

“But Saul Held His Peace”: A Lexical-Syntactical Analysis of 1 Samuel 10:27

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Abstract

A problem is raised in the text of 1 Samuel 10:27 due to the word כַּמְחִיר in the MT, which is significant both in terms of text transmission and exegetical interpretation. In the narrative context, some individuals question Saul's credibility following Saul's appointment as the first king of Israel, resulting in harsh criticism directed towards the new king. Interestingly, certain interpretations suggest Saul's response to these comments in 1 Samuel 10:27, while others remain silent. This article proposes a solution to the passage by utilizing textual criticism, aiming to identify the most suitable word for כַּמְחִיר, taking into account its broader narrative context, and conducting a lexical-syntactical analysis of the passage. The article argues that the correction made by the LXX, supported by the DSS and Josephus' writings, is closer to the original text.

Keywords: 1 Samuel 10, textual criticism, lexical-syntactical analysis, exegesis



Introduction

The text of 1 Samuel 10:27 presents a notable challenge due to the word כִּמְחַרִּישׁ in the MT,¹ which is significant both in terms of textual transmission and exegetical interpretation.² The scholarly apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia highlights this specific word. In alignment with the DSS, the LXX potentially offers a corrective rendering with *ὡς μετα μῆνα* (ἡμερῶν), translated as “after a month (days),” instead of כִּמְחַרִּישׁ in the MT, which can be understood as “as one who holds peace” or “as a deaf person,” depending on the interpretation. It underscores the complexity of Samuel’s textual history.³

Regarding the word כִּמְחַרִּישׁ, various Bible translations appear to interpret Saul’s response to the comment in 1 Samuel 10:27 differently, with some translations omitting any explicit response. Interpreting כִּמְחַרִּישׁ as a response, Saul was כִּמְחַרִּישׁ (v. 27). Some translations, adhering to the MT, understand כִּמְחַרִּישׁ in the following ways: Saul kept silent (NIV; NASB), held his peace (ESV; NRSV), pretended not to mind (JPS), or even pretended to be deaf (Indonesian New Translation 2 [TB2]). Regardless of the translation choice, this group of Bible versions effectively portrays and interprets Saul’s disposition.⁴

On the other hand, other translations, following the reading of the LXX supported by the agreement of the DSS (4QSam^a), choose to render it as “about a month later” instead. They propose that the word was intended to be written as כִּמוֹ חֹדֶשׁ (like a month) rather than כִּמְחַרִּישׁ.⁵ Therefore, this latter view regards the MT not only as omitting the verse but also as having erred in its manuscript.⁶ In line with this, Ulrich suggests that the verse may have originally been placed at the beginning of chapter 11, a placement supported by the LXX.⁷

In terms of narrative coherence, the two options do not necessarily conflict with each other.⁸ Some scholars view 1 Samuel 10:27b as possibly amended or edited. In essence, the verse “Saul held his peace” could serve to establish a connection with the Mizpah episode in chapter 11. Others also consider it fitting as a transition between 10:16 and 11:1, particularly if there was once a version of Saul’s ascension to kingship that excluded 10:17–27a.⁹ Thus, these interpretations could be seen as complementary pieces of a broader narrative puzzle that enhance each other, and the omission of either would not significantly disrupt the narrative flow. However, it might imply nuanced differences in details.

1 The MT (מַחַרִּישׁ) referred to here is based on the Leningrad Codex (AD 1008), which is the foundation for editions like *BHK*, *BHS*, and *BHQ*. This manuscript is aligned with the Ben Asher tradition, although it is not as closely aligned as the Aleppo Codex (AD 925).

2 Aaron J. Decker, “Multivalent Readings of Multivalent Texts: 1 Samuel 10:27 and the Problem of Textual Variants in the Interpretation of Scripture,” *Currents in Theology and Mission*, 41, no. 6 (2014): 412–16.

3 The delay in the publication of critical editions of the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible, notably the Biblia Hebraica Quinta and the Göttingen Septuagint projects, seems to underscore the complexity of Samuel’s textual history. This conclusion is indeed informed by comparing the ready-to-access-publications of other critical editions of biblical books, such as *BHQ Genesis* by Abraham Tal in 2017, just to mention a few of them. Daniel B. Glover, “Is Josephus Among the Qumranites?: Unraveling a Textual Conundrum in 1 Samuel 10:27,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 132, no. 2 (2020): 266, <https://doi.org/10.1515/zaw-2020-2005>.

4 David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 301.

5 Frank Moore Cross, “The Ammonite Oppression of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben: Missing Verses from 1 Samuel 11 Found in 4QSamuel^a,” in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 155–56.

6 Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 300.

7 Eugene Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, vol. 19, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 169.

8 Glover, “Is Josephus Among the Qumranites?,” 277.

9 Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 104–5.

The motivation to resolve this discrepancy primarily concerns interpreting Saul's personality within the broader narrative of Israel's first king. For many readers, Saul is perceived as a rejected king in the overall storyline.¹⁰ Consequently, these readers might approach Saul with a negative bias. Therefore, if the MT reading is favored, then Saul's downfall is not just tragic due to his eventual rejection (e.g., in 1 Samuel 13); it actually begins subtly from 1 Samuel 10:27, revealing his "true" character right from the start of his official reign as king.¹¹

On the contrary, this potentially negative inference could be avoided with the alternative reading that casts a more neutral light, offering a more favorable starting point for Saul's career. With this interpretation, Saul's actual reign in 1 Samuel 11 can be viewed entirely positively as a result of a significant deliverance victory leading to his coronation at Gilgal (11:14-15).¹² This perspective presents a more auspicious beginning for Saul's rule, at least within this part of the narrative.

Furthermore, the favorable portrayal of Saul aligns seamlessly with the narrative. From a moral perspective, an interpretation suggests that Saul was polite, caring, responsible, and reliable, as evidenced in 1 Samuel 9:5-16. This interpretation conveys that God recognized Saul's goodness and leadership qualities, ultimately choosing him as Israel's first king (1 Samuel 9:17). Additionally, the direct descent of God's Spirit upon Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6-7 can be interpreted as a sign of divine approval. Within the narrative's framework, Saul's victory over the Ammonites is closely tied to his ascent to the throne, perceived by most readers as the final step toward becoming Israel's king.¹³ Notably, the subsequent pericope, starting from chapter 11, presents one of the earliest and most positive depictions of Saul.¹⁴ Why must Saul be depicted as ignorant before emerging as the hero of the Israelites in 1 Samuel 11? Conversely, why did the LXX seem to correct the MT? Campbell accurately articulates that:

The issues are complex, requiring fine judgments of syntax and style; consensus is improbable. The tradition of Nahash's brutality existed; if early, it is interesting for issues regarding the east-of-Jordan traditions. The question at issue, however, is whether this tradition originally formed part of the MT.¹⁵

Research Method

This article will address the textual discrepancy by utilizing textual criticism, determining the most appropriate word for שִׁירָה־מֶלֶךְ, considering its broader narrative context, and conducting a lexical-syntactical analysis of the passage to illuminate Saul's character

10 For a discussion regarding the evil spirit as a sign of Saul's realized rejection, see Rory J. Balfour, "Rejection Realized: Saul, the Evil Spirit and the Loss of Kingship," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 47, no. 2 (2022): 206–22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03090892221116918>.

11 Balfour, 207.

12 Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 300–301.

13 Despite a strong negative connotation described to Saul in general, D. Ming still acknowledges the positive sides of Saul. See D. Ming, "Reflection on the Leadership Practice of Saul as a Failure of Leadership for Church Pastors," *Acta Theologica*, 42, no. 2 (2022): 295, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.v42i2.19>. For more leadership topic regarding Saul, see Daniel Suharto, Muner Daliman, and Yonathan Salmon Efrayim Ngesthi, "Persistent Leadership: Constructive Reflections on Saul's Leadership Model," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 104, no. 1 (2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.10424>.

14 Klein, *1 Samuel*, 10:109.

15 Antony F. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, vol. 7, *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 110–11.

within the entire narrative. It emphasizes the importance of consulting other textual witnesses alongside the MT. This article investigates the scribal activity or intentional variants here to identify which text is closer to the original. It argues that the correction found in the LXX, supported by the DSS and Josephus' writings, represents a closer approximation to the original text.

Discussion

The Textual Issues of 1 Samuel 10:27

The scholarly apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* highlights the textual problem as Ω^{corr} כמו חדש Θ ως μετα μηνά (ημερών). The apparatus indicates that the DSS corrects the MT, and the LXX agrees. A list of witnesses is organized by Semitic word order from right to left to elucidate this issue, featuring the MT, the LXX, the DSS (4QSam^a), and their corresponding English translations. The Peshitta, Targum, and Vulgate are not often regarded as independent witnesses to an original text that differs from the MT, unlike the LXX, which is why they are not included in this context.¹⁶ Several notable differences are evident upon comparing the tables, particularly observed in the third and final tables. Any omission of words or letters from the manuscripts is indicated by brackets: ().

Table 1. A Text Comparison between the MT, the LXX, and the DSS

זה	ישענו	מה	אמר	בליעל	ובני	MT
ημας	σωσει ουτος	Τι	ειπεν	λοιμοι	και υιοι	LXX
[זה]	[ישיענו]	מ [ה]	אמר]	הבליעל	ובני	4QSam ^a
this man	save us	How [can]	said	of worthless	But men	Translation
מנחה	לו	הביאו	ולא	ויבזהו		MT
δωρα	αυτω	ηνεγκαν	και ουκ	και ητιμασαν αυτον		LXX
מנחה	לו	הביאו	()	[וי]בזוהו		4QSam ^a
gift	to him	they bring	and did not	and despised him		Translation
()						MT
()						LXX
[ונ]חש מלך בני עמון הוא לחץ את בני גד ואת בני ראובן בחזקה ונקר להם כ[ול] [ע]ין ימין ונתן אין [מושי]ע ל[י]שראל ולוא נשאר איש בבני ישראל אשר בע[בר הירדן] [אש]ר ל[וא] נ[קר] לו נח[ש] מלך בני [ע]מון כול עין ימין ו[ה]ן שבעת אלפים איש [נצלו מיד] בני עמון ויבאו אל [י]בש גלעד						4QSam ^a
Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.						Translation
()	כמחריש	ויהי				MT
και εγενθη ως μετα μηνά*	()	()				LXX
*ויהי כמו חדש						4QSam ^a
and it was about a month later*	as one who hold peace*	and he was				Translation

Source: The MT is sourced from the BHS, the LXX is derived from the Rahlfs-Hanhart edition, and the text of 4QSam^a is founded upon the transcription found in Cross et al., in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*.¹⁷

16 Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 35.

17 Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997); Alfred Rahlfs and Robert

In the third table, the DSS includes an additional paragraph that is absent in the MT and the LXX. This paragraph narrates the story of Nahash, likely preceding the events described in chapter 11, and serves as a suitable introduction to that chapter. It explains the urgency of the Israelites' response, as Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been severely oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites, two tribes of Israel. The mention of Jabesh in chapter 11 indirectly refers to an Israelite sub-tribe. As Keil observes in the genealogy listed in the book of 1 Chronicles 2, the name Jabesh is somewhat complex, although one might assume that Jabesh in 1 Chronicles belongs to the tribe of Judah.¹⁸ However, it is unclear from the reading of 1 Samuel 11 alone whether it refers to a specific sub-tribe of Judah, given the term "men of Jabesh." This ambiguity is resolved by retaining the reading of the DSS, which explains that "there were seven thousand men (of the Gadites and the Reubenites) who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-Gilead." The DSS effectively clarifies why Nahash targeted Jabesh-Gilead.

Campbell highlighted the absence of mention regarding the seven thousand refugees in 1 Samuel 11:1-3. He suggests a problem with how Nahash's treatment of Jabesh-Gilead inhabitants is presented without any reference to these refugees. According to Campbell's analysis, this could indicate the presence of variant stories within the tradition rather than an omission in the MT.¹⁹ However, relying solely on the argument from silence is insufficient to support the conclusion of the existence of variant stories.

In the fourth table, we observe apparent discrepancies between the two witnesses presented. The LXX, recognized as one of the reliable and accurate witnesses of the Hebrew Bible, holds significant importance, mainly when it corrects the MT.²⁰ In the context of 1 Samuel 10:27, as indicated in the apparatus of the BHS, the LXX corrects the word כַּמְחָרִישׁ in the MT and translates it as ὥς μετὰ μῆνα instead. Consequently, the LXX reflects the original text more faithfully by rectifying the textual corruption. Adding weight to the LXX's witness, the DSS of 4QSam^a entirely agrees with this correction, reading כְּמוֹ חֹדֶשׁ. The disparity observed in the consonantal text between the two alternatives defies simple explanation through scribal error alone, as it necessitates the examination of multiple factors, including the omission of certain letters (ו and י), the addition of spacing to distinguish between words, alongside the substitution possibility of ח for ט.²¹ It is plausible that the LXX consulted the DSS or other manuscripts from the same lineage during the translation process. Regardless of the possibilities, both the Greek translation and an older variant from the DSS attest to a common source that likely represents the original rendering of the verse.

Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta: Id Est Vetus Testamentum Graece Iuxta LXX Interpretes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); Frank Moore Cross et al., *Qumran Cave 4.XII: 1-2 Samuel*, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XVII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 66.

¹⁸ For in depth discussion on the genealogy, see C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on 1 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1949), 88.

¹⁹ Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 7:111.

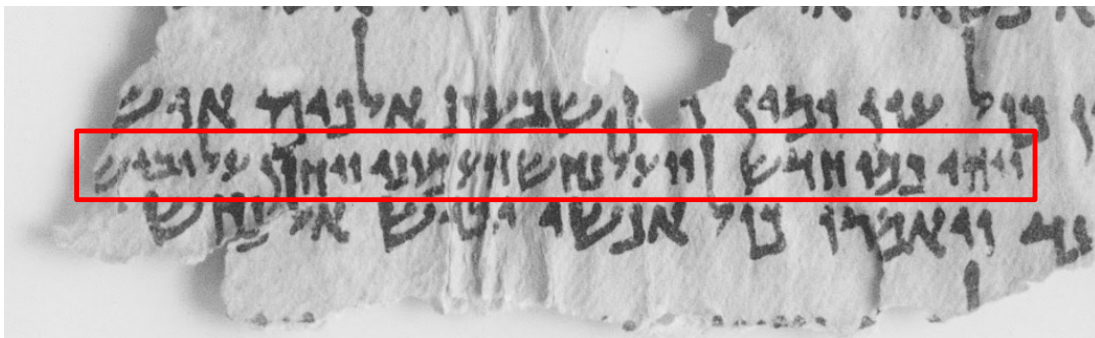
²⁰ Stuart explains correctly that it is so largely because the Greek language uses vowels and Hebrew does not, the LXX wordings were less ambiguous so it was less likely to be marred by textual corruptions than the Hebrew. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 88.

²¹ Contra Decker, "Multivalent Readings of Multivalent Texts: 1 Samuel 10:27 and the Problem of Textual Variants in the Interpretation of Scripture," 412.

The challenge to this conclusion lies in questioning whether the DSS indeed preserves the original text, considering they include the additional paragraph about Nahash. One could reasonably infer that the LXX might have been aware of older variants that differ from the MT, especially if the source used for translating the LXX was a manuscript other than the DSS. However, if the DSS is the sole source, one must inquire why the LXX did not incorporate the additional paragraph. If the LXX was translating from the DSS and adopted its rendering of כמו חדש, then why did it not include the extra paragraph about Nahash? It would only be logical to correct the MT without including the DSS's additional paragraph if the LXX utilized other source(s) supporting כמו חדש but lacking the Nahash narrative.

Regarding this matter, two prevailing perspectives exist on whether the LXX intentionally omitted the earlier Nahash narrative found in the DSS. The first perspective posits that the LXX deliberately excluded the text to streamline the narrative. Glover, for instance, suggests that there appears to be a contradiction between different oppressors in the narrative.²² However, no clear explanatory motives—exegetical or apologetic—can be discerned to support this assertion.

The second perspective argues that the omission was likely due to haplography, where the scribe inadvertently skipped over the text while copying. In addition to the issue of not incorporating the additional paragraph from the DSS, it is essential to note that the phrase ויהי כמו חדש (translated as “about a month later”) was inserted supralinearly, potentially as a later addition to the main body of text, as depicted in the accompanying image. Therefore, it appears plausible that this supralinear addition served as a corrective measure to address the haplography issue.



Picture 1: Fragment from 4QSam^a (4Q51). It reads as follows: ויהי כמו חדש (see again the fourth table above of the text 4QSam^a).

Source: <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-284918>

It is, therefore, puzzling to conclude that the LXX corrected the MT using the DSS when the specific phrase in the DSS was not originally part of its main text. If examining a purported instance of parablepsis in the MT (either *homoioteleuton* or *homoioarcton*) proves accurate, it is justifiable to revert to the original Hebrew text found in the LXX.²³ Considering the scribal tradition of inserting supralinear additions for correction, this practice may

²² Glover, “Is Josephus Among the Qumranites?,” 276–77.

²³ Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 139.

indeed signify a legitimate correction. If the copyist of the DSS adhered to this tradition, it would be reasonable for the LXX to follow suit with this corrective writing.²⁴ This issue becomes even more difficult when considering the omission of the additional paragraph found in the DSS.

The verse numbering in the LXX presents another issue, as the phrase *καὶ ἐγενήθη ὡς μετὰ μῆνα* was assigned to chapter 11:1. This suggests that the phrase in the LXX was not intended as a correction to 1 Samuel 10:27. It could be viewed as an interpretation of the supralinear verse in the DSS, where the correction made by the DSS copyist served as an adverbial time phrase to introduce chapter 11. However, Glover is correct in identifying the additional text as part of 10:27b rather than 11:1 of 1 Samuel, as 11:1 traditionally begins with *וַיֵּלֶךְ נָחָשׁ*.²⁵ Therefore, the LXX may have erroneously assigned the verse number, which does not affect the body text itself.

The Context of 1 Samuel 10:27

Determining definitively which manuscript should be preferred over another is challenging. Louis Cappel's assertion that the preference should rely on intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic ones holds weight. The decision should be based on which variant yields a truer, clearer, more appropriate, consistent, convenient, and coherent sense, aligning closely with the author's intended message and instructional scope.²⁶ Thus, the contextual narrative must be carefully considered in this assessment.

The passage exhibits a general literary form of narrative, emphasizing the significance of the plot and characters depicted within. In this context, Tsumura's classification of 1 Samuel 9:1-15:35 under "The Story of Saul" is apt.²⁷ Consequently, the narrative focuses squarely on Saul as the central figure. It begins by providing a detailed description of Saul's family lineage: "There was a man from Benjamin, whose name was Kish, son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Bechorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjamite" (1 Samuel 9:1), before introducing the main character in verse 2: "He [Kish] had a son, whose name was Saul, a fine young man." Moreover, positive attributes are attributed to Saul; he is described as a fine young man and taller than anyone else, suggesting an ideal individual with great promise.²⁸ Through this portrayal, the narrative conveys a clear message from the outset: Saul possesses all the qualities of a king.²⁹ Consequently, the narrative aims to guide readers towards recognizing the suitability of Saul as Israel's first king.

Unlike the author of the book of Chronicles, the author of the book of Samuel did not have an agenda to highlight the southern kingdom of Judah exclusively. Consequently,

24 Cf. Edward D. Herbert, "4QSam and Its Relationship to the LXX: An Exploration in Stemmatological Analysis," in *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, ed. Bernard A. Taylor (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

25 Glover, "Is Josephus Among the Qumranites?," 266 nn. 2. I believe that Glover had wrongly written 10:27b as 10:29b in his footnote.

26 Louis Cappel, *Critica Sacra* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1650), 303. Cappel was known as a devout Christian, a highly knowledgeable theologian, and a staunch Protestant. In addition to his theological and exegetical works, he is particularly remembered for his dispute with Buxtorff over the antiquity of Hebrew vowel points. His work *Critica Sacra* is notable for containing numerous scholarly dissertations, including a collection of textual variants and errors that had entered into the Bible's text.

27 Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 262.

28 Tsumura, 264.

29 C. H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), 112.

discussions on the character of Saul may be limited, if not absent altogether. In fact, there is no negative portrayal of Saul until at least chapter 10:24. However, following Saul's appointment as the first king of Israel, doubts about Saul's credibility emerge among some of the people, resulting in harsh criticism of the newly crowned king.

An ambivalent interpretation of Saul as a villainous king appears to be contradicted by the biblical narrative.³⁰ While it is suggested that the LORD intended to use Saul's reign as a form of punishment in response to the nation's sinful request, the positive depiction of Saul cannot be easily dismissed.³¹ From a narrative standpoint, the earlier story of Saul leading up to his coronation as king does not depict a negative plot, let alone the unexpected turn of events that follow.

The narrative exhibits a chiastic parallelism structured around thematic categories. There are at least five themes that demonstrate this mirrored parallelism. They include (1) Saul's portrayal, (2) Searching for the lost donkeys, (3) God's providence was revealed to Samuel, (4) The personal anointing of Saul, and (5) Foretold prophecy fulfilled. The following is a potential formation of this chiastic parallelism:

Saul's portrayal: Introduction (9:1-2)
 Searching the lost donkeys (9:3-14)
 God's providence was revealed to Samuel (9:15-20)
 The anointing of Saul: personal (9:21-10:1)
 Prophecy foretold (10:2-8)
 Prophecy fulfilled (10:9-16)
 The announcement of Saul: public (10:17-19)
 God's providence was revealed to Samuel (10:20-21a)
 Searching the lost king (10:21b-23)
 Saul's portrayal: Announcement (10:24)

Note that within the nearly balanced chiastic structure outlined above, the segment "the anointing of Saul: personal" does not align neatly with its chiasmic counterpart. This can be viewed as a form of synthetic parallelism, where the public announcement in chapter 10:17-19 is regarded as an elucidation of the anointing described in chapter 9:21-10:1. Interpreted in this manner from a narrative perspective, it suggests that Saul's ascent to kingship is not straightforward, as it culminates in an announcement rather than immediate realization. Rather than a public anointing, the author delays the anticipated event until 1 Samuel 11:14-15. This deliberate sense of suspense and expectation in the text appears intentional, signifying a reluctance towards Saul's kingship. The seamless introduction of Saul's positive attributes from Chapter 9 disrupts its symmetry.

The events in chapter 11 of the MT serve as a necessary precursor to demonstrate Saul's suitability to reign as Israel's king. This action is deemed essential for a proper ascension to kingship. Within its context, the narrative requires a heroic act from Saul to

³⁰ Jerry Hwang, "Yahweh's Poetic Mishpat in Israel's Kingship: A Reassessment of 1 Samuel 8-12," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 73, no. 2 (2011): 341.

³¹ Hwang, 352.

establish him as the true king of Israel. The challenge lies in ensuring that this proof of heroism is sufficiently grand to validate his kingship. However, the MT version presents a lack of urgency among the people to accept Saul as their heroic king. In contrast, the additional paragraph from the DSS infuses a sense of urgency for Saul to demonstrate his heroism and ultimately ascend to kingship. Therefore, it seems more natural to consider the DSS's additional paragraph as preceding the events of chapter 11 in the MT.³² From a narrative perspective, the transition from Saul's anointing to the actions of Nahash in 1 Samuel 11:1 is rather abrupt.³³ Thus, incorporating the reading from the DSS, while not essential for understanding, enhances the narrative's coherence and flow.

Word Studies

The discussion below focuses on the words *חדש*, *כמחריש*, and related words to determine their individual meanings and their appropriateness within the narrative. The root of the word *כמחריש* in 1 Samuel 10:27 is *חרש*, which carries several meanings such as “plow,” “engrave,” “prepare,” and “craftsman” (when used as a participle). However, no evidence supports the general meaning of “cut” in ancient Semitic languages. Instead, this root is understood specifically as “plow” in Akkadian, Canaanite, and Ugaritic languages.³⁴ Although the root form bears similarity to its Arabic counterpart, which means “careful,” Muller and Delcor, following Loewenstamm, rightly argue that these should be considered separate roots.³⁵

In a more recent German-language Hebrew and Aramaic dictionary focused on the Old Testament, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, the word *שרה* is interpreted with various meanings based on its usage in different Hebrew stems. In the qal stem, it signifies “being deaf” or “being mute” (*taub sein, stumm sein*); in the hiphil stem, it conveys “silencing” or “bringing to silence” (*stumm sein, schweigen, verschweigen; unterlassen, untätig sein; zum Schweigen bringen*); and in the hitpael stem, it denotes “being silent” or “remaining quiet” (*sich still verhalten*).³⁶

If the MT reading is preferred, then the root word *חרש* is presented in the form of Hebrew hiphil *מחריש*, characterized by the prefix *מ* and the infix *י* in the middle. The addition of *כ* at the beginning should be interpreted as a preposition indicating “as.” Examining the hiphil form *מחריש*, it aligns with the meaning of “to be silent, to remain silent, to keep quiet; omit, be inactive; to silence,” as outlined in the works of Diehl and Witte.

In the Targum, the passage of 1 Samuel 10:27 is translated as *והוה כשתיק* (but he was like one who is silent).³⁷ Evidently, the Targum aligns with the MT in this regard and

³² See also Alexander Rofé, “The Acts of Nahash According to 4QSam^a,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 32, no. 2 (1982): 129–33.

³³ Glover, “Is Josephus Among the Qumranites?,” 277.

³⁴ G. Johannes Botterweck and Ringgren, eds., “חרש,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 220.

³⁵ Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds., “חרש,” in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch Zum Alten Testament* (München: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1976/1971), 639.

³⁶ Johannes Friedrich Diehl and Markus Witte, eds., “חרש,” in *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 122.

³⁷ Although the Targum was not included in the discussion of the transmission of the Samuel's text earlier because of its complete agreement to MT, it is appropriate to discuss it now, since the grammatical form attests to the strong decision of word(s).

possibly finds this translation suitable for the narrative context, portraying Saul's passive response to the people. Condrea argues that the use of *והיה* functions as non-sequential or incomplete, asserting that assigning the quality of being silent to Saul in 10:27 confirms the specific usage of *והיה* in the Targum.³⁸ Therefore, it makes sense that Saul remains silent until the subsequent chapter beginning in 11:1 (following the logic of MT), where he reacts to a threat from the Philistines. This supports the interpretation of Saul as "being silent."³⁹ In other words, the MT rendering is deemed correct from Targum's perspective, as there is no syntactical error in the intentional use of *כשהיה* (being silent).

The study of the word *שנה* is of minimal importance for this discussion, as it simply means "month." Therefore, if this word is favored over the word *שנה*, one might infer that the author of 1 Samuel possibly did not consider it crucial to emphasize Saul's response to the people. In the context of the narrative and narrative writing in general, this does not pose any difficulty in understanding the text.

Insights from Josephus' *Antiquities* are significant for illuminating this passage. Here is the Greek text of Josephus from Thackeray's Loeb edition.⁴⁰ Observe the resemblances to the 4QSam^a in the preceding table.

Μηνι δ' υστερον αρχει παρα παντων αθτω τιμης ο προς Ναασην πολεμος τον των Αμμανιτων βασιλεα' ουτος γαρ πολλα κακα τους περαν του Ιορδανου ποταμου κατοκημενους των Ιουδαιων διατιθησι, μετα πολλου και μαχιμου στρατευματος διαβας επ αυτος' και τας πολεις αυτων εις δουλειαν υπαγεται, ισχυι μεν και βια προς το παρον αυτους χειρωσαμενος, σοφια δε και επινοια προς το μηδ' αυτης αποσταντας δυνηθηναι την υπ' αυτω δουλεια διαφυγειν ασθενεις ποιων' των γαρ η κατα πιστιν ως αυτον αφικνουμενων η λαμβανομενων πολεμου νομω τους δεξιους οφθαλμους εξεκοπτεν. εποιει δε τουθ, οπως της αριστερας αυτοις οψεως υπο των θυρεων καλυπτομενης αχρηστοι παντελως ειεν. και ο μεν των Αμμανιτων βασιλευς ταυτ εργασαμενος τους περαν του Ιορδανου, επι τους Γαλαδηνους λεγομενους...

However, a month later, his war against the king of the Ammonites begins, bringing him great honor. For he inflicted many evils upon those living beyond the Jordan, the Jews, because of Nahash. He crossed over with a large and warlike army against them, and brought their cities into subjugation. He used force and violence against them, while his wisdom and ingenuity prevented those who might revolt from escaping his dominion again. For he cut out the right eyes of those who approached or were captured by him, making them completely useless, covering their left eye under the gates. Thus, the king of the Ammonites accomplished these deeds against those beyond the Jordan, over the Gadites...

Since Josephus' text is not a literal word-for-word translation of the passage, it should be viewed as an interpretation or paraphrase of the biblical text and must be carefully considered. What is noteworthy is that although Josephus typically relies on the LXX, his writing regarding 1 Samuel 10:27 reflects a textual tradition similar to that of the DSS.⁴¹ Moreover, in Josephus' account, this interpretation of the Nahash story is integrated as

38 Vasile Condrea, *A Text-Linguistic Reading of 1 Samuel*, Syntactic Studies in Targum Aramaic (New Jersey: Georgias Press, 2020), 117.

39 Condrea, 118.

40 Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities Books V-VIII*, trans. Henry St. John Thackeray and Ralph Marcus, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 200–209. The English translation is my own.

41 Glover, "Is Josephus Among the Qumranites?," 272.

an explanation for 1 Samuel 11:1. Glover's explanation offers a plausible approach to this case. He argues that Josephus' text originated from a Proto-Lucianic version of the LXX that contains a misreading of Συσιας as Συσος, which in turn copied from a Greek Vorlage that misread איש טוב as Ιστοβος. Interestingly, Glover further explains that this Greek Vorlage copied the text of 4QSam^a, which was copied from the primitive Hebrew Ur-Text containing 1 Samuel 10:27b.⁴² Therefore, this lineage of texts supports the longer text as the original one.

From this standpoint, let us reconstruct the entire narrative of Saul's anointing before commenting on its meaning and relevance to the story. Based on the insights discussed earlier, the narrative can be understood as follows:

And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people."

And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD.

Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched.

But some worthless fellows said, "How can this man save us?"

And they despised him and brought him no present.

Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites.

He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer.

No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out.

But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead.

And it was about a month later.

With the reconstruction provided, the narrative now has a comprehensive background to continue Saul's story as Israel's hero. This reconstruction aligns well with the plot, depicting Saul's victorious leadership under his kingship.

Conclusion

The discrepancies evident in 1 Samuel 10:27 point to several textual problems. Firstly, there is a strong indication of textual transmission issues, particularly a potential haplography in the MT, which omits the entire Nahash story found in the DSS (4QSam^a or 4Q51). Additionally, Josephus paraphrased the omitted text in his writings, providing evidence of the existence of this older, well-known text from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Reconstructing the text with the DSS text serving as a prologue to chapter 11 of the MT enhances the

⁴² Glover, 275–76.

coherence of the narrative as a whole.

Secondly, from a narrative perspective, the omission of the DSS tradition suggests that the MT lacks the background needed for chapter 11. This omission includes the sense of urgency for the Israelites and for Saul as the incoming king, to react to the threatening Nahash. Incorporating the DSS text with its earlier reference to the Reubenites and Gadites being threatened by Nahash would make more sense.

Thirdly, the portrayal of Saul in the text aligns with the overall scheme by presenting a wholly positive nuance to his character, emphasizing his suitability to become the first king of Israel. These earlier chapters of Saul's narrative intentionally aim to cast Saul in a positive light. Contrary to readings that seek to diminish Saul's kingship in favor of David, these chapters do not intend to do so. Instead, the author of 1 Samuel portrays Saul positively, at least in his early career as a king. Premature judgments about Saul should be avoided in favor of the text's plot coherence, and the older witness of the DSS, supported by Josephus' writing, could effectively fill that gap.

Therefore, by reconstructing the text alongside the witness of the DSS, the narrative achieves completeness. From this perspective, the NRSV translation demonstrates better judgment in interpreting the text of 1 Samuel 10:27.

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