

Themes and threads in 1 Samuel 7

THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS: WHO IS TO LEAD YHWH'S PEOPLE, ISRAEL? WHAT ROLE DOES SAMUEL HAVE IN THIS?

Leadership options:

JUDGES: a charismatic figure chosen by YHWH to lead Israel in battle

PRIESTS: a "religious" intermediary who can legitimize "holy war" against Israel's enemies

PROPHETS: a figure chosen by YHWH to speak in YHWH's name, especially in relation to "the covenant"

KINGS: an "office" held by an individual or a "house" to fight enemies by leading a standing army

YHWH ALONE: the "kingdom/reign of YHWH" as direct rule without human representation

Samuel's role

As judge (7.6-16): but not as a military leader

As priest (7.5): praying for "all Israel" to YHWH

As prophet (3.20; 7.3): but not in service to a king or in relation to the covenant

In relation to kings (8.6-17): reluctant intermediary between the people and YHWH

In relation to YHWH alone (7.3ff): advocates to "serve YHWH only"

How does the character of Samuel in 1 Samuel 7 (as judge) fit with the character of him later in the book (as "man of God" kingmaker)?

THREADS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO "ANSWERS" TO THESE QUESTIONS:

THE ARK: From Exodus 25ff to Numbers 10.33-35 to Deuteronomy 10/31, to Joshua 3-6 to Judges 20.27 to 1 Samuel 4-7

PHINEHAS (SON OF ELEAZAR OR SON OF ELI): From Numbers 25 to Numbers 31 to Joshua 22 to Judges 20 to 1 Samuel 2/4

THE QUESTION OF THE ORDER OF WRITING: which of these texts would audiences of 1 Samuel 1-7 know? In other words, which texts are echoing which other texts?

The challenge of dating non-Samuel texts such as Numbers

The challenge of dating any specific part of the books of Samuel: is (Jobling's view) 1 Samuel 7 to be seen as "Extended Judges" or as part of what follows (i.e., the Saul/David/Solomon story)?

SAMSON (JUDGES 13-16) AND SAMUEL (1 SAMUEL 1-7)

Numerous parallels (see chart)

Continuity of leadership against the Philistines (Judges 16.30; 1 Samuel 4.1)

Question of ongoing viability of "judge" as leadership role or its replacement by monarchy

PHILISTINES

After Samson, next found in 1 Samuel 4-7

Will be the primary (real? symbolic?) threat that leads to the call for a king (e.g. 1 Samuel 7.7-8)