

The Educator as a Role Model within the Community: An Analysis of the Leader's Speech in the Book of Samuel

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ABSTRACT: The final speech given by Samuel to mark the passing from a theocratic to a monarchical regime is distinguished by a strategy of motivation to obedience, following his personal example. The community thus has the opportunity to meditate on the fact that they are changing a leadership system represented by a person of integrity that has honorably undertaken their leadership tasks. By means of this strategy, Samuel's generation benefited from the example of their leader to whom they could relate to, and whose faith could be followed in circumstances of social transition. The description of the immaculate journey of the leader using rhetorical techniques is displayed by presenting a living example that refers to the fact that faithfulness is achievable with respect to Yahweh's perfect commandments in Deuteronomy and has the role of convincing the nation that their request for a king was sinful.

KEYWORDS: Samuel, speech, education, strategy, leadership

1. Introduction

According to the paradigm consecrated in the books of Deuteronomy - Kings, Samuel gives a public speech at the end of his activity to mark an important moment of social transition (1 Sam. 12). The perspective given even from the times of the classical work of Martin Noth (*Geschichte Israels*, 1943), is that the protagonist interprets the past and the future, following the model offered by Moses (see also Joshua at Shechem (Josh. 23-24), Samuel at Gilgal (1 Sam. 12), Solomon in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8) and Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18).

In terms of general circumstances, we note that Samuel operates the transition from the theocratic regime instrumented by the judges to the monarchical one - in which the king will determine the further evolution of the nation. The prophet's speech begins with a sort of public report of activity in which he emphasizes the purity of heart with which he carried out his entire work. According to our interpretation, this aspect is part of a motivational educational strategy, by which the leader positions himself as a role model to be followed within the community.

The fact that Samuel includes himself in the list of judges authorized by Yahweh is not proof of his self-sufficiency, but rather an expression of the authority he was given. Paul does the same in a New Testament context, when he declares *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ* (1 Cor. 11: 1 NKJV). A true educator must be able to set an example to follow, essentially presenting an uncompromising trajectory. In addition, we believe that he fought for obedience to God even though times were changing. As in the case of Moses, by using his own example of obedience, one considers not only the shaping of the image of the leader / educator, but also the idea that this (privileged) status does not relieve one of responsibilities in relation to Yahweh. On the contrary, the

activity of mediating teaching connects and conditions the obedience of the people to the leading effort. Ultimately, as we will demonstrate, the purpose of this strategy is to determine a living proof of faithfulness to God. The requirements are not in the realm of the impossible, there are examples of people who have lived righteously. The community should follow the example and accept the Deuteronomic message it carries.

2. A king to judge us

It is clear that before the Gilgal sermon, a number of preliminary steps were taken, preparing the change of leadership in Israel, as recorded in the beginning of chapter 8. As R. P. Gordon pertinently remarks, the narrative of Saul's establishment as the first king can be summarized in five successive steps: "(i) a request for a king by the tribal elders of Israel (8:1-22); (ii) the private anointing of Saul (9:1-10:16); (iii) divine nomination and public presentation (10:17-27); (iv) military success and public acclamation (11:1-15); (v) final speech by Samuel" (Gordon 1984, 40).

Therefore, the final discourse and the whole evolution of events in Chapter 12 are a follow up of what happened in Chapter 8, where the motivation behind the request for a king (מֶלֶךְ - meleḵ) was revealed. In light of this representation, Samuel's speech is the climax to make the monarchical regime official. In view of the connection of the aforementioned writings, it is appropriate to examine the reasons which led the representatives of the tribes of Israel to ask for a king. Three of the elders' reasonings are revealed: "*Look, (1) you are old, and (2) your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us (3) like all the nations*" (1 Sam. 8:5 NKJV).

First of all, they begin from the objective reality in which Israel was at that moment, in terms of leadership. Samuel had grown old, so the appointment of a new leader was required. It is noteworthy to observe that this chapter specifically begins with the mentioning of the historical framework, by the use of the phrase *when Samuel grew old*. Samuel himself starts his final speech using the same statement: I am old and gray (זָקַנְתִּי - zāqantî - I am old / וָשַׁבְתִּי - wāšabtî - gray).

Second of all, the elders claim that the sons of the prophet did not continue to judge Israel according to the model set by their father. Verse three reveals four heads of accusation: (1) *But his sons did not walk in his ways;* (2) *they turned aside after dishonest gain,* (3) *took bribes,* and (4) *perverted justice (NKJV)*. It is important to note that the request comes in the context in which Joel and Abiah, Samuel's sons, had already been appointed judges over Israel, and were residing in Beersheba. It seems that their ministry was limited, probably with the aim of preparing them for a future, full-time position, because this location was positioned at the southern end of the country, and at that time Beer-Sheba was not yet well defined as a settlement (Walton, Matthews and Chavalas 2014, 313-314). However, it was enough for the young judges, who were no longer mentioned in Scripture after this time, to have the reputation of being compromised individuals. According to Willard Winter, "this is just another instance of a good father without the blessing of faithful sons" (Winter 1967, 103). Nevertheless, the problems within the leader's family added to the debate over the change of the Israel ruling regime. Christopher Wright implicitly notes in the context of describing examples of Old Testament moral self-defense that "it was the failure of Samuel's sons to uphold their father's standards that triggered and guaranteed the success of the monarchy as an alternative" (Wright 2004, 374). Samuel did not like the initiative of the elders (Rotaru 2014, 27-31), which suggests that it was not yet the right time for this change. The monarchy had been anticipated and even legally structured since the time of Moses, but the initiative should have belonged to Yahweh, and it should have been applied at the correct time. Moreover, their gesture could be defined as a lack of trust in God-given leadership.

The third reasoning behind the decision to ask for a king is likely to incriminate them even more. They wanted to be like the rest of the nations (כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם - *kāl haggōwym*). Neither the presentation of the king's rights discouraged the delegates, nor did the prophetic elements that revealed future conflicts between the people and the king. Consequently, during the meeting in Rama, the future moment when the judge-prophet would leave the ministry was anticipated, in a national assembly organized in Gilgal. In the context of the analysis, we bring into question the perspective of Christopher Wright, who examines the period of transition to a kingdom, emphasizing two fundamental issues. First, he points out that this system has human origins: "one thing that stands out clearly in the emergence of monarchy in Israel is how characteristically human, ambivalent, even squalid at times, were the factors that gave rise to it" (Wright 2004, 230). These remarks are made despite the text in Deut. 17, that is perceived as an additional and limiting stipulation that had to be initiated by Yahweh, and not by the people. On the other hand, the author talks about the divine participation within this system of leadership, as well as about "the interesting tension here between the theocratic ideal and the attributes and functions accorded to human kingship" (Wright 2004, 231). Thus, he aptly remarks that "the great paradox of the monarchy is that, though human in origin and infected from its very conception by tendencies to apostasy and corruption, God nevertheless took up monarchy and wove it into the heart of his redemptive purposes" (Wright 2004, 231). He therefore concludes with the long-term result of the ministry, asserting that "the king represented God's rule over Israel in the present, and became the symbol of the hope of God's ultimate perfect, messianic rule over all nations. Such is the wonder of the interplay between human freedom and divine sovereignty" (Wright 2004, 234).

As we could note, Samuel's speech in 1 Sam. 12 is the climax of the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. From a critical-editorial perspective, it is part of the work of a Deuteronomist writer (or several), that linked the older narrative texts. We will not insist on these aspects, but we will briefly reiterate only a few elements that underlie the interpretation of these texts. Not only the book 1 - 2 Samuel, but also the rest of the texts that are the subject of our study (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and 1-2 Kings), form a group of books whose final form has been assigned to a Deuteronomist author (or several), receiving the generic name of Deuteronomistic history. This perspective is based on the fact that Joshua - 2 Kings can be observed through a single line of interpretation, based on the connections in language and concepts between Deuteronomy and the following books, especially distinguishable in the speeches of leaders given at the turning points in history. Although the hypothesis that Martin Noth made at the beginning of his study came to be considered too simplistic, the evolution of his ideas developed, in the sense that, researchers came to accept the idea that the writing was made by a Deuteronomic school or Deuteronomic circles, and, moreover, the inter-connections (McCarter 1980, 1984) between these books have been generally acknowledged.

3. Editorial aspects

The analyzed text reveals that we are dealing with a complex text from an editorial perspective. For example, Antony Campbell points out that in chapters 7-12 "rather than a flowing text, these chapters present a variety of views, both for and against the monarchy, expressing different traditions of its origins in Israel" (Campbell 2003, 88). Campbell believes that writing a sketch with a general perspective will highlight different versions and contradictory opinions of those who contributed to the writing of the texts. In spite this, we should keep in mind that Samuel, as a leader, is, in our view, a mediator of the two outlined perspectives. He is the main character in any of the versions we could identify.

Hence, according to the understanding we have, because of the way the main character wrote the texts that preface and postface the speech, these can be perceived without reservation as homogeneous.

In addition, we emphasize the perspective of some researchers who underlined the unity of the paragraphs between chap. 8-15, such as Dorsey or Marcel Măcelaru. The latter explains the differences between his own perspective and that of Dorsey, and points out that “the meaning and purpose of the pericope are necessarily in connection to its structural arrangement. In this regard, I suggest that the narrative was arranged in such a way that the events presented are changed, reversed, and contrasted with other parallel events as the narrative unfolds. The result is a chiasmatic and concentric arrangement of narrative scenes, with Samuel's speech as the culmination of the chiasm, and with the parallel events written in opposition to each other” (Măcelaru 2012, 64-65).

Referring to Samuel's speech in Chapter 12, we point out that while in Barton and Muddiman's work it is categorized as “a farewell speech” (Barton and Muddiman 2000, 205), Keith Bodner points out from the start that, “it is the longest speech in Samuel's career” (Bodner 2009, 110) and that he was trying for the last time to determine the progress of the people by offering an alternative to monarchy, in the form of his sons who were brought into discussion at the beginning of the speech. We do not concur with this perspective because of the fact that Samuel was the one who anointed Saul king, and afterwards, even though the same prophet announced the king that his reign would not last, we should not dismiss the detail that he was weeping over the fact that God had rejected him (1 Sam. 16:1). In the same commentary edited by Barton and Muddiman, is underlined the idea that “1 Sam 12 is certainly Deuteronomistic, for Samuel's speech is reckoned to be one of the orations included by the Deuteronomist to mark one of the important milestones in Israelite history” (Barton and Muddiman 2000, 200).

Another observation is that in Samuel's speech, we can remark the specific elements of entering a covenant. McCarter noted some similarities between this covenant and the one in Joshua 24. These are the following: the introductory part, historical elements, the transition to the present, requirements, blessings, and curses (McCarter 1980).

To conclude this section, we can assert that the discourse in question marks the end of one age and the beginning of another. The narration shows that after a victory accompanied by enthusiasm, the prophet Samuel advances the proposal to go to Gilgal to strengthen the kingdom. Thus, the discourse of Samuel is prefaced, and that will, in essence, emphasize Samuel's faithfulness, reveal the sin of the people in their request for a king, and call the whole community to listen and obey God's commandments. Before the speech, we witness a moment when the cooperation between Samuel and Saul is evident. The enthusiasm of the people for the victory over the Ammonites is manifested inadequately due to the fact that it asks Samuel to hand over Saul's early opponents. Therefore, the victory over Nahash's army was to publicly confirm the legitimacy of the newly elected king. Saul himself will respond to the request, showing a conciliatory spirit. Immediately after, Samuel forwards the proposal to go to Gilgal, and verse 15 summarizes the most important things that happened there:

So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly (1 Sam. 11:16 NKJV).

4. The educator as a role model (1 Sam. 12: 2-5)

The leader's speech begins with the motivational strategy provided by his personal example. By comparing Samuel's approach with that of Moses or Joshua, we notice that at this time there is more emphasis on his personal ministry, which is why the discourse can be perceived as a sort of public account. He cannot say what Joshua had said, *as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD*, because of the compromise of his sons, so he focuses his speech on his own activity. Consequently, in verses 2-5, a strategy based on the leader's behavior in public ministry is shown. After pointing out that he had aged, he disclosed that he had served the people tirelessly since his youth. This exemplifies an entire life put in the service of one's fellows. The speech continues to reveal that it was not an ordinary ministry, but one that stood out in terms of faithfulness and justice. Samuel was at the forefront of history as a worthy servant. He shows in this way that the people chose to change the leading typology, even though they had in front of them a complex and upright leadership model. He was careful to remove completely any possible accusations: greed, injustice, bribery, abuse and the oppression of the people. The speech presents elements that lead to the shaping of a process in which, through rhetorical techniques, the accused also becomes an accuser. Besides the charges, witnesses are also called, and these obviously have to be exterior. Thus, the discourse incorporates public testimonies, given by the people and the new king, whom he names in this context the anointed of the Lord. In the *The IVP Background Bible Commentary: Old Testament*, the structure of the process is pointed out: "the legal process described here consisted of three parts: (1) the witnesses are listed (Yahweh, his anointed [i.e., the king] and the people, v. 3), (2) Samuel appealed to these witnesses, and (3) the witnesses responded. This pattern is also attested in Ruth (4:4, 11) and Joshua (24:22)" (Walton, Matthews and Chavalas 2000, 320).

Some scholars have argued that the part of the discourse between verses 1-5 "do not represent the most interesting dialogue in the Deuteronomistic History" (Bodner 2009, 111), and that the people would be "rather passive and compliant, and not very creative as interlocutors with the last judge and his very intense speech. Samuel's inquiries sound like rhetorical questions" (Bodner 2009, 111). However, given the background of the discussion, we can ask ourselves what creativity could have been shown in the face of questions that required evidence of compromise. These are not rhetorical questions, although in a speech like this, they could have been addressed, but rather they were real questions, that require the same kind of answers. There is every reason to believe that these elders, who did not shy away from telling the prophet about the sins of his own sons, would have reasoned if Samuel had wronged them in any way. However, their answer leaves no room for other interpretation. They had a leader whom they could not blame, who did not take anything from them, unlike the king who would lead the people from then on, and who would claim all kinds of benefits from the people (1 Sam. 8: 11-18).

Another aspect that needed to be considered at that time was Samuel's decision to include himself in the list of judges who were sent by the Lord. We do not consider that gesture to be a proof of self-sufficiency, but rather the expression of the authority of a man truly used by God, and who could be recommended as an example to follow. Similarly, in a New Testament context, Paul has the same approach, when he says *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ* (1 Cor. 11: 1 NKJV). Neither Paul, nor Samuel should be suspected of infatuation when making such statements. On the contrary, a true educator must be able to set an example to follow, demonstrating in himself the experience of an uncompromising life path.

We agree with Hamilton that Samuel does not present in his discourse any of the "problems or the actual experiences of the judge leadership" (Hamilton 2001, 242), however his purpose was to inspire the community to serve God. So, we should not be

held captive to the reasoning that Samuel supports the monarchy, or Samuel supports the judge. He rather sought to connect the people to Yahweh's preferred system of government, and most of all, we believe that he advocated obedience to God even though times were about to change. The leader was perceived as a role model therefore the developed rhetoric had an important motivational component.

Conclusions

In light of the above observations, we can see that Samuel is positioning himself as an exemplary leader. Although Israel benefits from a special identity, the people yearn to be like the rest of the nations. Their request for a king derived from their immediate needs - we need a military leader, and not from other deeper realities - we need a leader to lead the nation in obedience to Yahweh. Suitable leaders (and teachers) for the living times have always been sought, to help meet the relevant needs of a specific generation. However, the considered options in this field should be based on moral considerations, taking into account the fact that those who lead inevitably become models to which the social group adheres.

The fact that Samuel includes himself in the list of judges authorized by Yahweh is not proof of his self-sufficiency, but rather an expression of the authority he was given. Paul does the same in a New Testament context, when he declares *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ* (1 Cor. 11: 1 NKJV). A true educator must be able to set an example to follow, essentially presenting an uncompromising trajectory. In addition, we believe that he fought for obedience to God even though times were changing. As in the case of Moses, by using his own example of obedience, one considers not only the shaping of the image of the leader / educator, but also the idea that this (privileged) status does not relieve one of responsibilities in relation to Yahweh. On the contrary, the activity of mediating teaching connects and conditions the obedience of the people to the leading effort. Ultimately, as we will demonstrate, the purpose of this strategy is to determine a living proof of faithfulness to God. The requirements are not in the realm of the impossible, there are examples of people who have lived righteously. The community should follow the example and accept the Deuteronomic message it carries.

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