Appearances, Appearances:
First Impressions of Young David in
1 Samuel 16:12; 17:42

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> But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things human beings look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7 TNIV).

> . . . So he sent and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.
>   Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him;
> this is the one" (1 Sam 16:12 TNIV).

> . . . He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him (1 Sam 17:42 TNIV).

The seminal introduction of young David in the narrative of the Books of Samuel has captured the hearts of readers for immeasurable generations. At the same time, various aspects of the text have puzzled thoughtful readers' minds since ancient times. While numerous minutiae may be debated, the general difficulties for scholars are usually the

following: (a) YHWH is said to disregard outward appearance and to attend instead to inward character when evaluating a person, yet the only description of David that is provided in the pericope extols his attractive appearance (16:7, 12); (b) a similar initial impression of David is put in the eyes of Goliath in 17:42, which many therefore conclude is a later addition based on 16:12; and (c) the phrase עם יפה עינים (literally, "with beautiful of eyes") in 16:12 is grammatically awkward—so much so that its precise meaning remains unresolved. Placed within a context that introduces the greatest king of ancient Israel, the text and its difficulties gain additional significance. Just what were these initial impressions of the future king? What do they mean, and what do they tell us about David, and moreover, what do they tell us about the diverse people who perceived him?

This article endeavors to address these questions and issues by way of a close literary and phraseological investigation of the text. While most interpretations understand the assessments of David by Samuel and Goliath (1 Sam 16:12; 17:42) to be based on externals, closer study of the language used in this tradition demonstrates that Samuel's assessment is, in fact, ultimately based on the internal condition of David, while Goliath's assessment remains based on superficial factors. This difference in perception provides a rich and engaging comparison as Samuel learns to perceive as YHWH perceives, while Goliath—to his own condemnation—does not. We will also look further at the grammatically difficult phrase עם יפה עינים and propose a literary-theological function behind it.

YHWH Establishes the Standard (1 Sam 16:7b)

To begin, let us take a closer look at the seminal statement of 16:7. In this verse, YHWH gives Samuel, the 'seer'/הראה (cf. 9:9, 11, 18, 19), a virtual tutorial in how to truly 'see' (אל תבט אל מראהו cf. 16:6). YHWH issues a warning to Samuel to focus not on a person's מראה ("outward appearance," 16:7a), and he then distinguishes the divine manner of perception from the human manner of perception, concluding with a succinct and memorable contrast:

cl#1	אל תבט אל מראהו	Not		look	[to/at]	his appearance
	[…]	[…]				
cl#2	כי האדם יראה עינים	For	the human	looks	[to/at/for]	the eyes
cl#3	ויהוה יראה לבב	But	YHWH	looks	[to/at/for]	the heart

The fronting of the subject in cl#2+3 clauses puts emphasis on the comparison "human": "YHWH."

Man	YHWH
האדם יראה לעינים	יהוה יראה ללבב
<subj (fronted)>+<pred: ראה>+<compl: ל+art+עין>	<subj (fronted)>+<pred: ראה>+<compl: ל+art+לבב>

While the contrast between human seeing and divine seeing is obvious, the meaning of the particular ראה construction used in cl#2+3 is unclear for three reasons:

(1) The relation between the verb נבט (cl#1) and the verb ראה (cl#2+3) needs to be explored. Are the two words used interchangeably as synonymous or is the shift from נבט to ראה instructional for understanding the meaning of cl#2+3?

(2) The valence construction <pred: ראה>+<compl: ל> is very rare if not exceptional (3 occurrences in the TNK). In most cases where a ראה construction is used it is followed by an object-complement (677 of a total of 1102 cases) triggering the meaning 'to see X <objc>.' The question is, therefore, whether, and if, how <pred: ראה>+<compl: ל> is different from <pred: ראה>+<objc>.

(3) Finally, after the meaning of the valence construction <pred: ראה>+<compl: ל> has been settled, we need to ask the question: What is the qualitative meaning in the difference between the body parts "eyes" and "heart." This is at the core of the difference between human and divine seeing.

The Relation of נבט (Hiph) and ראה (Qal)

נבט and ראה appear in successive clauses 22 times. In the majority of these cases (19/22) ראה follows נבט as can be seen in Isa 42:18.

Isa 42:18	והעורים הביטו	And you blind ones look (!)
	לראות	so that you may see.

The above construction indicates that נבט describes the more general idea of looking, i.e. opening one's eyes while ראה describes the observation of a specific object. This would explain well why the נבט => ראה sequence usually appears in the following syntactical construction:

'Look'<pred: נבט>+'at'<compl> (the <compl> is optional). And 'see'<pred: ראה>+<obj: 'X'>.[1]

See a number of examples in the table below:

1Sam 17:42	ויבט הפלשתי ויראה את דוד	And the Philistine looked. And he saw <obj: David>.
Psa 33:13	משמים הביט יהוה ראה את כל בני האדם	From the heavens looks YHWH. He sees <obj: all the sons of man>.
Psa 91:8	רק בעיניך תביט ושלמת רשעים תראה	Only with your eyes you look. And <obj: the reward of the wicked> you see.
Psa 142:5	הביט ימין וראה ואין לי מכיר	Look towards the right And see: <obj: There is none who recognizes me>.
Lam 1:12	הביטו וראו אם יש מכאוב כמכאבי	Look And see: <obj: Whether there is a sorrow like my sorry>.
Lam 5:1	הביט וראה את חרפתנו	Look! And see <obj: our disgrace>.
2 Kgs 3:14	אם אביט אליך ואם אראך	When I look at you. And when I see <obj: you>.
Isa 22:8	ותבט ביום ההוא אל נשק בית היער ואת בקיעי עיר דוד ראיתם	And you looked in that day to the armor of the house of the forest. And <obj: the breaches of the city of David> you saw.
Isa 22:11	ומקוה עשיתם בין החמתים למי הברכה הישנה ולא הבטתם אל עשיה ויצרה מרחוק לא ראיתם	A reservoir you made between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look at him who did it. And <obj: the one who planned it long ago> you did not see.
1 Chr 21:21	ויבט ארנן וירא את דויד	And Ornan looked. And he saw <obj: David>.

The construction calls in cl#1 for the activity of looking (sometimes with a direction: 'looking at'). The cl#2 with ראה then brings the object of seeing into perspective. Thus, a difference between looking at/towards something and seeing something is made explicit through this construction. Herewith, the meaning of 'looking (נבט) at/towards' the forest is not the same as 'seeing (ראה)' the forest. Only two exceptions (and thus confirming the above rule) are found in Num 23:21 and Isa 5:12 where the synonymous parallelism expresses a more equal relation:[2]

Num 23:21	לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישׂראל	Not has he seen (נבט) misfortune in Jacob. Not has he seen (ראה) trouble in Israel.
Isa 5:12	ואת פעל יהוה לא יביטו ומעשׂה ידיו לא ראו	And the dead of YHWH not they have seen (נבט). And the actions of his hand not they have seen (ראה).

So far we can conclude that, the vast majority of cases, when נבט and ראה are used in consecutive clauses, the meaning of ראה includes a

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[1] See: https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4b&id=1371.
[2] See: https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4b&id=1372.

mental awareness of (i.e. the cognitive perception of) the object of seeing as an actual object, while נבט emphasizes a state of sensory activity, i.e. looking.[3] Truly comprehending an object, then, involves two steps: (a) Looking (sensory activity); and then (b) cognitive perception of the specific object within the frame of our previous, more surface-oriented looking. This distinction is also recognized by the LXX's rendering of 1 Sam 16:6 where we transition from ἐμβλέπω (pure looking) to ὁράω (actual seeing):

cl#1	אל תבט אל מראהו	ὅτι οὐχ ὡς ἐμβλέψεται ἄνθρωπος,
	[…]	[…]
		ὄψεται ὁ θεός,
cl#2	כי האדם יראה לעיני	ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ὄψεται εἰς πρόσωπον,
cl#3	ויהוה יראה ללבב	ὁ δὲ θεὸς ὄψεται εἰς καρδίαν

The LXX adds between cl#1 and cl#2 the clause ὄψεται ὁ θεός. Consequently, cl#2 becomes an object clause of the inserted clause rendering the meaning 'God sees that man sees at the face/appearance.' With the inserted clause, the meaning of ὁράω has clearly adopted the meaning of cognition ('understanding' or 'comprehending'). Such an observation further supports the distinct meaning of ראה and נבט when they are used in consecutive clauses.

Thus, we have introduced phraseological data that comports with and develops further the more basic understanding of scholarship regarding the distinctives of ראה and נבט.[4] The minimum conclusion that we can derive from this for our text is that God regards the mere looking in v. 7a as not enough. 'Looking at' appearances is not yet understanding (i.e. 'seeing' the appearance).

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[3] While these nuances may be present when נבט and ראה are not used in consecutive clauses or grammatical relation to each other (consider Helmer Ringgren, "נבט," *TDOT* 9:126-128; Jackie A. Naudé, "נבט," *NIDOTTE* 3: 8–11; and H. F. Fuhs, "ראה," *TDOT* 13: 208–242, esp. 213, 215), our interest here is in the unusual consistency with which these particular nuances occur when the two words are posited in grammatical relation to each other.

[4] נבט occurs only 67 times in the Hiphil in contrast to ראה's 1303 instances. The basic OT sense of נבט appears to be that of 'to look at,' while ראה conveys a sense of 'perceive, recognize.' See sources in previous note, as well as Ashley S. Rose, "The 'Principles' of Divine Election: Wisdom in 1 Samuel 16," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg,* eds. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler, PTMS 1 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974), 43-67, here 50.

If we add to all this a few brief observations regarding the use of ראה and נבט specifically in the Books of Samuel, the results are compelling. It has been noted that נבט is used both in 16:7 and 17:42 to connect the two passages and to describe the action by which a human makes an incorrect conclusion.[5] We additionally observe that נבט occurs only two other times in the Books of Samuel (1 Sam 2:32 and 24:9 [8]), and that in all four situations involving נבט in the Books of Samuel, the subject who looks has been short-sighted and faces negative circumstances if his vision and attitude do not change. While נבט has a somewhat wide semantic range throughout the OT, one may surmise that—within the Books of Samuel—it refers to a superficial, shallow sight that is to the detriment of its subject.

ראה is a more developed term in the OT—the basic OT sense of נבט appears to be that of 'to look at,' while ראה conveys a sense of 'perceive, recognize.' Further, Fokkelman observes that both 16:1–13 and 17:1–18:5 consist of seven occurrences of ראה and one occurrence of נבט —the single instance of נבט among the seven instances of ראה distinguishes it as an eighth and therefore an odd instance (i.e., נבט occurs outside the perfectly numbered instances of ראה).[6] This further reinforces our conclusion that ראה is not only the deeper, more attentive manner of seeing, particularly when in constructive relation to נבט, but that as such, it is the ideal manner of seeing in the Books of Samuel.

The Valence Construction <pred: ראה>+<compl: ל>

In the beginning of the direct speech (v. 7a) YHWH uses the construction <neg>+<pred: נבט>+<compl: אל+מראהו>. It seems that the somewhat synonymous predicates נבט and ראה have led the LXX to render the prepositions אל and ל with εἰς:

אל־תבט אל־מראהו ואל־גבה קומתו	Μὴ ἐπιβλέψῃς ἐπὶ τὴν ὄψιν αὐτοῦ μηδὲ εἰς τὴν ἕξιν μεγέθους αὐτοῦ
Not look at/to his appearance and [not look] at/to his height,	Not look at/to his appearance and not [look] at/into his height,
כי האדם יראה לעינים	ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ὄψεται εἰς πρόσωπον

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[5] See Keith Bodner, *1 Samuel.* A Narrative Commentary (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2008), 186, building on Jan P. Fokkelman, *The Crossing Fates*, vol. 2 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, SSN 23 (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1986), 179, 204.

[6] Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 179, 204.

for a human being sees at/to/on behalf of the eyes.	for a human being sees at/into the face.
ויהוה יראה ללבב And YHWH sees at/to/on behalf of the heart.	ὁ δὲ θεὸς ὄψεται εἰς καρδίαν but the God sees at/into the heart

However, as earlier mentioned, the valence construction <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<compl: ל> is very rare. The most dominant construction with ראה (Qal) is <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<obj> triggering the meaning 'to see/comprehend X.' The valence construction <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<compl: אל> appears only once (Isa 17:7). This stands in stark construction with the typical and frequent valence construction <pred: נבט>+<compl: אל>. The difference in this valence behavior emphasizes our earlier finding: the word ראה is not really used for describing the activity of 'looking at' something, but rather for the activity of 'seeing/comprehending something.' The <compl: אל> is, however, the most dominant valence construction of ראה in the Niphal stem (45x). In such cases, the construction triggers the meaning 'to be known/understood by X' or 'to make X known to Y.' Again, the stress is on seeing as cognition.

From a linguistic perspective, we have to assume first that the construction <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<compl: ל> is triggering a different meaning than the construction <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<obj> or <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<compl: אל>. A critical look at all six <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<compl: ל> cases[7] reveals that three cases add to the <pred: ראה(Qal)>+<compl: ל> an object phrase rendering the meaning 'to search for X a Y':

אלהים יראה־לו השה לעלה	God will search for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.	Gen 22:8
וירא ראשית לו	And he searched the best [of the land] for himself.	Deut 33:21
ראו־נא לי איש	Search please for me a man.	1 Sam 16:17

The only three cases in which <compl: ל> relates to the predicate without any other complement (except the subject) are the following:

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[7] Gen 22:8, 50:23; Deut 33:21; 1 Sam 16:7 (2x), 16:17; Psa 64:6. The case in Psa 119:96 (לכל תכלה ראיתי קץ) does not belong to our selection since the ל-phrase relates as complement to the nominal predicate קץ. Likewise, the case in Gen 50:23 (וירא יוסף לאפרים בני שלשים) does not belong to our selection since the ל-phrase relates in a genitival way to בני שלשים. And finally, the case in Psa 10:11 (בל־ראה לנצח) must be excluded from our study as the ל-phrase functions as a time marker ('forever').

מי יראה־למו	Who sees to/at/for them?	Psa 64:6
כי האדם יראה לעינים	For the human being looks to/at/for the eyes.	1 Sam 16:7
ויהוה יראה ללבב	But YHWH looks to/at/for the heart.	1 Sam 16:7

If we want to derive some insights for our two cases in 1 Sam 16:7 we are left with Psa 64:6. Obviously, this is a very weak basis for any argument that is based upon distributions of patterns. Psa 64:6 as "data" is further disqualified when textual traditions are compared. The Syriac and Vulgate deviate from the MT in Psa 64:6 (they render לנו instead of למו). Meanwhile, the LXX renders למו in the accusative (למו => αὐτούς). In doing so, it is inconsistent with its rendering of the <compl: ל> in 1 Sam 16:7 where it renders the complement as having directional meaning (לעינים => εἰς πρόσωπον; ללבב => εἰς καρδίαν).

We, therefore, can conclude that the construction in 1 Sam 16:7 is exceptional and likely exclusive. But the lack of similar constructions does not hinder us from arriving at a positive conclusion: (a) The books of Samuel are well aware of the construction <pred: ראה(qal)>+<obj> and use it frequently (71x). In fact, 1 Sam 16 itself utilizes this construction in v. 6 and v. 18. (b) 1 Sam 16:17 utilizes the valence construction <pred: ראה(qal)>+<objc>+<compl: ל>. Consequently, 1 Sam 16:7 is written in a context that utilizes all dominant patterns of ראה. We can then conclude that 1 Sam 16:7 shows either signs of a redaction which incorporated material that was not originally part of the narration and came from an environment where different valence patterns were used, or–and this makes more sense to us–the author consciously creates a new way of speaking about seeing. If this line of thought is followed, then the author wanted to exclude the meaning "to see the eyes/ the heart" (<pred: ראה[Qal]>+<obj>) as well as "to see to the eyes/the heart" (<pred: ראה[Qal]>+<compl: אל>) but chose instead "to look with comprehension for the eyes/heart" (<pred: ראה(Qal)>+ <compl: ל>). Thus, the text initiates a new way of thinking about the activity of seeing, which will be further distinguished in v. 7b by the use of 'eyes' and 'heart.'

Eyes and Heart

As we have seen, within 1 Sam 16:7, the text intentionally establishes a divine standard that is in contrast to the human standard[8] as well as a new way of speaking about seeing. How then do 'eyes' (עינים) and 'heart' (לבב) contribute to this contrast and the narrator's presentation of the divine standard?

To begin, 'the heart' naturally refers to the inner/psychic aspect of a person. It is an internal reality that is not immediately evident to the ordinary human eye.[9] The ability to see this invisible "heart" is a characteristic of the omniscient and all-wise YHWH. In addition to this, לבב conveys its general sense of the fundamental volitional, intellectual, emotive, and vital center of a person.[10] It is this hidden, private, intensely personal psychic-emotive control center within humans that perceives and attends to evaluating the measure of a person,[11] and to which YHWH directs the sight of his 'seer,' Samuel.

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[8] Further, bear in mind that within the context of biblical theology, the divine standard is *the* standard.

[9] Cf. D. R. Goodwin, "On the Use of לבב and καρδία in the Old and New Testaments," *JSBLE* 1 (1881): 67–72, see 71. The meaning behind the "heart" (לבב) in v. 7b may strike the modern Western reader as both simple and complex. What לבב does not denote is the physical, blood-pumping cardio-vascular organ identified by modern science as the "heart." לבב, when it does indicate an anatomical part, appears to signify a general area in the torso in which the ancient Hebrews believed the functions of both the modern "heart" and "brain" operated. See H.–J. Fabry, "לבב," *TDOT* 7 (1995): 399–437, esp. 411–412; Robert North, "Brain and Nerve in the Biblical Outlook," *Bib* 74 (1993): 577–597, here 594; and Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales, 1964) 76. For a good argument that "heart" remains our best English translation among imperfect alternatives, see North, "Brain," 593–594.

[10] Goodwin's articulation of this is classic: "[The heart] stands for the central part in general, the inside, and so for *the interior man* as manifesting himself in all his various activities, in his desires, affections, emotions, passions, purposes, his thoughts, perceptions, imaginations, his wisdom, knowledge, skill, his beliefs and his reasonings, his memory and his consciousness. . . . It designates the central basis for the functions of the whole inner man" (Goodwin, "Use," 67).

For further discussion on the developments of these nuances, consider Fabry, "לב," 412–434; Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 40–55; and BDB, "לבב," 523–525. For an engaging, more lay-oriented discussion, see Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, *Body Symbolism in the Bible* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 41–55.

[11] While it is true that a לבב is attributed to YHWH, for the most part it is an overwhelmingly anthropological term. See Wolff, *Anthropology*, 40.

By way of parallel comparison and the remainder of v. 7, here 'the eyes' equate with purely outward appearances ("external appearance" [מראהו] and "height" [גבה קומתו], v. 7a), i.e., what is seen with the physical eye. Notice that the physical act of seeing *per se* is not criticized, for both humanity and YHWH "see"; rather, it is the appropriateness of the manner of seeing for a particular context that matters.

As for the ultimate object of one's attention,[12] what one seeks appears to be intrinsically related to *how* one sees. One might ask whether the subject sees and relies upon his own eyes/heart or the object's eyes/heart in v. 7b. In light of the narrative context, it could be the object's eyes/heart. Consider that both former 'objects' (so to speak), Saul and Eliab, have already been rejected on the basis of their deficient hearts despite their impressive outward appearances and the favoring "eyes" of the people (cf. 1 Sam 9–10; 12–13; 15; 16:6–7a; more positively, see 13:14). At the same time, another factor to consider is that v. 7b, with its memorable repetitions and syntactic balance, functions on a secondary, broader level as a summary core statement for the community audience. With this in mind, a more generalized sense of 'eyes'/'heart' that includes a sense of the subject's approach, his style and character - yet also what the object has to offer —i.e., altogether, the realms of the 'eyes'/'heart'—may be understood. Thus, we paraphrase 16, 7bb as: "for humans rely on externals, while YHWH attends to the interior."[13]

When David arrives on the scene in 16:12, the narrative appears to focus on his external appearance as an implicit qualification for kingship, which is somewhat contrary to the expectations recently established in 16:7b.[14] However, 16:7b informs our reading of the text by encouraging us to look beyond the surface level at 16:12a:

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[12] Notably, by way of ראה in v. 7bb.

[13] In a similar spirit is the rendering of Diana Vikander Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, JSOTSup 121 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 115: "[Yahweh] sees in accordance with the heart, whereas man sees in accordance with the eyes."

Though it is beyond the focus of this study, the description in 1 Sam 13:14a of the future king (i.e., David) as an איש כלבבו anticipates these motifs and theology.

[14] E.g., see Rose, "'Principles,'" 52; Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10 (Waco: Word, 1983), 161; Mary J. Evans, *The Message of Samuel: Personalities, Potential, Politics and Power*, BST (Leicester: IVP, 2004), 107; Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 122–123; John Goldingay, *Men Behaving Badly* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2000), 118; Mark K. George, "Yhwh's Own Heart," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 442–459, esp. 448; Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 171; cf. Martin

והוא אדמוני עם יפה עינים וטוב ראי
"… and he was ruddy, with beautiful of eyes and good appearance."

The most common interpretation of 16:12a is that it describes David's good looks as fitting for kingship. But is that what the text is really saying? Jesse would have been well-aware of his youngest son's appearance, but he evidently did not think it was anywhere near kingly material. Having said that, Jesse's opinion may not matter much in 16:12, since the perspective presented is that of Samuel.[15]

Being "ruddy" and with "good appearance" can denote more of a healthy and youthful appearance than a particularly regal or beautiful one. Similarly, טוב, "good," may convey here a moral-ethical sense, indicating the wholesome nature of the boy.[16] But our phraseological analysis goes beyond the semantic connotations that come with טוב. As the narrator avoids here the use of מראה (יפת־מראה), opting for טוב ראי (ראי) instead, he deviates from the expected idiomatic expression. Also, the expression עם־יפה עינים, "with beautiful of eyes," is untypical as it is nowhere used in the Hebrew Bible for describing outward appearance (typically the formulations (יפת־מראה, יפת־תאר). Hence, we will discuss this construction in a later section dedicated to these issues. The careful reader, however, can already conclude from these phrases used, that the story prevents a confusion between the presentation of David (in 16:12) and the disregard of external appearances (in 16:7a).

Kessler, "Narrative Technique in 1 Sm 16,11-13," *CBQ* 32 (1970): 543–554, see 551; and Edelman, *King Saul*, 116.

Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 131, warns against an overdone reading of 16:7: "Since receiving God's lecture on the relationship external : internal = appearance : being, [Samuel] has been tempted to think that beauty is a contra-indication of quality. That is quite wrong, however. It does not follow logically at all from this relationship that ugliness is a proof of ability, etc."

[15] Agreeing with Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 130–131; and Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 171. For that matter, the primary perspective throughout the pericope of 16, 1-13 is that of Samuel.

[16] Edelman, *King*, 116, interprets טוב ראי as indicating that David had good insight or judgment (though unfortunately her dependence on the use of Gen 16:13 is questionable). See I Höver-Johag, "טוב," *TDOT* 5: 296–317, esp. 306, regarding the prime importance of covenant keeping in demonstrating good kingship, the subjective viewpoint of the observer in evaluating טוב, and Höver–Johag's estimate of David as טוב "in his vivacity, musical skill, and bravery." Note that the most recent occurrence of טוב before 16,12 is in 15:28, in which Samuel informs Saul—after he has repeatedly religio-morally failed—that the kingdom will be given to someone else who is ממך, הטוב ממך, "better than you." Consider Edelman, *King*, 112.

Deviating from Idioms? יפה עינים **and** טוב ראי **(1 Sam 16:12a)**

To analyze the meaning of the phrase יפה עינים and וטוב ראי more than the lexical meaning of each single word needs to be consulted. Grammatically, the first construction עם־יפה עינים is difficult—a preposition (עם) is followed by an adjective in construct state (יפה) governing the dual absolute noun (עינים).[17] Early modern interpreters often preferred to resolve the difficulty by simply emending the text from עם to עלם, "young man."[18] Nowadays, however, most scholars settle the matter by assuming a substantive function for יפה, hence: "with beauty of eyes," meaning "beautiful eyes."[19] Tsumura makes the additional attractive suggestion that "with beautiful eyes" is supported by a supposed Babylonian cognate.[20] Unfortunately, however, this is not defensible, since *damqat inisu* may be better understood as "generous/kindly eyes,"[21] not "beautiful eyes."[22]

A distributional analysis, however, sheds new light on the used formulations. A search for all phrases where the head position is held by יפה or טוב in status constructus[23] shows that our narrative contains two

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[17] A sample of scholars recognizing this difficulty include: William McKane, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 106; Peter R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 133; John Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel,* NCB (London: Oliphants, 1971) 129; George, "Yhwh's Own," 448, n. 18; and the sources listed below, in n. 35.

[18] See Grätz in S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel with an Introduction on Hebrew Palaeography and the Ancient Versions*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 134; and Max Krenkel, "Einige Emendationen zu den Büchern Samuels," *ZATW* 2 (1882): 309–310; who are followed by Paul Dhorme, *Les Livres de Samuel*, EBib (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1910), 142, n. 12; followed somewhat by Karl Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, KHCZAT 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1902), 117; and considered by Driver, *Books*, 134; and BDB, "יפה," 421c-d.

[19] See n. 27, above.

[20] David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 423.

[21] Similar to Hebrew's "good eye," cf. Prov 22:9.

[22] As well, Tsumura asserts that, according to the syntax of the Akkadian, "ruddy countenance," "generous [beautiful, acc. to Tsumura] eyes," and "bright face," are all subsidiary to "happily he looked." However, the basic subject being clausally modified is not a happy king with a bright face, but a happy king ready to reward a helpful high priest, which reinforces the interpretation "generous eyes." See Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 423; *CAD* 7, "*īnu*," 155; and Victor Hurowitz, "The 'Sun Disk' tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina," in *The Context of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World,* ed. William W. Hallo, vol. 2 of *The Context of Scripture*, ed. W. W. Hallo (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 364–368, esp. 367, n. 44.

[23] See https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4b&id=1375.

unique formulation that appear nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible: (1) יפה
עינים (2) and טוב ראי.

The standard idiomatic expression for יפה connects the status
constructus with מראה or with תאר.

יפת־מראה	beauty of appearance	7x
יפת־תאר	beauty of form	6x

יפה עינים then, contrasts with the idiomatic expression and likely
indicates that the author is, again, playing with language and surprising
the audience with an unexpected formulation. This "disturbing" language
use continues with the formulation טוב ראי.

Instead of טוב ראי, the expected idiomatic expression would have
been טבת מראה (8x).[24] It is not only striking that the author deviates from
the expected idiom, but how he has deviated from it. The word רֳאִי
(pausal form of the noun רֳאִי) can mean "seeing"[25] or "perception."[26] This
would render the translation "good of perception" or "good in seeing."
From this would follow the conclusion that the text indicates that David
is one who can see well.

Although on different grounds, similar directions have been taken by
other scholars, too. While "with beautiful eyes" is the most popular
interpretation for יפה עינים,[27] some suggest "with bright eyes,"[28]
indicating eyes full of vitality. Relatedly, we would observe that eyes full
of vitality are connected to a healthy spirit/soul behind it. Approaching
this, Edelman interprets יפה עינים as "beauty of vision" (in association

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[24] See https://shebanq.ancient-data.org/hebrew/query?version=4b&id=1376.

[25] BDB 909, cf. Jb 33:21, Gen 16:13.

[26] Westermann on Gen 16:13, see HALOT 1162.

[27] E.g., see Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, trans. James Martin, CFTLFS 9 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1910), 169; William McKane, *1 and 2 Samuel: Introduction and Commentary*, TBC (London: SCM Press, 1963), 106; John Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel,* 129; Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 97; Klein, *1 Samuel*, 161; Bruggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 122; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 423; Klaus–Peter Adam, *Saul und David in der Judäischen Geschichtsschreibung,* FAT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 159; Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 171; Michael Avioz, "The Motif of Beauty in the Books of Samuel and Kings," *VT* 59 (2009): 341–359, see 349.

[28] NJPS translates the term as "bright-eyed"; see also Roger L. Omanson and John E. Ellington, *A Handbook on the First and Second Books of Samuel,* vol. 1, UBS Handbook Series (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 2001), 341.

with טוב ראי, "good insight/judgment" [her interpretation]).[29] As well, Stendebach comments that

> [i]n most texts the eyes is [*sic*] the locus of personal perception and knowledge. In the eye the human 'soul' is revealed . . . A broad spectrum of inward states can find expression in the eyes, for the 'soul' reveals itself in the face and its expression. If the 'soul' is vigorous and healthy, the eyes are bright.[30]

By way of contrast, Fuhs remarks that

> as the eyes dim, the aging individual perceives the ebbing of vigor and vitality and approach of the darkness of death (Gen 27:1; 48:10; 1 Sam 3:2; 4:15; 1 Ki 14:4; in an allegorical sense: Eccl 12:3).[31]

With regard to 16:7bb, "eyes" in v. 12 do not necessarily equate with "the eyes" of v. 7. Within the OT, "eyes" has a range of semantic meaning; this includes not only external appearances (i.e., what the eye sees), but also, ironically, internal conditions (i.e., what the eye reveals, the soul behind it). Fuhs observes that

> the frequent conjunction of *ra'â* with *'ayin* ('one's eyes see') or *be'ayin* ('see with one's eyes') … emphasizes the personal nature of the visual experience. The personality of the individual is concentrated in the seeing eye. In the look of the eye is reflected the individual's present state as a change of situation, subjectively experienced and objectively recognizable.[32]

As Kraus asserts:

> Kein Organ des menschlichen Körpers ist ein so ausdrucksvolles Spiegelbild des ganzen Lebens wie das Auge. . . . Alle Erregungen und Bewegungen des innersten Lebens treten in den Augen hervor. . . .[33]

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[29] Edelman, *King*, 116.

[30] F. J. Stendebach, "עין," *TDOT* 11: 28–44, esp. 32, 34.

[31] Fuhs, "ראה," 215.

[32] Ibid., 215.

[33] Hans–Joachim Kraus, *Biblisch-theologische Aufsätze* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 84. Similarly, Johnson, *Vitality*, 47–48, cf. 51, observes that the eyes may, by way of synecdoche, reflect personal behavior and therefore be subject to moral evaluation. He continues that: "Indeed, the behavior of the eye is found to be related to a wide range of psychical activity. . . In fact, the eyes are found to be so

Given our above observations of 16:12a in light of 16:7, a number of additional interpretive factors present themselves which will prove helpful in elucidating the grammatical sense and coherence of עם־יפה עינים within the text. To begin, there is the possibility that the unusual form has been used simply to facilitate establishing the relationship between 16:12a and 17:42, both of which use עם־יפה. We will focus in this connection more in the following section. That said, the question still somewhat persists as to why an adjective was used instead of a noun (such as יפי), but said question is easily answered by the fact that יפה is used elsewhere as a substantive. Yet another explanation for the unusual construction is forwarded by context. Recall that Samuel's vision of David in all other respects in 16:11–13 aligns with the "seeing to the heart" category of 16:7b. Furthermore, what Goliath does not see—i.e., David's "eyes" and "good[ness]"—are implied to be beyond his comprehension, beyond the category of external and immediate appearances. Also, to recall, as discussed earlier, is that "eyes" express the interior of a person. Taking all this into account, one may legitimately suspect that יפה עינים or עם־יפה עינים is a rare idiomatic and/or biblically-unique phrase reflective of the idea that "eyes" reveal the soul.[34] There is also a slight moral-ethical sense present, in the same way that the nearby phrase טוב ראי can suggest wholesomeness or that the similar idiom עין טוב indicates generosity.

What exactly might "beauty of eyes" look like in relation to the soul? The David unveiled in 16:14–17:58 provides a clue. David the musician is attributed numerous times in the Psalms as having expressed his internal condition in relation to his eyes. On the basis of David's general characterization there and in 1 Sam 16:14–17:58, "beauty of eyes" reflects a soul that is in *shalom* with oneself and YHWH. Such eyes seek YHWH intimately and truly. They are eyes that trust and worship him (1 Sam 16:18; Psa 141:8; 145:15). They are eyes that are humble before YHWH and bold before his enemies (1 Sam 17:26, 36–37, 45–47; Psa 18:28; 54:9; 131:1). They are wholly focused on YHWH's righteous and faithful ways and people (Psa 26:3; 101). They know weakness and hard

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expressive (readily betraying any fluctuation in a man's vigor or alertness) that occasionally the use of the term is almost equivalent to that of נפש or פנים, when these are employed with reference to the individual as a whole" (49–50).

[34] Bear in mind that עין forms idioms with many other words. See Stendebach, "עין," 36–38, and additional idioms mentioned throughout the remainder of his article on 29–44.

times, but are attached to a soul that clings to YHWH even when one cannot "see" him (Psa 6:8; 13:4; 25:15; 31:10; 38:11; 141:8; cf. 88:10, though attributed to the Sons of Korah). They are eyes, in sum, that see spiritually beautiful things in a beautiful manner and are, therefore, beautiful to see.

And so, within the context of 1 Sam 16:1–13 alone, it can be demonstrated that 16:12a does not contradict 16:7b. Furthermore, we shall see that investigation of further context sheds even more light on 16:12a.[35]

First Impressions of Young David upon Goliath—The Play of Perspectives (1 Sam 17:42)

In 1 Sam 17:42, Goliath encounters David for the first time and makes observations of the young man that are similar to those of Samuel. Scholars who note the similarity often assume that 17:42 is a later addition based on 16:12a and propose emending 17:42, without text-critical warrant, to resolve the difficulty of Goliath apparently acknowledging David's handsomeness.[36] Such miss-reading of 17:42 is not a new phenomenon. An example of an ancient tradition doing this may be seen in the Targums. Targum 1 Sam 16:12, 18; 17:42 interprets that David was שפיר ברויה "handsome in his appearance," and the ancient

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[35] Though it is beyond the purposes of this article, note that this narrative of the selection and call of ancient Israel's greatest king in 1 Sam 16:1–13 bears some resemblance to the narrative of the creation of woman in Gen 2:18–25. In both cases, a new party is needed for a vital task and every other option is exhausted, reinforcing the fit of the eventual identification and selection of woman/the future king.

Also, while this study focuses on initial impressions of young David, a comparison of this with the introduction of Saul in 1 Sam 9–10 is worth considering (e.g., see Ralph K. Hawkins, "The First Glimpse of Saul and His Subsequent Transformation," *BBR* 22 (2012:) 353–362, esp. 358–359, 361–362), though an implicit innerbiblical comparison is not as strong between 1 Sam 9–10 and chs. 16–17 as it is between 16:12 and 17:42. See Jan P. Fokkelman, *Vow and Desire*, vol. 4 of *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, SSN 31 (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1993), 372ff, for profound close-reading analytical insights of the narrative concerning the introduction of Saul (such as the nuanced narratival use of טוב in 1 Sam 9:2 on 374–375).

[36] See Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel*, 129; Paul Dhorme, *Les Livres de Samuel*, 155; Karl A. Leimbach, *Die Bücher Samuel*, DHSAT 3.1 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1936), 81; P. Kyle McCarter, *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, AB 8 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 289; Alfons Schultz, "Narrative Art in the Books of Samuel," *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressmann and Other Scholars, 1906–1923*, ed. David E. Orton, JSOTSupp116 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), 119–170, here 130; cf. Klein, *1 Samuel*, 161, 180.

acrostic addition to Tg 1 Sam 17:42/43 (MS C)[37] goes so far as to put into the mouth of Goliath words apparently appreciating the beauty of David: "You are chosen, boy, // and you are very beautiful. . . . Your splendor resembles // the splendor of kings…. The shape of your face // is beautiful and ruddy. // And you are beautiful in looks // and lovely in appearance."[38] However, as we saw above regarding 16:12a, the biblical passage itself is not concerned about David's handsomeness that much. Rather the used phrases in 1 Sam 16:12 can be read as being concerned with the quality of his eyes and the skills of his seeing. Taking a closer look at 17:42, as much is conveyed in the differences between 16:12 and 17:42 as in the similarities, if not more so.

וטוב ראי	עם־יפה עינים	אדמוני	והוא	1 Sam 16:12a
and good of seeing/appearance	with beauty of eyes	ruddy	And he (was)	
	עם־יפה מראה	ואדמני	כי־היה נער	1 Sam 17:42
	With beauty of [outward] appearance	and ruddy (he was)	For he was a boy	

The lexical similarities between 16:12 and 17:42 of אדמוני ("ruddy"), and עם־יפה ("with beautiful of")— along with the general theme of initial impressions of the young David (he is referred to as a נער, "lad," immediately before both texts, cf. 16:11; 17:42ba) and the contextual theme and frequent vocabulary of "seeing" (ראה and נבט)—establish a comparative relationship between the two passages.[39]

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[37] See Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel,* SAIS 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 364.

[38] As translated in Staalduine-Sulman, *Targum of Samuel*, 366–367, 373, see also 339, 341, 364.

[39] Agreeing with Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 179, 204. A third, brief passage concerning first impressions of the young David is in 16:18, in which David is described as איש תאר, "a man of form." The perspective is that of an anonymous young servant of Saul and functions as an authoritative voice in the narrative. With regard to vocabulary and motifs, however, an immediate innerbiblical connection is *not* made between 16:12; 17:42; and this verse in the MT. The LXX may be seen to harmonize 16:18 slightly with 16:12 in that both include ἀγαθός. In Tg. Neb., all three passages are harmonized with שפיר ברויה.

Indeed, it is the distinctives that have explanatory power. Goliath does not comprehend David's עינים ("eyes"), nor his טוב ראי ("good seeing") aspect. Perhaps this is not surprising if "eyes" in 16:12a indeed convey a moral quality, and "good seeing" is understood as a desirable social and ethical skill. Personal depth and morality are truly beyond the sight of Goliath. The inability to distinguish ethically between good and evil is a characteristic of people who are either not-yet-responsible (such as young children, Deut 1:39; Isa 7:15–16), unable (such as the very elderly, 2 Sam 19:36), or foolish (Jer 4:22)[40] and though it would be unflattering to a proud warrior like Goliath, the Philistine fits the bill. Goliath's ineptitude is reinforced by both his activity of נבט (as seen the beginning of this article, this is a root associated with a surface viewing in the OT, and short-sightedness and negative consequences in the Books of Samuel)[41] and his perception of David's מראה, a focus fatefully warned against (16:7b).[42] Even when Goliath applies ראה to David in 17:42, the direct object marker את is applied, marking Goliath's sight as approaching David as a mere object to be acted upon instead of as a person to be comprehended and, in a sense, received. Thus, in these various ways, the Philistine champion's condemnation of David, ironically, condemns himself.

By way of contrast, Samuel's view of David begins like Goliath's. Samuel sees David's ruddiness and "beautiful of. . . ," but the seer diverges from Goliath in that he perceives inward and moral qualities of the boy that only a sight divinely calibrated to the heart can comprehend (cf. 16:7b). The avoidance of מראה in Samuel's perspective and the marked difference between final terms ראי and מראה (in 16:12a and 17:42, respectively) emphasize that, though the prophet and the Philistine begin with the same view, ultimately what each comprehended was significantly different from the other.[43] One exemplifies seeing the more

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[40] See Höver-Johag, "טוב," 309.

[41] See discussion in main text above concerning ראה and נבט.

[42] Agreeing with Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 179; and Frank Polak, "Literary Study and 'Higher Criticism' according to the Tale of David's Beginning," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies; Jerusalem, August 4-12, 1985*, eds. M. Goshen-Gottstein and D. Assaf (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986) 27-32, esp. 31.

[43] Similar to Jan P. Fokkelman, *Crossing Fates*, 179; somewhat similar to Edelman, *King*, 131–132, but Edelman considers the perspective in 16:1–13 as that of YHWH instead of Samuel.

hidden, internal reality while the other illustrates looking superficially at what is immediate, easy-to-view, and indeed superficial.

The implicit criticism of facile judgments by way of appearances is illustrated on yet another level by Samuel and Goliath. Samuel is an old man near the end of his career (8:1–5), while Goliath is a strapping champion warrior evidently at the height of his powers (17:4–11:23–24). The Israelites' approach to the two is markedly different: they have already confronted Samuel with his imminent demise, but they are terrified by Goliath. However, the ability to see like the divine is not in the tall, muscled champion, but in the YHWH-obedient, teachable prophet. As Edelman observes: "Goliath, like the Israelites, focuses on outward appearances rather than inward strengths."[44] Samuel was about to do the same, but received and responded to a divine lesson that recalibrated his vision.

So, the two men see the same basic object—youthful, energetic David. But Samuel's vision goes deeper, catching sight of the character behind the superficial appearance. This is why Goliath only perceives a puny youth he may haughtily despise; while Samuel discerns a future king he is called to honor.[45]

Summary-Conclusion

An in-depth look into the initial impressions of David in 1 Sam 16–17 unveils a deeper look into the perceptive abilities of an old prophet, a hostile warrior, and the very human people of God. As well, an in-depth look demonstrates the richness of language and creative use of phrases that slightly deviate from known idioms. Most of all, an in-depth look at the early impressions of David elucidates the inner character of the young king-to-be. Through detailed study of the vocabulary and phraseology concerning David in 1 Sam 16–17, we have explored the precision and depth in terms used, such as נבט, ראה, לבב, יפה, and טוב with

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[44] Edelman, *King*, 131. Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 34, insightfully wrote: "To the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures." Goliath's spiritual sight is evidently blind, while Samuel's is keen. Goliath has no sense or fear of YHWH, while Samuel listens well to him.

[45] In the LXX, the innerbiblical allusion is strengthened, but the contrast is severely weakened in that μετὰ κάλλους ὀφθαλμῶν is used in both 16:12 and 17:42. As well, recognition of David's goodness in 16:12 is qualified as YHWH's, not Samuel's. Further, whether any of the perspective in 16:12 belongs to Samuel is unclear in the LXX rendering.

their related constructions. Importantly, we have seen that David's apparently physical characteristics in 1 Sam 16:12 are actually shown to reflect his character—that is, not only is David young, healthy, energetic, and wholesome, but more important is what he does with his eyes and how sees. His way of reading the world is enabled by his soul being in harmony with YHWH. David's ethical stance, his inner constitution, and his ability to look beyond the mere visible is perceived by Samuel, but—as the comparison between 1 Sam 16:12 and 17:42 makes clear—is not seen by Goliath, to his own disreputation and demise. Finally, the grammatically difficult phrase עם־יפה עינים in 16:12a has been analyzed and is provisionally understood to indicate the *shalom* that is within David and with YHWH.

Thus, in multiple respects, the text has demonstrated that one cannot facilely rely on mere appearances. Indeed, as an in-depth look at 1 Sam 16:7, 12; 17:42 reveals, both David and the text demonstrate greater inward beauty and consistency than at first meets the eye.[46]

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