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The Heart of Yhwh and His Chosen One in 1 Samuel 13:14

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BETHLEHEM COLLEGE AND SEMINARY

This article considers the meaning of the prepositional phrase כלבבו, “like/according to his heart,” in 1 Sam 13:14. By assessing syntactic and semantic parallels, comparative ANE data, and the deuteronomic context of 1–2 Samuel, the study argues that the prepositional idiom is best rendered adverbially and understood to clarify the norm or standard by which Yhwh sought a king to replace Saul—he did so according to his own will. This being established, the paper then explores whether God’s showing discretion and seeking one man in contrast to others necessitates that there was something about the king-elect that matched the royal image he had in mind. Specifically, while כלבבו should be read adverbially, the resulting meaning in 1 Sam 13:14 may in fact align with both the numerous texts that emphasize David’s special divine election in contrast to Saul and the many passages that stress David’s greater like-mindedness to Yhwh when compared to Saul.

Key Words: King, election, Saul, David, heart, obedience, man after God’s heart

INTRODUCTION

A key and familiar clause in 1 Sam 13:14 reads בקש יוהו לא איש כלבבו. In a recent JBL article, Benjamin J. M. Johnson provided a strong literary-contextual defense for the traditional view that these words explicitly describe “something about the heart of Yhwh’s chosen agent” who will replace Saul—“David is ‘a man after [Yhwh’s] own heart.’”1 Whether pointing to the king-elect’s inward makeup, motives, or God-dependence

Author’s Note: This essay is dedicated to my mentor and friend Dr. Gary D. Pratico, who first taught me to consider the difference between Hebrew adjectival and adverbial prepositional phrases and who displayed for me during my four years as his teaching and research fellow at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary what it means to be a man who treasures God and his Word.

on the one hand or his covenant loyalty on the other, this view consistently treats (1) the idiomatic prepositional phrase כָּלְבַּב, “like/according to his heart,” adjectively, modifying the object שֵׁא, “a man,” and (2) the 3ms pronominal suffix in כָּלְבַּב as having its antecedent in הוא, “YHWH.” The whole, therefore, is seen to point to the royal substitute’s like-mindedness to God, which stands in contrast to Saul’s tendency toward disobedience: “YHWH has sought for himself a man [whose heart/will is] like/in accord with his [YHWH’s] heart/will” (see the NASB).

In distinction, the view Johnson argues against has been present at least since the late 1800s and was made popular in recent days by P. Kyle McCarter Jr. Here, כָּלְבַּב is still commonly rendered adjectively with its suffix referring to YHWH, but now the idiom clarifies not that the king-elect’s character reflects God’s character but that the royal replacement stands in alignment with God’s elective purpose: “YHWH has sought for himself a man of his choosing.” In McCarter’s words, כָּלְבַּב in 1 Sam


4. To grasp properly the meaning of the traditional adjectival rendering of כָּלְבַּב, two points of note are significant: (1) This reading almost certainly requires the inclusion of the relative clause “whose heart is” in order for the sentence to make sense (so too Johnson, “The Heart of YHWH’s Chosen One in 1 Samuel,” 458). For more on this, see pp. 472–478 below. B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor have observed that ellipsis of a relative clause may cause structural ambiguity, making the referent of a given prepositional phrase difficult to discern (IBHS §11.4.3e). (2) When properly understood, the reading requires that the relationship of כָּלְבַּב to שֵׁא, “man,” express the king-elect’s like-mindedness to YHWH and not the man’s pursuit of YHWH’s heart. The issue is raised because the English word after bears a broader range of uses than the Hebrew preposition ד. After can connote resemblance of manner as “in accordance with, in imitation of,” and as such may be a fine translation for ד in 1 Sam 13:14 (The Oxford English Dictionary [2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1989] 1:233a: “after” §§13–14; Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary [10th ed.; Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1993] 21; cf. DCH 4:348; e.g., Gen 4:17; Josh 19:47). However, after also regularly means “in pursuit of,” as in “the police are after him” and “the miner went after gold” (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1:232a: “after” §4; Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 21), and this meaning is never connected with ד in the Hebrew Bible (for more on ד, see p. 475 n. 22 below). It seems best, therefore, to render ד in 1 Sam 13:14 as “according to” or the like (so Douay-Reims [1610] and Young’s Literal [1898] translations; see table 1), so as not to lead some readers to conclude falsely that the clause means “YHWH sought for himself a man (who was) in pursuit of God’s heart.” Nearly all modern translations render the preposition ד in 1 Sam 13:14 with the English word “after” (table 1).

5. P. K. McCarter Jr., 1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 8;
Table 1. Translations of 1 Samuel 13:14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version(s)</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>כַּאֲשֶׁר בִּקֵּשׁ יְהוָה לְאִישׁ כִּלְבָּב</td>
<td>Jehovah/Yahweh/the LORD hath/has sought him a man after his own heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop's Bible (1572), Geneva Bible (1599), KJV (1611), Webster Bible (1833), RV (1885), Darby Translation (1890), ASV (1901), WEB (1997)</td>
<td>The LORD/Adonai has sought for himself/ Himself a man after his/His own heart.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASB (1995)</td>
<td>The LORD/Lord has sought out a man after his/His own heart.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douay-Reims (1610)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td>character/loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young’s Literal (1898)</td>
<td>The Lord wants a man who will obey him. And he has discovered the man he wants. The LORD will find the kind of man he wants.</td>
<td>character/loyalty and election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible in Basic English (1965)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td>election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET Bible (1996)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td>election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCSB (2003)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td>election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Message (2002)</td>
<td>GOD is out looking for your replacement right now. This time he’ll do the choosing. The LORD will search for a man of his own choosing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEB (2011)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Living Bible (1971)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNT (1992)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCV (2005)</td>
<td>The Lord, searching for a man who is pleasing to him in every way . . . The LORD has found a man loyal to him.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13:14 “has nothing to do with any great fondness of Yahweh’s for David or any special quality of David . . . [but instead] emphasizes the free divine selection of the heir to the throne.” 6

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*New York: Doubleday, 1980) 229. H. P. A. Smith said of the entire clause that “the divine purpose is already a fixed fact” (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904] 97); this suggests a reading that focuses on divine election over like-mindedness.

6. McCarter, 1 Samuel, 229. Other more recent studies that follow this approach include D. M. Gunn, The Fate of King Saul: An Interpretation of a Biblical Story (JSOTSup 14; Sheffield:*
V. Philips Long has postulated a middle position that Johnson himself fails to highlight. Long suggests that, while primarily focusing on divine choice, may also connote the covenant loyalty of the coming king. In support, he observes that “implicit in the selection of a vassal is an expectation that the new appointee will act in harmony with the suzerain’s will and purpose, viz. ‘in accord with his heart.’”

Table 1 presents the way many English versions treat 1 Sam 13:14.

While commentators are split regarding the interpretation of the prepositional phrase, “like/according to his heart,” in 1 Sam 13:14, most appear to agree on two points (whether consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally): (1) the prepositional phrase functions adjectivally, modifying the object שׁアイ “man,” and (2) the subject יהוה “YHWH” stands as the antecedent to the 3ms pronominal suffix on כלבבו. The former conviction almost certainly necessitates the latter, for in an adjectival reading, having the 3ms suffix refer to the “man” would only be stating the obvious. Moreover, doing so would fail to provide the necessary contrast to Saul’s disobedience. Context demands that something is being said of the king-elect in 13:14 that cannot be said of Saul, and certainly one could say of Saul that “he was like/according to his own heart.”

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9. Cf. 1 Sam 25:3, where the Kethib states of Nabal: ‘אלו כלאב, “he was as his own heart,” that is, he was evil, for his heart was bent on evil; but most follow the qere and read “he was a Calebite.”
Raising fresh lexical, syntactic, comparative, and contextual questions, this study investigates anew the meaning of כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14. The argument will include four overlapping elements: (1) I will affirm with McCarter and others that the prepositional idiom points most explicitly to Yhwh’s choice of the king-elect rather than to the successor’s makeup or loyalty. However, (2) I will argue for the likelihood that the phrase כלבבו itself is best rendered adverbially, modifying not the object שׁאלא but the main verb בקש, “he sought.” Read this way, כלבבו is shown to express the manner or standard by which Yhwh pursued a new king—namely, he did so according to his heart/choice.10

(3) I will also consider the specific antecedent to the 3ms pronominal suffix on כלבבו, for the adverbial rendering creates two potential readings. If the suffix refers back to Yhwh, then an adverbial interpretation would suggest that God’s own discretion guided his selection of a king: “Yhwh has sought for himself according to his own will/choosing a man.” However, if the suffix refers instead to its nearest nominal שׁאלא, then a quality in or of Saul’s successor becomes the explicit standard that guided Yhwh’s quest: “Yhwh has sought for himself according to [the man’s] heart a man” (cf 1 Sam 15:28; 16:7). Figure 1 shows the primary syntactical possibilities for reading בקש יזאש כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14, based on whether the...
prepositional phrase כלבבו modifies the object יאש or the verb בקש and whether the 3ms suffix finds its antecedent in “YHWH” or “man.”

(4) After arguing for the likelihood of the adverbial rendering and for YHWH being the antecedent of the 3ms suffix, I will wrestle in the conclusion with whether YHWH showing discretion and seeking one man in contrast to others necessitates that there is something about the king-elect that matches the royal image God had in mind. That is, even with an adverbial reading of כלבבו that takes יהוה as the antecedent to the 3ms suffix, 1 Sam 13:14 may in fact both align with the numerous texts that emphasize David’s special divine election in contrast to Saul’s and anticipate those that stress David’s greater like-mindedness to YHWH when compared to Saul.

REASSESSING כלבבו IN 1 SAMUEL 13:14

This article argues that the idiomatic phrase כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 focuses principally on YHWH’s elective purposes (so P. Kyle McCarter Jr.) and yet does so adverbially (contra McCarter), describing that YHWH’s own will or desire provided the standard that guided his pursuit of Saul’s replacement (so with the 3ms suffix referring to the subject “YHWH,” not the object “man”). My case is structured under the following headings: (1) syntactic and semantic considerations within the greater literary and biblical contexts; (2) ancient Near Eastern comparisons; and (3) David’s election in context. In the conclusion, I will assess the extent to which YHWH’s choice of one person over another in 1 Sam 13:14 requires viewing the text as stressing both the king-elect’s election by God and his like-mindedness to God.

Syntactic and Semantic Considerations

Four points are noteworthy with reference to syntactic and semantic matters. First, Ronald J. Williams lists כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 as one of his examples of “כ of the norm (according to),” and both of his other examples include adverbial uses (2 Kgs 11:14; Ps 51:3). Some other parallel texts buttress this approach to 1 Sam 13:14.

Perhaps unwittingly, in support of his own conviction that 1 Sam 13:14 “asserts the freedom of the divine will in choosing a new king,” P. Kyle

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11. Biblical Hebrew has been commonly classified as a VSO language in light of the fact that the “statistically dominant and unmarked word order” of the verbal clause is Verb-Subject-Object-Modifier (Joüon §155k, with Williams’ Hebrew Syntax §572a; BHRG 342 [§46.1.3(iii)a]; cf. GKC §142f; IBHS §8.3.3; Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroese, A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar [Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999] §46.1.1). While some have recently argued for SVO (e.g., R. D. Holmstedt, The Relative Clause in Biblical Hebrew: A Linguistic Analysis [Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2002] 126–59, esp. pp. 145–50), the fact does not change that adverbial modifiers most commonly follow the object. The placement of כלבבו, “according to his heart,” after the object יאש, “man,” therefore, in no way clarifies whether the prepositional phrase is to be read adjectivally or adverbially. The placement of לו, “to him,” after the subject יהוה, “YHWH,” was most likely necessitated by the need to track pronominal referent and not stack two prepositional phrases on top of each other.

McCarter Jr. compares the semantic meaning of כלבו with that of the prepositional phrase in Ps 20:5[4]: “May he grant to you according to your heart/desire.” Significantly, the prepositional idiom in this structurally parallel text functions adverbially, clarifying the norm that was to guide God’s provision.

With a more direct contextual parallel to our passage, a number of commentators who agree with McCarter on 1 Sam 13:14 (e.g., Ralph W. Klein, Robert P. Gordon) liken the text to 2 Sam 7:21 (1 Chr 17:19): ושלח "and according to your heart you have done all this greatness.” For our purposes, the wording in 2 Sam 7:21 is significant for a number of reasons: (1) The prepositional phrase is unambiguously adverbial, so that God acts specifically in accord with his heart. (2) The 2ms pronominal suffix on the prepositional phrase unquestionably refers to Yhwh; his “heart,” not David’s, is in the fore. (3) This reference to Yhwh’s “heart” is one of only four or five mentioned in the DtrH and one of only two or three in Samuel (see 1 Sam 2:35; 13:14; 1 Kgs 9:3; 2 Kgs 10:30).13

(4) Like 1 Sam 13:14, the verse is focused on David’s kingship. David declares to Yhwh, “For the sake of your word and according to your heart (כלבו) you have done all this greatness to let your servant know.” By “all this greatness,” David refers to Yhwh’s gracious dynastic blessing (see 2 Sam 7:8–17), which was granted in accordance with God’s will, purpose, or pleasure (כלבו). Now, if this unambiguous adverbial use of כב is seen to clarify the ambiguous use of כלבב in 1 Sam 13:14, a parallel is created: just as Yhwh sought “according to his will” a replacement for Saul, so he promised “according to his will” a perpetual dynasty to David.14 This

13. In addition to these 5, Fabry observes only 21 instances outside the DtrH that speak of Yhwh’s “heart” (“לב; ללב,” 7:434–35): Gen 6:6; 8:21; Jer 3:15; 7:31; 19:5; 23:20; 30:24; 32:35, 41; 44:21; Isa 41:22; 63:4; Hos 11:8; Ps 33:11; Job 7:17; 10:13; 34:14; 36:5; Lam 3:3; 1 Chr 17:19 (2 Sam 7:21); 2 Chr 7:16 (1 Kgs 9:3). Significant among the total 26 are the 7 references that present his heart as the seat of his will and as the norm for human conduct: 1 Sam 2:35; 13:14; 2 Kgs 10:30; Jer 3:15; 7:31; 19:5; 32:35 (ibid., 435).

14. Scholars agree that the semantic ranges of ב and בלב in biblical Hebrew are indistinguishable, so that in many texts the two words are interchangeable and appear synonymous (cf. Gen 31:20, 26; Judg 19:5, 8; 19:6, 9; 1 Sam 6:6ab; Ezek 28:2c, 6; 1 Chr 12:39ab[38ab]; 2 Chr 12:14; 19:3; Fabry, “לב; ללב,” 7:407–8). Within Samuel, the 45 instances of ב and בלב connote eight different meanings, nearly all of which are nonphysical. All three potential references to Yhwh’s “heart” appear to refer to his “will, intention, or motivation” (1 Sam 2:35; 13:14; 2 Sam 7:21). In the following breakdown of “heart” texts in Samuel, a Y refers to Yhwh and D to David/Saul’s replacement; I list in brackets alternative possible meanings in the various contexts: (1) the physical organ (1 Sam 25:37 [no. 4]; 2 Sam 18:14); (2) mind (1 Sam 1:13; 9:19); (3) inclination, disposition, character? (D: 2 Sam 14:1; others: 1 Sam 6:6 [no. 8]; 10:9 [no. 8]; 10:26; 25:3, qere; 2 Sam 15:6; 13; 19:14); (4) one’s inner self, seat of feeling, or emotion (D: 2 Sam 13:33 [no. 7]; 19:7; other: 1 Sam 1:8; 2:1 [no. 8]; 4:13; 17:32 no. 5]; 25:36; 28:5; 2 Sam 6:16; 13:20 [no. 7]; 13:28); (5) conscience (D: 1 Sam 24:6; 25:31; 2 Sam 24:10); (6) determination, courage (D: 2 Sam 7:27 [no. 8]; others: 17:10); (7) attention, consideration, reason (D: 1 Sam 21:12; 25:25; 27:1; 2 Sam 19:19 [no. 4]; others: 1 Sam 4:20; 9:20 [no. 3]; 2 Sam 18:3; (8) will, intention, motivation (Y: 1 Sam 2:35; 13:14 [D] [no. 3]; 2 Sam 7:21 [no. 3]; D: 1 Sam 16:7 [no. 3]; 17:28; 2 Sam 7:3 [no. 7]; others: 7:3 [no. 3]; 12:20, 24; 14:7 [no. 7]). Outside Samuel, one finds additional meanings for ב and בלב, such as “seat of vital force; the organized strength of; and inside, middle (metaphorically).”
parallel supports reading יְהוָה as the antecedent to the 3ms suffix.

Along with 2 Sam 7:21, McCarter and others point to 1 Sam 14:7 and Jer 3:15 in support, but neither text in my view is fully clear either semantically or syntactically.\(^\text{15}\) The former is significant if only for its nearness to our passage. Here Jonathan’s armor-bearer declares, כלבבך עַמֶךָ֝ הנַ֣ני, “Be-hold, I am with you according to your heart.” McCarter believes the prepositional phrase addresses “an individual’s will or purpose,” but V. Philips Long is correct to note the idiom could imply not only “chosenness” but also “‘unity of purpose’ and a willingness to act in concert.”\(^\text{16}\) What is clear is that the prepositional phrase is functioning adverbially.

In Jer 3:15, as a counter to the wicked Judean leaders of Jeremiah’s day (Jer 2:8; 10:21; 12:10; 23:1–2; 50:6), YHWH declares his new covenant promise: כלבי רעים לכם ונתתי, “and I will give to you shepherds according to my heart” (cf. 23:4). C. F. Keil argued that this was a purposeful allusion to 1 Sam 13:14, which would make it significant that the 1cs pronominal suffix on כלבי “like/according to my heart” agrees only with the understood clause subject YHWH.\(^\text{17}\) What is not clear is whether the prepositional phrase itself functions adjectivally or adverbially and whether it points to the shepherds’ like-mindedness to God or their chosenness. Elsewhere in Jeremiah, YHWH does refer to his appointed shepherds as “chosen” ( выбръ) (Jer 49:19; 50:44), which heightens the possibility that the “heart” idiom in Jer 3:15 addresses divine election. Nevertheless, the clause that follows in Jer 3:15 relates to the shepherds’ faithful leadership, so there is also support for the traditional adjectival understanding.\(^\text{18}\) Clearly, Jer 3:15 does not offer decisive help in our interpretation of 1 Sam 13:14.


16. Long, The Reign and Rejection of King Saul, 92–93. This translation follows the MT, which reads כָּלֵבּוֹךָ, but the LXX has ιδοὺ ἐγὼ μετά σοῦ, ὡς ἡ καρδία σου καρδία μου, “Behold, I with you; as your heart is my heart.” The inclusion of “is my heart” may be the translator’s interpretive addition in light of an apparent ellipsis in Hebrew, or it could witness the more original text, with כלבי, “like/according to my heart,” being lost through haplography (so McCarter, I Samuel, 236).

17. C. F. Keil, “Jeremiah,” in Commentary on the Old Testament (ed. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, trans. D. Patrick; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866–91, repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 8:92. In his discussion, Keil contrasts YHWH’s selection of David in 1 Sam 13:14 with the kings that “Israel had itself appointed according to the desire of its heart”—a reading that renders the prepositional idiom adverbially. Later, however, he appears to support the traditional adjectival reading when he asserts, “If Israel will return to the Lord, He will give it rulers according to His heart, like David, who did wisely in all his ways.”

18. The clause that follows in Jer 3:15 reads, והשִּׂכִּיל דעֵת אתכם ורעֵהוּ, “and they will shepherd you with knowledge and understanding” (cf. Jer 23:4). However, the wording is not decisive support for rendering a meaning of like-mindedness to כלבי, for the weqatal וַיֹּאמֶר simply signals logical progression (result?) from the previous clause, in light of the subject’s switch from YHWH to the shepherds. All we learn, therefore, is that God’s gift of pastor-leaders in the age of the new covenant will result in their shepherding in knowledge and prudence. For more on this construction, see Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar §21.3; D. A. Garrett and J. S. DeRouchie, A Modern Grammar for Biblical Hebrew (Nashville: B&H, 2009) 64–66 (§10.D).
Second, while Benjamin J. M. Johnson and others are correct that the content of 1 Sam 2:35 could be understood to support the traditional understanding of 13:14, this first of the three potential references in Samuel to YHWH’s “heart” most likely supports the adverbial rendering of כלבבו and YHWH as the antecedent to the 3ms suffix. The similarities between the passages are clear: just as Samuel declared to Saul, “YHWH has sought for himself (לו) a man according to his heart (כלבבו),” so also YHWH declared to Eli through the man of God, “I will raise up for myself (לי) a faithful priest who will do according to what is within my heart and within my soul (כלבבו).” Johnson and others infer that the explicit stress on “doing” along with the presence of +לבב in 2:35 necessitates that +לבב in 13:14 also focuses on the “doing” of Saul’s replacement—that is, he is likeminded with YHWH and lives accordingly (the traditional adjectival rendering). A number of observations, however, suggest a different conclusion.

(1) The passages are distinct in their use of prepositions with לֶבֶב. Whereas 1 Sam 2:35 links the preposition אָשֶׁר with the preposition לֶבֶב, 13:14 has only לֶבֶב. The preposition לֶבֶב is clearly used spatially in 2:35, marking a location within the area of God’s will and clarifying the “what” of the relative אָשֶׁר: that which is “done” is “according to what is within God’s heart and soul.” In contrast, the preposition לֶבֶב is never used spatially, and in 13:14 it is either expressing a relationship of correspondence or identity between the “heart/choice” of God and the “man” (the adjectival view) or emphasizing agreement in kind, manner, or norm between (a) God’s “heart / will” and his action or (b) man’s “heart / will” and God’s action (the adverbial view).

(2) No ambiguity exists in the function of אָשֶׁר in 1 Sam 2:35: it is clearly modifying the verb הָעָשָׂה, “to do.” That is to say, in 2:35 the prepositional

19. Johnson, “The Heart of YHWH’s Chosen One in 1 Samuel,” 460–61; cf. T. Veijola, Die Ewige Dynastie: David und die Entstehung seiner Dynastie nach der deuteronomistischen Darstellung (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1975) 56; M. Garsiel, The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels (Ramat Gan: Revivim, 1985) 100–102. Garsiel further comments that the reader must wait until the battle of Gilboa (1 Sam 28–2 Sam 1) to see played out the narratorial hints that connect Eli and Saul (102–6).

20. For more on 1 Sam 2:35, see most recently D. S. Diffey, “David and the Fulfillment of 1 Samuel 2:35: Faithful Priest, Sure House, and A Man After God’s Own Heart,” EvQ 85 (2013) 99–104.

21. On the spatial use of לֶבֶב see IBHS §11.2.5b.

22. לֶבֶב describes comparison and correspondence “like, as, just as” (IBHS §11.2.9a), and, similar to the English word like, the Hebrew preposition with its object noun (or noun equivalent) can function substantivally, adjectivally, or adverbially (see IBHS §11.1.3a; Jobin §133g n. 4). Waltke and O’Connor observe that, when viewed from a semantic perspective, the preposition לֶבֶב is used in at least three ways: (1) to connote agreement in quantity or measure; (2) to express the logical outcome of a comparison as correspondence or identity; and (3) to emphasize agreement in kind, manner, or norm (IBHS §11.2.9b). The phrase לֶבֶב in 1 Sam 13:14 follows one of the latter two categories, so that (1) YHWH’s heart/will corresponds in some way with the (heart/will of the) man (that is, the traditional adjectival reading), (2) YHWH’s elective purpose corresponds with or finds fulfillment in the man (that is, McCarter’s adjectival reading), or (3) YHWH or the man’s heart serves as the standard or norm by which God sought a new king (that is, the adverbial rendering).
phrase beginning with כ functions adverbially, just as was the case in 2 Sam 7:21 already noted. From the perspective of syntax, then, the use of כ and its object in 1 Sam 2:35 can only be seen to support the adverbial reading of כלבבו in 13:14.

(3) In 1 Sam 2:35 the faithful priest is the implied subject of the main verb אשר יעשה, but YHWH is the principal actor in 13:14. Whereas in 2:35 the anticipated priest operates according to what is in YHWH’s heart, God’s “doing” (Piel בקש, “to seek”) rather than the man’s “doing” is at the fore in 13:14. Nevertheless, the way in which YHWH’s heart is portrayed as the standard in 2:35 supports the view that YHWH’s heart and not the man’s is addressed in 13:14.

All these observations suggest that YHWH is indeed the antecedent to the 3ms pronominal suffix on כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 and that the phrase itself is functioning adverbially, describing the standard by which YHWH acted; he sought Saul’s replacement in accordance with his own will/choice.

Third, if the narrator of 1 Sam 13:14 had intended כלבבו to be descriptive of איש, “man,” in the way Johnson and other traditional-view advocates attest, would he not have said “a man whose heart is like his heart” ( איש אשר כלבבו) rather than just “a man according to his heart” (כלבבו איש)? Notice how passages with similar constructions and lexemes are shaped:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
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| 2 Sam 17:10 | ותרומ מתמיד איש לכלבבו
              | And he—even a valiant one whose heart is like the heart of a lion—will completely melt. |
| Ezek 28:2  | תחת לְכָלַב יאדוים
                | And you set your heart like the heart of a god. |
| Ezek 28:6  | יִנָּה תחת אֶלְיוֹבֶּכָּלָב
                | Because you have set your heart like the heart of a god . . . |

Certainly, prepositions such as כ can appear in “pregnant” constructions containing ellipsis.23 However, in view of the filled-out patterns elsewhere both inside and outside Samuel, one may legitimately question why the full construction was not included in 1 Sam 13:14 if the traditional adjectival view was intended.

Fourth, we must consider the work of Ernst Jenni, who in his 1994 monograph Die Präposition Kaph analyzes all 3,038 appearances of the preposition כ in the OT.24 A key purpose of his study was to determine the meaning of the relation between the noun that the preposition governs and the clause in which the prepositional phrase appears. In the Hebrew Bible, he finds nine main categories of use, each with its own subcategories.25

23. See IBHS §11.4.3e; Joüon §133h.
24. E. Jenni, Die Präposition Kaph, Band 2, Die hebräischen Präpositionen (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994). All translations of Jenni’s German original are my own; the German texts for most citations are included in the footnotes.
25. Jenni’s nine primary categories are as follows: (1) Comparability (predicate approximation: without commonality); (2) Similarity (no transitive comparison); (3) Imitation (activity comparison: subject distinction); (4) Reiteration (situational comparison: subject equality); (5) Realization (mental anticipation); (6) Truth Proving (verbal anticipation: announcement);
He places כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 under the general category of “realization (mental anticipation),” in which a comparison is made between reality and a mental image of that reality. Jenni states, “With the collective concept ‘mental image’ we think of various mental and intellectual activities that in a certain way picture external reality, particularly the activities of perception, subjective judgment, and willing.” 26 The formula Jenni uses to describe this category is: “X is/acts as X/Y imagined or conceived.” 27 Placing the various constituents of our clause into this formula results in the following statement: “YHWH acts as he conceived” or, more particularly, “YHWH sought (a man) in accordance with his act of willing.” Clearly, Jenni renders כלבבו adverbially and treats YHWH as the antecedent to the 3ms pronominal suffix.

Jenni places our passage in the subcategory of “action according to discretion.” 28 Here, the preposition כ manifests in clauses that show how one’s willing or intention is fulfilled. So, for example, Gen 19:8 reads אשר יעשה עביכם כטוב ליהן, “Do to them as is good in your eyes”—that is, act toward them as you think best. There are 26 instances of this use in the OT, 5 of which have God as the subject. The primary fulfillment verb is сталש (used 20 times), but other verbs also appear. The various prepositional idioms of willing along with their accompanying fulfillment verbs are noted in table 2. 29 In each of these instances, the prepositional idioms of willing are syntactically linked to the verbs of fulfillment. Specifically, Jenni correlates the prepositional phrase כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 with the fulfillment verb בקש, “to seek.” YHWH had an image of a new king, and in alignment with this act of discretion (“according to his will,”aniel) he sought out Saul’s replacement.

If Jenni’s categorization is correct, there is no question that כלבבו is functioning adverbially in 1 Sam 13:14. The intimate connection between the prepositional idioms of willing (here, כלבבו) and the various fulfillment verbs (here, בקש) necessitates this conclusion. It also requires that the phrase itself designate God’s heart and not that of Saul’s replacement.

In summary, the closest parallel texts both semantically and syntactically suggest that 1 Sam 13:14 should be read adverbially, with כלבבו clarifying the standard by which YHWH sought Saul’s successor and with


27. Ibid., 37: “x ist/handelt wie x/y sich vorstellt.”

28. Jenni’s nine subcategories under “Realization (mental anticipation)” are as follows (using his enumeration): (51) fact as heard (e.g., 1 Sam 23:11); (52) self-evident as seen (e.g., 2 Kgs 2:19); (53) dream (interpretation) corresponding to meaning (e.g., Gen 40:5); (54) evaluation according to appearance (e.g., Gen 19:14); (55) fulfillment as anticipated (e.g., Gen 27:4); (56) performance as projected (e.g., Num 33:46); (57) fulfillment according to desire (e.g., 2 Chr 2:15); (58) action according to discretion (e.g., Gen 19:8); (59) intention as present status (e.g., Gen 50:20).

29. In 1 Sam 14:7, the verb сталש is understood in the assertion of readiness by the weapon carrier (cf. 2 Sam 15:15).
the 3ms suffix highlighting that YHWH’s own heart guided his selection process. These conclusions are further supported by Jenni’s study of the preposition ב, which treats the choice of the new king as the outward realization of God previous act of mental discretion.

**Ancient Near Eastern Comparisons**

V. Philips Long has compared our passage to one located in the Babylonian Chronicles (R §11–13): “The seventh year: In the month of Kislev the king of Akkad [Nebuchadnezzar II] mustered his army and marched to Hattu. He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city (and) seized (its) king. *A king of his own choice he appointed (šarra ša ŠÀ-šú ina libbi ipteqid) in the city [Jerusalem] (and) taking the vast tribute he brought it into Babylon.*”

herence, I add the following statement from a Hittite New Kingdom treaty between Tudhaliya IV of Hatti and Kurunta of Tarhuntassa (ca. 1250–1225 b.c.; no. 18C; §19.ii.92–94): “Whatever son Kurunta prefers, whether the son of his wife or the son of some other woman, whatever son is the choice of Kurunta, whatever son Kurunta prefers, (let him place him in kingship in the land of Tarhuntassa).”

Both of the above texts use cognates of the Hebrew לב and לְבָב in the context of a human suzerain’s appointing or electing a vassal. While the clauses that follow in the Hittite treaty do emphasize the need for the vassal’s covenant loyalty, the “heart” language is abandoned.

I will now cite numerous texts that link a god’s “heart” to the selection of a king. Significantly, the “heart” idiom appears in contexts dealing with divine royal election as early as the second half of the Early Dynastic III period (ca. 2500–2335 b.c.), and it continues to be used at least into the reign of Cyrus II (the Great; ca. 559–530) at the beginning of the Persian period. The first text comes from Eannatum, a ruler in the Dynasty of Lagash and one of the last kings of the Early Dynastic period (Brick A.i.9–ii.1). He declares that he is one “whose name was called to mind by Enlil; endowed with strength by Ningirsu; envisaged by Nansh in (her) heart (ŠA [G]-PA [D]-DA d NINA-GE); truly and rightly suckled by Ninhursaga; named by Inanna.”

King Gudea of the Dynasty of Akkad (ca. 2335–2112 b.c.) makes a similar
announcement concerning himself on one of his statues (Statue B.ii.8–iii.5): “Shepherd evisaged by Ningirsu in (his) heart (SIB ŠA[G]-GI-PA[D]-DA 4NIN-GIR-SU-KA-GE), steadfastly regarded by Nanshe; endowed with strength by Nindar; the man described(?) by Baba; child borne by Gatumdug; endowed with dignity and the sublime scepter by Ig-alima; well provided with the breath of life by Dunshagar; he whom Ningiszida his god has made to appear in the assembly with (proudly) raised head.”35 While we must not force the authors of these comparisons to mean more than they intended through the use of idiomatic speech, these texts at least conceptually align with Ernst Jenni’s categorization of נב (nab) in 1 Sam 13:14 as “realization (mental anticipation).” The gods conceived in their “minds/Hearts” both Eannatum and Gudea as kings.

The following further texts provide other pertinent parallels. On Cylindrical A.xvvi.10–16 of Gudea’s inscriptions, the king proclaims of himself: “Being the one at whom Nanshe looked with favor, being the man of the heart of Enlil (4EN-LIL-LÁ GALU ŠA[G]-GA-NA-KAM), being the ruler . . . (?) of Ningirsu, Gudea, being born in a lofty sanctuary of Gatumdug; Nisaba opened the house of wisdom for him, Enki prepared the plan of the house for him.”36 Similarly, the following example is representative of numerous statements in the royal inscriptions of Shu-Sin of the Ur III Period (ca. 2112–2004) that declare he was chosen by god (E3/2.1.4.3.i 4–16): “Šū-sîn, called by name by the god An, beloved of the god Enlil, king whom the god Enlil chose in his (own) heart (LUGAL 4EN-LÍL-LE ŠÀ-GA-NA IN-PÀ) as shepherd of the land and of the four quarters, mighty king, king of Ur, king of the four quarters.”37 A series of Neo-Assyrian liver omens uncovered in Ashurbanipal’s library (ca. 668–627 B.C.) contain the following comment (Manzāzu Commentary 1:19.103): “If the Presence is turned upside down: Enlil will install a king of his own choice (4Illil šarra ša libbīšu išakkan).”38 Finally, the Cyrus Cylinder records the king declaring: “He [Marduk] surveyed and looked throughout all the lands, searching for a righteous king according to the desire of his heart, so as to grasp his hand (IŠTÊMA MALKI IŠARU BIBIL LIBBI ŠA ITTAMAḤ QÂTUŠŠU). He called his name Cyrus, king of Anshan; he pronounced his name to be king over all (the world).”39

35. ISA 106–7, as translated by Jacobsen and cited by Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods, 238. 36. ISA 156; translation by R. A. Averbeck in COS 2:426.
37. D. R. Frayne, Ur III Period (2112 –2004 bc) (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 302. For similar statements, see E3/2.1. 43.ii.8–13 (p. 303), vii.19–29 (caption 1) (p. 306); 4.4.ii.11–15 (p. 308); 4.5 caption 2.1–8 (p. 311); 4.7.1–5 (p. 314), 15–20 (p. 315); 4.9.x.6–10 (p. 317); 4.11.1–9 (p. 321); 4.12.1–12 (p. 322); 4.13.1–5 (p. 323); 4.14.1–5 (p. 325); 4.15.1–5 (p. 326); 4.17.12–19 (p. 328); 4.18.1–8 (p. 329); 4.19.1–8 (p. 330); 4.20.3–10 (p. 331); 4.21.5–14 (p. 332); 4.24.1–5 (p. 334); 4.27.1–6 (p. 336).
38. U. Koch-Westenholz, Babylonian Liver Omens (Copenhagen: Musem Tusculanum, 2000) 146 §19.103. The “Presence” (symbolic meaning) or “Station” (literal meaning) (manzāzu) is a vertical groove on the liver’s lobar sinister (pp. 45, 51–53).
39. F. H. Weissbach, ed, Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden (Vorderasiatische Bibliothek; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911) 2; translation adapted from ibid., 3; and Mordechai Cogan in COS 2:315. Cogan’s full translation paraphrases a more literal rendering: “searching for a righteous
This unit has surveyed numerous extrabiblical texts dealing with a superior’s selection of a king. In each of these contexts, the “heart” idiom refers to the human suzerain or god’s mental conception or choice of a new king rather than to the likemindedness of the vassal to his superior or to the loyalty of the new king as the standard for his selection. This comparative ancient Near Eastern material, therefore, counters the traditional adjectival rendering of כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 and potentially supports all views that see the idiom focusing more on Yhwh’s choice of Saul’s replacement and the 3ms suffix referring to יהוה, “YHWH,” rather than ישא, “man.”

David’s “Election” in Context

Benjamin J. M. Johnson is certainly correct that within the context of 1 Sam 13 an allusion to the new king’s loyalty would provide the greatest contrast to Saul’s foolish act. However, I question his claim that the literary context forces the reader to “expect the statement about Yhwh’s future chosen one in 13:14 to say something about the chosen one’s heart, not something about Yhwh’s choice.” As V. Philips Long has noted, “The allusion to David in 1 Sam. 13:14, though obvious in the light of later episodes, is only anticipatory in the present context, so that the emphasis falls not so much upon the sufficiency of David as upon the deficiency of Saul.”

king . . . whom he [Marduk] would support.” A. L. Oppenheim’s offers a contrasting view of this final clause in ANET 315: “searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him (i.e., Marduk) (in the annual procession).” Here, “his hand” is seen as a reference to Marduk rather than to the elected king—a more likely interpretation in view of the fact that the king’s chief duty during the annual procession was to “grasp Marduk’s hand,” the very thing the priests accused Nabonidus of not doing, thus securing Cyrus’s victory (see “Nabonidus Chronicle 7” in Grayson, Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles, 104–11). I thank Charles Halton for pointing this information out to me.

For a number of other interesting extrabiblical references to the divine election of a king, though without the same use of the heart idiom, see Parpola, Assyrian Prophecies, C n. 186. H.-J. Fabry states that in Akkadian literature “the will of the gods (libbi ilāni) played an especially important role at the accession of a king, above all if he reigned kî la [sic] libbi ilāni ‘contrary to the will of the gods’” (Fabry, “לֵב; לֵלָב”, 7:405). He does not cite any examples, however, where the “heart” idiom is applied to the loyalty of the vassal.

After submitting this essay, I found that Athas published a similar list with some additional Akkadian texts and conclusions comparable to my own (“A Man After God’s Own Heart,” 193–95). While none of The Assyrian Dictionary’s seven translated examples of libbu “heart” following kîma, kî, or aki (cognate prepositions of כ) offer contextual parallels with 1 Sam 13:14, each has the prepositional phrase functioning adverbially, modifying a verb rather than a noun (see CAD L 171; cf. AHw, 1:549–51). For example, in the Amarna Letters (EA, 109.11; cf. 38.18, 21; 125.43) a certain Rib-Hadda tells the Great King that the sons of ‘Abdi-Ašîrtu overtook the cities of the mayor “just as they pleased” (kîma libbišunu) (see W. L. Moran, ed. and trans., The Amarna Letters [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992] 183). Similarly, the Middle Assyrian Laws (A §14; cf. §16) grant that the husband of a wife who commits adultery may “treat her as he wishes” (ki libbiša eppasu; COS 2:355; ANET 181; cf. ANET 181 n. 6, “in accordance with his heart”).


Ibid., 463.

Long, The Reign and Rejection of King Saul, 93 (emphasis added).
Furthermore, there are numerous literary signals in 1 Samuel that point to the necessity for 1 Sam 13:14, as the first mention of Saul’s replacement, to provide a direct allusion to the new king’s divine election. With the statement in 8:5 that Israel desired a king “to judge us like all the nations” (cf. 8:19–20), the reader is encouraged to interpret the history of Israel’s monarchy through the lens of the royal ideal pictured in Deut 17, which stressed that Israel’s king be divinely “chosen”: “When you enter the land that YHWH 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 YHWH your God chooses (מלך אלהיך ההוא)" (Deut 17:14–15). In all likelihood, this emphasis on “chosenness” provides the background to the historiographer’s stress that the people “chose” Saul (1 Sam 8:18; 12:13) for themselves (see נל, “for us,” 8:5; לך, “for yourselves,” 8:18), whereas YHWH acted for himself (ל/לי, “for him/for me,” 1 Sam 13:14; 16:1, 3) in setting apart the one later identified as David. What is striking is that the immediate context nowhere explicitly declares David as God’s “chosen.”

45. God is the subject of בָּחַר, “to choose, elect,” in 88 of the verb’s 164 instances in the OT (54%). 32.95% of the 88 are in Deuteronomy, a book that contains every key OT election motif. In Deuteronomy, God elects his people Israel (Deut 4:37; 7:6, 7; 10:15; 14:2), their king and his dynasty (17:14), his sanctuary location (12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16, 17:8, 10; 18:6; 23:17[16]; 26:2; 31:11), and his priesthood (18:5; 21:5). When viewing the OT as a whole, God is the subject of בָּחַר 29× in Deuteronomy, 7× Samuel, 12× in Kings, 11× in Isaiah, 9× in Psalms, and 18× in Chronicles. It applies to the choice of Israel’s place of worship (44×), of priests and Levites (9×), of David and the dynasty bearing his name (18×), and of Israel as the people and servant of God (17×). Along with many of the figures above, E. Nicole has rightfully noted that the theme of election is far broader than the appearances of this single verb and its cognates ("בחר," NI D O T T E 1:639). Significantly, there is no hint in Deut 17 that Israel would be wrong to have an earthly king once in the promised land. Indeed, Israel could have a king so long as he was an Israelite, chosen by YHWH and so long as he would be surrendered to God’s law. The problem in 1 Sam 8, then, is not Israel’s desire for a king per se but the type of king they desired. They wanted someone who would replace rather than represent YHWH as judge and warrior, and in doing so they rejected God as king—something that was totally foreign to the picture put forth in Deut 17 (cf. 1 Sam 8:7, 20; 12:12–13).

46. The text explicitly says that YHWH set Saul apart (1 Sam 9:17) and indeed chose him through lot to lead Israel (1 Sam 10:21–22, 24; cf. 2 Sam 21:6). However, following the statements that the people chose to have a king for themselves (1 Sam 8:5, 18), the text also stresses that God gave the king for the people (לְהָלַךְ, “for them,” 1 Sam 8:22). As YHWH’s later commentary makes clear, his setting apart of Saul was done “in my anger” (Hos 13:11). Indeed, he could declare, “They have made kings, but not by me; they have set up princes, but I did not know/approve” (8:4). That Saul stands as a manifestation of divine judgment is highlighted within the context of 1 Sam 10 both by the stress on his origin from Gibeah of Benjamin (1 Sam 10:21, 26; cf. Judg 19–21, esp. 20:4–6) and by the note of his height ( gib, which places him among those (with David’s brother Eliab and Goliath, 1 Sam 16:6–7; 17:4) that Hannah already declared YHWH would bring down (2:3–10, esp. v. 3; cf. 2:30). As such, the reference in 1 Sam 10:24 that God chose Saul must be read in light of its highly polemical context and in relation to the two references of the people’s choice of Saul that frame it (8:18; 12:13). As Long has noted, a comparison of the texts “suggests that David was Yahweh’s choice in a way that Saul, given in response to the people’s request, was not” (The Reign and Rejection of King Saul, 93). A similar rhetorical use of בָּחַר is found in 2 Sam 16:18, where Hushai, a pro-David figure, prefaces his bad advice to Absalom with this statement: “The one chosen by YHWH, by these people, and by all the men of Israel—his I will be, and I will remain with him.”
For example, 1 Sam 16:1 highlights God’s rejection of Saul and his selection of another (cf. 15:26, 28). But rather than using the more natural verb בחר, “to choose, elect,” as the counterpart to מזא, “to reject,” YHWH uses חז, “to see, identify”: “I have identified for myself among his [Jesse’s] sons a king.” Furthermore, following the statement in 16:7 that Eliab is rejected (מאס) and that God looks (ראה) at the heart (לב), the clause יִהוּד לאֵבָּחר “YHWH has not chosen,” is used three times with reference to David’s other brothers (16:8, 9, 10). Then, as soon as David shows up on the scene, YHWH tells Samuel in 16:12: “Arise; anoint him, for this is he.” Whereas Saul and Jesse’s seven oldest sons were “rejected” and thus “not chosen,” David is he who was “seen” by God and, by implication, “chosen” by him. J. P. Fokkelman is certainly correct that “an ‘election’ in favour of David . . . is conspicuous by its absence.”

That David is indeed the chosen one of God is further supported by the texts outside 1 Samuel that explicitly use בחר in reference to David (2 Sam 6:21; 1 Kgs 8:16 // 2 Chr 6:6; 1 Kgs 11:34; Ps 78:70; 1 Chr 28:4). Significantly, all but two of these passages appear to echo 1 Sam 13:14; 15:28; or 16:7, thus affirming the royal election theme in these contexts, even though בחור is not used of David at these points. Specifically, 2 Sam 6:21 implies Saul’s rejection when speaking of David’s election and is one of only three other passages, the first being 1 Sam 13:14, that speak of David’s being “appointed (by YHWH) as ruler over Israel” (see also 1 Sam 25:30 and 1 Kgs 1:35). Furthermore, 1 Kgs 11:34 parallels the mention of David’s covenant loyalty with the statement of his election, and both Ps 78:70 and 1 Chr 28:4 echo the story of David’s anointing in 1 Sam 16 by making reference to his being chosen “from all the house of my father” and “from the sheepfolds,” respectively.

While the narratives describing David’s rise to kingship clearly portray him as God’s “chosen” in contrast to Saul, the reader of the DtrH expects a more explicit expression of David’s divine election, especially in the first explicit reference to God’s replacement of Saul—namely, 1 Sam 13:14. Ernst Jenni’s proposal indicates that in this text YHWH’s previous act of discretion

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47. For a number of extrabiblical texts that speak of a god’s glance singling out a king, see Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods, 238–39. The two verbs used for sight in this passage (Hiphil נבט and Qal רא), 16:1, 7) both generally denote physical sense perception with the eyes (“to see, look”), and the two frequently appear together in the OT. Specifically, 26 of the 67 occurrences of Hiphil נבט parallel or correspond with Qal רא (e.g., Num 23:21; 1 Sam 17:42; 2 Kgs 3:14; Isa 42:18; Hab 1:5; Ps 33:13; Job 28:24; Lam 1:11, 12). For example, YHWH declares in Isa 66:2: “But to this one I will look (Hiphil נבט), to the one who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at my word.” Note also 1 Kgs 14:8, which explicitly connects David’s wholehearted obedience (that is, covenant loyalty) to the sight of YHWH: “Yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and who followed me with all his heart (בכל לבו) to do only that which was right in my sight (בעיני).”

48. Fokkelman, The Crossing Fates, 114. Even if David’s election is certain in the context, the narrator’s reticence to use בחר with reference to him is still striking and probably quite intentional. In all likelihood, the use of בחר with Saul and yet not with David in 1 Samuel is part of the narrator’s rhetorical strategy to discourage all human will that is not submitted to YHWH’s authority and purposes.
(his “heart/will,” לבב) anticipated and thus directed his seeking (בקש) of Saul’s replacement. I suggest, therefore, that either the verb “to seek” (בקש) with its modifier “for himself” (לָּה = “Yahweh sought for himself”) or, more likely, the prepositional phrase “according to his heart/will” (כלבבו) provides the expected reference to the divine choice of the king. Both of these possibilities easily align within the adverbial reading of the text. Conclusion and Implications

Synthesis

The interpretation of 1 Sam 13:14 depends on properly grasping the meaning of the prepositional phrase כלבבו, “like/according to his heart.” This article has identified three overlapping issues that establish one’s conclusions: (1) Does the prepositional phrase function adjectively, modifying the noun איש, “man,” or adverbially, modifying the verb בקוש, “seek”? (2) Is the antecedent of the 3ms pronominal suffix on הכלבבו the object or the subject יהוה, “YHWH”? (3) Does the context of royal selection suggest that the “heart” language (לבב) refers more to character or election?

The traditional interpretation of the verse reads כלבבו adjectively, sees YHWH as the antecedent to the 3ms suffix, and views the unit כלבבו איש to express the man’s likemindedness to God. There is little question that this reading makes solid sense within the narrative framework of the book. As Benjamin J. M. Johnson concludes from explicit texts such as 1 Sam 16:7 that highlight David’s inner quality in contrast to his brothers (and ultimately Saul), “It is a key thematic interest in the narrative of 1 Samuel that YHWH’s chosen agents have a right heart, and it appears that there is something about David’s heart that makes him an ideal candidate to function as YHWH’s chosen one.”

This study added justification to the view that YHWH’s heart and not the man’s is explicitly referred to in הכלבבו. Numerous biblical parallels support this contention, as well as many comparative texts outside the Bible wherein a king’s selection is linked to the “heart/will” of a superior.

These same support texts, however, strongly affirm McCarter’s assertion that הכלבבו refers most directly to the divine choice of Saul’s successor (“according to God’s choosing”) and not to the king’s likemindedness to God. In contrast to McCarter, however, the corresponding texts also sug-

49. We can see that בקוש can carry the sense “to elect” because it parallels the verb הוֹדֵע “to appoint” in our passage and in its similar use in Isa 40:20, where בקוש, “to seek,” and הוֹדֵע, “to choose,” stand in neighboring clauses. (For other examples of words or expressions that convey the idea of election, see Nicole, “buyer,” 638, 640.) 44 of the 250 examples of בקוש in the Hebrew Bible appear in the book of Samuel. C. Chhetri has observed that God is the subject of בקוש 14× and that the object of the verb can be persons, animals, or inanimate objects (“בקש,” NIDOTTE 1:722–23).

50. Recognizably, with the traditional adjectival reading, the verb “to seek” (בקש) with its modifier “for himself” (לָּה) could itself be seen as the expected allusion to Deut 17. In McCarter’s adjectival view, הכלבבו itself supplies the allusion—“a man of/according to his choosing.”

gest that could be read adverbially, clarifying the standard or norm by which YHWH sought a royal replacement—he did so in accordance with his own will/choice. The adverbial view easily allows כלבבו to provide the expected allusion to Deut 17:14–20, fits conceptually with the other ancient Near Eastern data, and aligns perfectly with Ernst Jenni’s observations that prepositional idioms of willing (here, כלבבו) have a close syntactic link to their respective fulfillment verbs (here, קוש). As such, 1 Sam 13:14 is best understood to explicitly declare that YHWH’s hunt for a new king was directly guided by his desire or inclination. The verse tells us nothing explicit about the inward makeup or loyalty of Saul’s successor. We know only that God’s mental act of discretion (לבב) regarding Israel’s soon-to-be king found outward expression when YHWH sought Saul’s replacement.

“Realization (Mental Anticipation)” in 1 Samuel 13:14

I now recall V. Philips Long’s suggestion that while 1 Sam 13:14 denotes the king-elect as one divinely chosen it also connotes that the royal successor was in some way superior to Saul.52 Ernst Jenni classified our passage under the main category “realization (mental anticipation)” and the subcategory “action according to discretion,” and he used the following formula to characterize the classification: “X is/acts as X/Y imagined or conceived.” When the various constituents of 1 Sam 13:14 are plugged into the formula, the result is: “YHWH has sought in accordance with his previous act of willing (a man).” YHWH’s choice (the mental image) anticipated his following action (the realization) with direct reference to Saul’s replacement. But now two possible interpretations follow.

On the one hand, if YHWH’s subjective judgment or willing expressed by לבב in 1 Sam 13:14 points in particular to a choice of David in contrast to all others, then the action of seeking a man that follows is a direct fulfillment of the previous choice. On the other hand, if the mental image expressed by לבב is more general and simply an expression of a royal ideal rather than of David in particular, then the seeking of a royal replacement may be a further act of discretion by which YHWH declared that David in contrast to others matched the ideal picture of a king that God had in mind. The meaning associated with this latter adverbial rendering would therefore allow 1 Sam 13:14 to remain parallel to 15:28, which identifies Saul’s replacement as “better than you” (cf. 28:17),53 and 16:7, which elevates

52. Long, The Reign and Rejection of King Saul, 92–93.
53. Saul had wrongfully saved the “best” (马来ך) of the Amalekite spoil (1 Sam 15:15) to provide an offering to YHWH. In response, Samuel announced that Saul’s deeds were “evil” (15:19) (רעים), that obedience was “better than” (טוב) sacrifice (15:22), and that Saul’s replacement was “better than” ( טוב) him (15:28). Like 1 Sam 13:7–14, chapter 15 stresses the covenant disloyalty of Saul. He had rejected God’s word, and therefore YHWH rejected him from being king (15:26). The comparative phrase “to your neighbor better than you” (לאучך הובכ מקך) in 15:28 thus most likely connotes the greater devotion to YHWH that Saul’s replacement would have (cf. Esth. 1:19). Where Saul failed, David would succeed. While David is not explicitly mentioned here as Saul’s “better” replacement, the story of David’s anointing that directly
David over his brothers by stressing how “man looks to the (outward) appearance but YHWH looks to the heart.” The first option reads 1 Sam 13:14 only as a reference to the new king’s election with no implicit allusion to David’s superior qualifications to those of Saul. In contrast, while affirming the adverbial rendering of כלבבו and seeing an allusion to Deut 17:14–20, the second view also retains many of the strengths of the traditional adjectival interpretation wherein David is presented as a better candidate for kingship than Saul.

As noted, P. Kyle McCarter Jr. asserts that איש כלבבו, “a man according to his heart” in 1 Sam 13:14 “has nothing to do with any great fondness of Yahweh’s for David or any special quality of David . . . [but] emphasizes the free divine selection of the heir to the throne”—a conclusion that aligns with the first adverbial reading. I agree that the verse speaks principally about the replacement’s special election, and I recognize that it is only in 1 Sam 15:28 and 16:7 that divine discretionary statements are made explicit. As such, 1 Sam 13:14 may simply be an (intentionally) ambiguous text that leaves the reader wondering, “Who is this ‘man,’ and what does a man that God selects look like?”

On the other hand, the mental anticipation expressed in Jenni’s category “realization” along with the clear readings of 1 Sam 15:28 and 16:7 insinuate that 1 Sam 13:14 indeed stresses the similarity between the image of the divine royal ideal and the reality seen in the “man,” the person of David. That is to say, even if כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14 describes the standard by which Yahweh sought a king (that is, in alignment with his desire), the meaning conveyed by the adverbial reading likely includes the conceptual realities that the traditional adjectival reading intends to convey. YHWH sought a particular “man” who aligned with the divine picture of human kingship.

follows in 1 Samuel 16 and the echo of 15:28 in 28:17 (“YHWH has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David”) make clear that Jesse’s eighth son is the one to whom YHWH refers. Perhaps in order to leave no chance for doubt, the LXX translator created an allusion to 15:28 in 16:12 by adding ἄγαθὸς, “good,” to YHWH’s designation of David. Whereas the Hebrew (and the Greek Lucianic mss) reads, “And YHWH said to Samuel, ‘Arise, and anoint him, because this is he (הוא כי‐זה”), the LXX (spec. Codex Vaticanus) reads, “And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Arise and anoint David, because this one is good (ότι οὗτος ἄγαθός ἐστιν,”)

54. On these texts, see Johnson’s helpful discussion (“The Heart of YHWH’s Chosen One in 1 Samuel,” 459–60, 463–64).
55. McCarter, 1 Samuel, 229.
56. For more on this, see George, “Yhwh’s Own Heart,” 442–59.
57. Accordingly, Jenni states, “Comparison [with the external reality] thereby confirms the (real or unreal) equivalence of the content of the mental image and the situation that it pictures, but it leaves aside [the question of] inequivalence in relation to reality (a mere ‘mental image’) and in relation to point in time (anticipatory mental activity or that which begins only subsequently [to the pictured situation] and continues)” (Die Präposition Kaph, 117): “Der Vergleich konstatiert dabei die (reale oder irreale) Gleichheit des Vorstellungsinhalts und der abgebildeten Situation, belässt aber die Ungleichheit im Wirklichkeitsbezug (nur Vorstellung) und im Zeitpunkt (vorwegnehmende oder anschliessend einsetzende, weiterdauernde mentale Tätigkeit).”
What was the nature of this sort of picture? As already noted, through the narrator’s inclusion of the people’s request for a king to judge them “like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5; cf. 8:19–20), he encouraged readers to interpret the monarchical history through a deuteronomistic lens—specifically the description of the royal ideal in Deut 17:14–20, which itself emphasized the necessity for a king’s divine election (v. 15, בִּכתְּבִּלָּו) and covenant faithfulness (vv. 16–20). Both of these elements stand in opposition to the portrait of Saul (see esp. 1 Sam 8:10–18; 15:22–23) and are painstakingly realized in the way the narrator(s) of Samuel–Kings portrayed David.\(^{58}\)

David: The Realization of God’s Image for Kingship?

While it is true that David’s sins are not hidden from the reader, he is nevertheless portrayed throughout the DtrH as the king that all others were to emulate (see e.g., 1 Kgs 3:6; 9:4; 11:4; 14:8; 15:3). One may legitimately wonder, therefore, why a sin like the “case of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Sam 11–12; cf. 1 Kgs 15:4–5) was even retained in the narrative; certainly the Chronicler felt free to leave it out (see 1 Chr 20:1–3). Marc Zvi 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.\(^{59}\) To this I add the inclusion of David’s sins was likely also intended to show his humanness, to represent him as a 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 that David was a better king 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).\(^{60}\) 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—a divine royal son (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7, 12; cf. Luke 1:32), “chosen” of God (Isa 42:1; cf. Luke 9:35; 23:35; 1 Pet 2:4), whose faithfulness would be complete (Isa 55:3; cf. 1 Pet 2:22–24) and whose kingship would never end (2 Sam 7:16; cf. Luke 1:33).\(^{61}\) When 1 Sam 13:14 is read typologically, in the pattern of the Bible’s own redemptive-historical and canonical exegesis, Messiah Jesus becomes the culminating object of Yhwh’s royal quest, the ultimate realization of God’s ideal for kingship, the truest counterpart to Saul’s disobedience, and the definitive hope to which 1–2 Samuel points.\(^{62}\)


\(^{60}\) So also Long, *The Reign and Rejection of King Saul*, 156.


APPENDIX:

THE TARGUM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT ON 1 SAMUEL 13:14

Two points are noteworthy regarding the history of interpretation of 1 Sam 13:14. First, Targum Samuel, which adhered to a literal translation as far as possible, unambiguously paraphrased the entire Hebrew idiom in 1 Sam 13:14 as a reference to covenant loyalty rather than divine selection: "YHWH has established before himself a man doing his good pleasure" (דבר טוב ורצוי). The complete absence of Aramaic לבב, the cognate to Hebrew לבב, is probably due to the tendency in Targum of the Prophets to clarify ambiguous texts in the MT and to modify any texts that frame God in anthropomorphic terms. Significantly, in the second way to interpret the adverbial reading of כלבבו, 1 Sam 13:14 highlights the resemblance of the image of the royal ideal in God’s mind with the reality seen in Saul’s replacement David. As such, the interpretive step found in the targum may in fact be anticipated in the original context of 1 Sam 13:14 and legitimated by David’s own life as portrayed in Samuel and as idealized by the narrator of Kings.


64 Ibid., 4, 7, 8–10. An external reviewer of this essay has noted the fact that Tg. Neb regularly refers to the divine will and frequently treats the status of doing “his/my will” (e.g., Zech 11:11; Mal 1:1; 3:12). There may, therefore, be a predisposition on the targum’s part to think of doing God’s will, with the use of לבב setting up this interpretation in 1 Sam 13:14.
and Samuel to Saul. He then states, “And after he [YHWH] had removed him [Saul], he raised up David to be their king, concerning whom he also testified and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man according to my heart, who will do all my will [εὗρον Δαυὶδ τὸν τοῦ Ἰεσσαί, ἀνδρὰ κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν μου, δὸς ποιήσει πάντα τὰ θελῆματά μου].’” Paul’s rendering seems to combine the MT/LXX and Targum Samuel in that it includes both the idiom and the interpretation. With respect to the idiom, the fact that Paul’s speech comes after David’s rise easily explains both the inclusion of David’s identity and the shift in verbs from “sought” to “found.” As such, the prepositional phrase “according to my heart” could be either adjectival or adverbial, with the Apostle merely citing the text as it stands. This stated, the descriptive relative clause that follows (δὸς ποιήσει πάντα τὰ θελῆματά μου, “who will do all my will”) clearly points to David’s loyalty rather than his divine selection and may be a direct translation of the targum. This latter possibility is suggested (1) by the plural form of θέλημα, only used elsewhere in the NT in Eph 2:3, and (2) by the fact that the Aramaic form for “will, pleasure” (רעותא / רעה) in Targum Samuel could be pointed either as a singular or plural (ףربعתא, “his pleasure”; פربعיתא, “his pleasures”). While in no way conclusive, Paul is at least aware of the way David’s own life of loyalty and repentance contrasted with Saul’s (cf. 1 Clem. 18:1). In contrast to Benjamin J. M. Johnson’s assumption, however, there is not enough evidence to assert that Paul followed the traditional adjectival interpretation of כלבבו in 1 Sam 13:14.

66. Ibid.