



The First Book of Samuel: A Study in Prophetic History

Martin Sicker

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The subject of this study is the story of Samuel and Saul and the anything but smooth transition of Israel from a tribal confederacy to a centralized state, as presented in the Masoretic text of the First Book of Samuel. The term story rather than history of the transition is employed to describe the subject because the biblical book is a history only in the very special sense of prophetic history, the purpose of which is to inform Israel of the consequences of failure to observe the terms of the divine covenant entered into between God and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai following the exodus from Egypt. Although based on events that were believed to have taken place, the primary focus of prophetic history is on the moral implications of the decisions taken by men rather than the factual accuracy of the details of the events described. The approach taken in this study is concerned primarily with what the biblical narrative purports to tell us in its own special way, and only peripherally with the issues of primary concern to the modern academic studies of biblical texts such as when the text was finalized and by whom, literary analysis of the language employed, comparative analysis of the text and other ancient literature, and other such topics, all of which are of valid intellectual interest but, with some notable exceptions, contribute little to understanding what the authors and editors of the Hebrew text as we have it are trying to teach us.

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