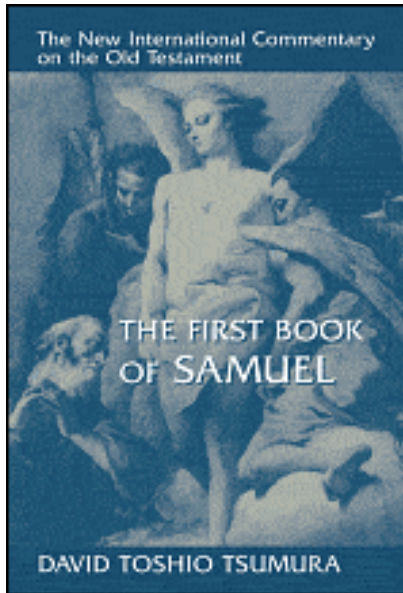


RBL 12/2007



**Tsumura, David Toshio**

***The First Book of Samuel***

New International Commentary on the Old Testament

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. Pp. xxii + 698. Cloth.  
\$50.00. ISBN 9780802823595.

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This thorough and well-indexed commentary provides an alternative reading to most mainstream understandings of 1 Samuel today, and the author promises a second volume of similar orientation dealing with 2 Samuel.

The author refers to possible precanonical units behind the present text of 1 Samuel that differ somewhat both in extent and date from standard treatments. The original ark narrative is limited to 1 Sam 4:1–7:1 and dates to the time of Samuel, in his opinion, while 2 Sam 6 is dated to early in the reign of David. Instead of the History of David's Rise, he isolates 1 Sam 16–31 as the Story of Saul and David and 2 Sam 1–20 as the Story of King David. More surprisingly, he dates the final editing of 1 and 2 Samuel to the late tenth century, probably during the reign of Rehoboam. His primary evidence for this early date is 1 Sam 27:6, which states that the city of Ziklag "belongs to the kings of Judah until this day." He therefore discards the notion of a Deuteronomistic History and attempts to explain away words identified with the Deuteronomist, including the expression "to serve other gods." He surmises that the Hebrew historians may have had Hebrew sources that were many generations old and that were preserved on wax or papyrus, which is an untestable guess and irrelevant for Samuel in any case, since in his view it was written by

contemporaries of the action. He believes that 1 Chr 29:29 implies the existence of written records of Samuel, presumably still available at the Chronicler's time.

The author prefers a synchronic over a diachronic reading and states that his is the first commentary on 1 Samuel to utilize discourse analysis, which investigates linguistic units larger than a sentence and focuses on the narrative flow. In this analysis he notes the use of *waw*-consecutive or other sentence types and divides stories into their setting, the event itself, and its terminus. He argues that the text of 1 Samuel is an aural text written as if it were to be read aloud. With regard to 1 Sam 17:41–44, he observes that the expression “the Philistine” occurs five times as the subject of a sentence and suggests that this repetition suggests the heavy, ponderous motions of the giant. But only one of those uses refers to the Philistine's movement, and three of the uses introduce things he said. The author also argues that the prose text can often be read as if it were poetic, leading to his identification of an improbable bicolon:

Such was done to all Israel,  
To those who came there at Shiloh. (1 Sam 2:14)

or an equally improbable tricolon:

So that the Lord might give even Israel (who is) with you into the hand of the Philistines  
—tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me—  
(so that) even the camp of Israel the Lord might give into the hand of the Philistines!

The line set off by em-dashes is “X” in an AXB pattern that the author identifies in a number of passages, many of which are better understood through redaction criticism or textual criticism.

In regard to textual criticism, Tsumura also departs quite sharply from the majority viewpoint, arguing that the majority (possibly the vast majority) of proposed emendations are needless. In reviewing his textual comments on 1 Sam 1:11; 2:13, 22, 27, 31b–32a; 3:21–4:1; 12:8; 16:7; 28:19—only a representative sample—and comparing them with what Kyle McCarter in his commentary in the Anchor Bible series and I in my commentary in the Word series proposed, I found McCarter and my comments in every case much more convincing. He suggests that 4QSam<sup>b</sup> and 4QSam<sup>c</sup> may be paraphrases and not really copies of Samuel and that the LXX translators worked from an MT-like text that they found difficult and that they made their own best guess as to what it meant. This ignores the fact that many of the LXX readings have been confirmed as based on an alternate Hebrew *Vorlage* by the three Samuel manuscripts from Qumran Cave 4. He also

proposes that many so-called scribal errors may be phonetic spellings that have been misunderstood. This may explain a few forms, but one of the primary differences between MT, LXX, and the Qumran manuscripts is in textual length, which is not explained by his hypothesis at all.

These serious issues about introductory questions and textual criticism aside, I observe that the author has read widely in the literature and offers many helpful insights into the meaning of individual passages.