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### Incommunicable Mindlessness

Saul, the first anointed king of Israel in the book of Samuel 1, loses his anointment after continuous instances of transgression from the commands of Samuel and his Lord God. Saul first seems over-eager to anticipate the will of God by offering sacrifices that are not called for, to which Samuel responds with great displeasure. Again soon after, Saul fails to kill King Agag in addition to all of the living animals from the Amalekites, which he was explicitly ordered to do. Saul's repeated acts of insolence are not for a lack of trying though! Instances of this king's reactions to his own repeated inability to properly carry out the commands of his Lord God and of Samuel in First Samuel suggest that Saul has no intentional transgressions, but a disconnect caused by incommunicable ethos. Saul directly disobeys the commands of Samuel in many instances, and proves not to be unfaithful, but to lack the needed characteristics of a King. When confronted by Samuel on accounts of his transgressions, Saul first denies any transgression, and then justifies his actions by explaining he was only trying to please the Lord in a way he thought more suitable. By analyzing the specific scene of Saul's so-called "final transgression" before he is un-anointed, I will explain how this case of incommunicable ethos humiliates a character that attempts to fill in for the word of God, and show that this sort of miscommunication only serves to humiliate those that lack the proper ethos in the Judeo-Christian religion (mindless loyalty to their God).

There are two main instances of Saul's transgression in Samuel 1; both resulting from a lack of complete understanding of the explicitly of the Samuel's instructions. After Saul's first mistake of making an offering to God rather than following his explicit commands not to,

Samuel patronizes him by saying, “Thou has done foolishly: thou has not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever”(First Samuel 13:13-14). It is first made clear with Samuel’s shaming of Saul that he is not to anticipate the wishes of God, but to follow explicit orders. Yet Saul still does not seem to quite understand. Amongst the battlefield, Samuel explicitly commands of Saul, “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.”(First Samuel 15:3). Saul does not disagree with Samuel or show that he has plans to disobey, but fails to accomplish this task. “But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them...”(First Samuel 15:9). Why does Saul directly go against the commandments of God? When approached by Samuel, Saul seems to have no knowledge of any wrongdoing: “Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord”(First Samuel 15:13) and after Samuel makes clear what Saul has done wrong, he pushes the responsibility onto others, “But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal”(First Samuel 15:21). The characteristics of Saul in this scene include the following: easily persuaded, absent minded, and eager to please. The ethos of the desired King of Israel would include these traits: leadership, mindlessness, and ability to carry out explicit orders without variation.

Samuel makes Saul’s flaws explicit in saying, “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better to sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”(First Samuel 15:23). It is not until Samuel provides this

list of Saul's transgressions and an explanation to what Saul has done wrong that he finally understands. Saul replies by saying, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice"(First Samuel 15:24), which provides an acknowledgment of what he has done wrong, but still removes the responsibility from himself by involving the "the people". God speaks to Saul, "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments"(First Samuel 15:10). Thus the reason for Samuel and God's disappointment in Saul is his inability to contain the required ethos that Samuel himself contains- mindless obedience to God and loyalty to every command.

The disconnect between Samuel and Saul does not appear to be productive in any way other than conveying a message about the importance of obedience and respect to the word of God. When Samuel explains to Saul that, "to obey is better to sacrifice", he sets a precedent for all other Judeo-Christians to never anticipate the will of God but to simply obey his word. The idea of blind obedience is suppressive and has the potential to be greatly psychologically damaging to those believers. Saul becomes un-anointed and rejected by his God simply for his inability to correctly follow orders and inhabit a position of submissive obedience. If this can happen to the Lord's anointed, what will the consequences be of any others?

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Final Essay #2  
(Question 2)

Covenant Covenant Covenant Covenant

The idea of an everlasting promise between a timeless being and any mortal human contains an interesting dynamic. Each time God establishes a “covenant” with a human in both the Old and New Testaments, an immediate feeling of security arises; but God’s memory does not always serve justice to each of these promises. Themes of God’s forgetting and remembrance of his covenants throughout the Bible devalue the effect of the word “covenant” which is used so often with intentions of holding the utmost power. By analyzing two instances of God’s use of the word “covenant” in the Torah, I will examine the powerful initial effects of the word’s explicit use in the passage, and how they contribute to the overall etymological use of the word throughout the Bible. Though the word “covenant” contains power and a feeling of timelessness when first delivered, the general etymological unfolding of the word throughout the text proves to be more of a temporary means of gaining trust and expressing God’s emotions.

In Genesis 7, God becomes overwrought with frustration at the evil he sees in his own creation of humanity and decides to destroy all life on Earth with a flood. Noah, a righteous man that has proved to be worthy of God’s trust, is chosen as a leader to continue on life on Earth. Noah successfully gathers two animals of each species as well as his family into an ark for the duration of the flood just as God commands. After the flood, God delivers the following covenant to Noah: *“And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it that I may remember that the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.”*(Genesis 9:14-17). Initially the passage provokes the following image: God creates a

rainbow in the clouds as a symbol of the promise he makes with Noah and all of the living things on Earth to never destroy all flesh by means of a flood. Each time God brings about a cloud and rainbow to the earth, he will remember the covenant that he has made with Noah to not destroy the Earth with water. It is first striking that rain will bring about a symbol to not destroy the Earth with water, and that God is in charge of bringing about rain. So each time God brings about rain, he must be reminded to not create a flood and subsequently destroy all human and animal life. It is also noteworthy that the rainbow will serve as a symbol of the covenant. On its own, the word “covenant” means something along the lines of a “treaty” or a “contract” which evokes a sense of eternity. A rainbow exists in time- it is brought about by water, and then soon fades away once the water is gone. Humans exist temporally in a similar way- they are brought about as a consequence of an action (sex); they exist for a short amount of time and then fade away. The word “covenant” in this particular passage seems to ensure timelessness because every time a rainbow appears, God will be reminded of his promise. Yet, the importance of the promise is downplayed by the fact that God has to have a symbol to remind him of the covenant. It is as if human existence is so arbitrary that he has to be reminded to not destroy it on a whim. The use of “covenant” in the passage brings about a strong image of remembrance and symbolism, but also devalues the word by reminding us that God could easily forget about it.

God’s first covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 also provides interesting connotations for the usage of the word for the rest of the text because it is one of the most inclusive. God states to Abraham, *“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.”* (Genesis 17:5-8) There are striking similarities in the structure of this covenant to that deliver to Noah after the

flood. God establishes a covenant with one man and promises to hold with the descendants of this man, and includes a symbol to add validity to his promise. Rather than using a rainbow to remind himself of the covenant, God changed Abram's name to Abraham- "father of many". This can serve as two things: a tool to help God remember the covenant that he has made, or a means to gain more of Abraham's trust in the legitimacy of the covenant. "Covenant" as explicitly used in the passage seems redundant. It is placed directly after the word "everlasting" and is not necessarily to deliver the intended message. Why does the word "covenant" hold necessity to make God's promises valid when it is so overused? From Genesis 17:1-14, "covenant" God uses "covenant" 10 times. The word serves to legitimate God's claim of eternal loyalty to a certain promise, and although it may be effective in each individual passage, the overuse throughout the text almost makes it cliché.

Both uses of "covenant" in the above passages include three components: God, a man, and a symbol used to validate the covenant or serve as a memory technique. The word holds the power to gain trust of the men because it has an eternal factor. The dynamic of the covenant between a timeless being and a mortal is so interesting because the man will never know if God has upheld his promise, nor does God have any reason to want to convince them that it is truly eternal. The explicit use of the word in each passage then adds legitimacy and strength to God's proposed treaties, while the uses of the word also contribute to the overall etymological unfolding of the word as slightly overused and devalued. Though each individual mortal man that joins God's covenants does not feel any essence of overuse, the reader of the text witnesses the theme of forgetting that may reduce the value of the word and lead to it be slightly cliché.