Sam. 22.33). Therefore, while human dependence is necessary to enjoy God's favor, the very nature of dependence stresses divine initiative and not human "merit."

This fact is further highlighted when one reads the covenant history in the light of the covenant. Deuteronomy is clear that Israel, by nature "a stiff-necked people" (Deut. 9.6; 10.16), could only serve God faithfully if he gave them a will (i.e., heart) to do so (4.30–31; 29.4; 30.6; cf. Isa 44.18). So when the reader of the covenant history sees characters portrayed as covenant keepers, it must be because God himself has motivated such loyalty. In the Book of Samuel we read not only of Yahweh's Spirit rushing upon David (1 Sam. 16.13) but also of David's own declaration that his blamelessness and covenant loyalty were gifts of God (2 Sam. 22.26–51, esp. vv. 33–35). David truly learned "to fear Yahweh his God in order to observe all the words of this Torah and these statutes" (Deut. 17.19; cf. 1 Sam. 12.14–15, 24–25; 2 Sam. 22.21–25). And while sins like the case of Uriah the Hittite are mentioned, the narrator portrays David's default before and during his kingship to be the God-honoring dependence anticipated in the Deuteronomic ideal (cf. Ps. 51 and 2 Sam. 22)—a dependence that is only possible when God himself gives it. Consequently, while the bent of David's will is in some way a condition for his selection in 1 Sam. 16.7 (and perhaps 13.14), the Deuteronomic theology that controls the Book of Samuel forces us to understand the ultimate basis to be in God's work in and through the prospective king.

²⁷ "When you enter the land that Yahweh your God gives you and you possess it and live in it and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' then you shall surely set over you a king whom Yahweh your God chooses. . . . And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this torah, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God by keeping all the words of this torah and by doing all these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel" (Deut. 17.14–15, 18–20).