

1 Samuel 16:1-23

David anointed

1 Samuel 16:1 - "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons."

mourn = *'ābal* - to be languid, to walk with the head cast down; to mourn or lament

"fill thine horn with oil" - not a small flask of oil, as when he anointed Saul, but a whole horn full. Because David's kingdom would be eternal. Also, tradition says this was the holy oil used to anoint the High Priest, rather than the common oil used to anoint Saul previously.

Samuel would have poured oil on his own hand and then smeared it between David's eyebrows in the form of a crown, then poured the rest on his head.

Jesse the Bethlehemite was the son of Obed, the son Boaz begat with Ruth the Moabitess (**Ruth 4:21**). He was of the tribe of Judah, and David's line would begin to fulfill the prophecy of Jacob, which is completely fulfilled in the Messiah:

- **Genesis 49:10** - "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

The Sages taught that Jesse the father of David was one of four people who never sinned, and died only because death had been decreed for all mankind after the Fall. This is interesting because it is very similar to the later Catholic tradition that Mary the mother of Jesus was sinless.

Bethlehem means "house of bread," and the rabbis said this bread refers to the Torah, pointing to **Proverbs 9:5**, where Wisdom says to "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." (Bread and wine of course are also the elements of the communion/ afikomen of the Lord's Supper).

1 Samuel 16:2-3 - "And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee."

"if Saul hear it, he will kill me" - to anoint another king would be considered an overt act of treason

Samuel was to sacrifice a peace offering, and then invite Jesse and his family to eat the remainder with him.

From this verse, the Talmud deduces that it is a mitzvah to diverge from the truth in

order to bring about or maintain peace. (Yevamos 65b)

1 Samuel 16:4-5 - "And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice."

"trembled at his coming" - Samuel in his old age rarely traveled his circuit. So they imagined he was come to reprove them, or denounce some judgment upon them for their sins.

1 Samuel 16:6-7 - "And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

Samuel had previously (**1 Samuel 9:19**) declared "I am the seer." God's response here was to rebuke his tendency toward hubris. i.e. he wasn't seeing so well after all.

Compare:

- **Isaiah 55:8-9** - "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

RE: The Messiah -

- **Isaiah 11:3-4** - "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth..."

Samuel had previously told Saul:

- **! Samuel 13:14** - "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart..."

Jesse had eight sons. None of those present were chosen.

1 Samuel 16:11-12 - "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

A blank space is added to the text before the words "Arise and anoint him" because this marks the beginning of a new phase of Jewish history - the advent of the Davidic kingdom.

Although God looks on the heart, David's appearance is described. He is ruddy, like Esau, meaning ready to shed blood, but with a "goodly appearance" indicating a clear mind and self control - unlike Esau.

Some said David's face had the power to spiritually illuminate those who saw him, so that they recalled Torah stored in their memory. (Be'er Moshe; Eruvin 13b)

This appearance is reflected later in **Song of Solomon 5:10** - "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand."

Here again the youngest is chosen. Like Jacob and Esau, the younger overtakes the elder; first the natural then the spiritual. The Hebrew word for youngest also means "small" and the Midrash says this refers to David's humility.

The rabbis said God's choice of David was kept secret and hidden until the moment God revealed it to Samuel. In a similar way, the lineage of David was full of episodes that would seemingly obscure the birth of a holy monarch - one of his ancestors was Moab, born through the illicit union of Lot with his daughter (**Genesis 19:30-38**); the embarrassing episode of Judah and Tamar (**Genesis 38**); and the story of Boaz marrying Ruth the Moabitess. These incidents were meant to fool Satan into thinking that no sanctity could come from such a background. Had Satan known that the Lord's kingdom was in the process of formulation, he would have done all he could to prevent it. (Chavetz Chaim al HaTorah) Compare Jesus' birth - in a manger, to Mary a poor orphan, and fleeing as a baby from King Herod.

An Illegitimate, Rejected David?

There is a fascinating medieval story of how David was considered illegitimate. After fathering six sons, Jesse separated from his wife, fearing he might be a Moabite and thus breaking a Torah law by marriage to a Jew. Jesse devised a scheme to have a child by his maidservant, which would somehow determine if he was really a Moabite. But like Rachel and Leah, the maid and Jesse's wife exchange places, and David is born to his wife. His brothers considered him illegitimate. Because David's birth was an embarrassment he was sent off to tend sheep. Compare that story to Mary's predicament - pregnant through a virgin birth. Thus David can say in **Psalm 51:5** - "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." and in Psalm 69:8 - "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children."

And this was why Jesse left him out of the gathering with Samuel.

When David was chosen, Jesse's wife cried out in joy as vindicated, and exclaimed (Psalm 118:22) - "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."

"builders = *bânâh* - and can refer to a childless wife becoming the mother of a family through the children of a concubine. (**Ruth 4:11** - "...The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build [*bânâh*] the house of Israel." (Also, Genesis 30:3)

The Shepherd King - The people of Israel are compared to sheep numerous times:

- **Ezekiel 34:22-24** - "Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it."

- **Ezekiel 34:31** - "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD."

- **Ezekiel 36:38** - "As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD."

Because David knew how to tend to each sheep's individual needs - giving tender grass to the young, fresh grass to the oldest, and tough grass to the strongest - God made him king, according to the Zohar and Midrash. "A compassionate shepherd carries a newborn sheep in his arms behind his mother to that it will not grow tired. So too, a leader of Israel must lead the people with compassion."

- **Psalms 78:70-72** - "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands."

1 Samuel 16:13 - "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."

"in the midst of his brethren" - rather from out of the midst. He was chosen from among his brethren. But Samuel took him apart from them, and anointed David by himself.

Previously, when Samuel tried to anoint his brothers, the oil flowed away from them when he poured. Now, the oil left the horn of its own volition to anoint David. In fact it was God who anointed David:

- **Psalms 89:20-21** - "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him."

According to Midrash Yalkut HaMechiri, when the oil touched David's head it hardened and turned into precious stones and jewels.

"the Spirit of the LORD came upon David" - The Spirit of prophecy expressed in his psalms, a spirit of wisdom and prudence, and also the spirit of fortitude, according to the Targum, whereby he was enabled to encounter with the lion and bear.

1 Samuel 16:14 - "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."

The spirit of a sound mind departed, among other characteristics. At his anointing, the Spirit had made him "another man" (**1 Samuel 10:6, 10**). But Saul had resisted and rebelled without true repentance.

Saul personified the "sorrow of the world." He regrets his rebellion has been revealed:

- 2 Corinthians 7:10 - "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Josephus (Antiqu. l. 6. c. 8. sect. 2.) says it was as if Saul was possessed by the devil; by whom he was almost suffocated and strangled, as well as was distracted in his counsels, and became weak and foolish; lost all courage and greatness of mind, was timorous and fearful, and alarmed by everything, and was full of envy, suspicion, rage, and despair.

1 Samuel 16:15-17 - "And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me."

The Jewish tradition is that the "servant" who suggested David was Doeg the Edomite, who later becomes an enemy of David, in order to spur Saul's jealousy. Over-profuse praise is like slander because it often results in disparagement, according to the Talmud.

Probably only Samuel knew David had been anointed as the next king. Jesse perhaps knew of the anointing but guessed it was for some other honor, maybe preparation for joining Samuel in a school of the prophets.

1 Samuel 16:23 - "And it came to pass, when the [evil] spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

David may not have realized much about his anointing. Like the young Jesus, he perhaps had a dawning awareness of his destiny. At the times when Saul would regain

his sanity, David probably would leave the court to return to shepherding his father's flocks.

A Note on Depression, Melancholy and Sorrow

This chapter begins with Samuel mourning, and ends with Saul afflicted by an evil spirit that caused melancholy and a disturbed mind.

God told Samuel that he mourned "too long" for Saul.

mourn = *'ābal* - to be languid, to walk with the head cast down; to mourn or lament

The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and he was troubled by "an evil spirit from the Lord"

troubled = *bā'at* - to suddenly strike with fear, dread or terror; to be overwhelmed

The evil spirit was sent not to tempt Saul into more sin, but as a judgment on what he had already done.

But God is always open to repentance, and provided Saul with a way of reprieve:

When David played his lyre (or stringed instrument) before him, Saul was "refreshed" and the evil spirit left him and he became "well" - *tob* = good.

[In fact this is a good plan to address our own depression - read or listen to the Psalms, which describe David's own struggles, as a type of Christ]

refreshed = *rāvaḥ* - to breathe freely, have ample room. Instead of the world closing in on him, Saul was able to again feel he had escaped from being squeezed and come into an open, airy, wide space.

But eventually this no longer "worked" - Saul gave himself over to jealousy and twice tried to kill David with a spear.

- **James 3:16** - "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."

Depression or mental heaviness often afflicted the heroes of faith in the Bible.

David

Even David was no stranger to depression. His response, reflected in multiple psalms, was to "speak to his own soul":

- **Psalms 38:6,8** - "I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. ... I groan because of the turmoil of my heart."

- **Psalm 43:5** - "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

"cast down" = *šāḥaḥ* - to be bowed down, humbled, brought low, sink down, despairing

David's response was to tell his disquieted soul to "hope in God." And he anticipated praising God in the future, although he couldn't seem to do it at that moment.

Proverbs has something to say about this despair, or "*šāḥaḥ*" -

- **Proverbs 12:25** - "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop (*šāḥaḥ*): but a good word maketh it glad."

heaviness = *d'āḡā* - heavy with anxiety, care, fear or sorrow

"good word" = *dabar* - discourse, talking, speech

Talking about our depression with others can be a step in dispelling it.

Unlike these Bible characters, Saul refused to repent, he "kept silence" so his guilt festered within him, increasing his depression and moroseness. Confession and repentance can eliminate one source of depression:

- **Psalm 32:3-5** - "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah."

By talking with friends or your community about what your depression is telling you - your failures, your shame or guilt - they might be able to uncover either that these thoughts are a lie, or point the way to forgiveness if actual sin underlies them.

Job

The story of Job is all about a very depressed man who felt he had good reason to complain to God.

- **Job 10:1, 19** - "I loathe my very life; therefore, I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. ...I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave."

Elijah

Samuel's feeling of dejection at how Saul had turned out was repeated in the life of Elijah under the evil reign of Jezebel and Ahab. Elijah felt he had failed, and that God had seemed to abandon him.

- **1 Kings 19:4** - "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Like Samuel, Elijah listened to the Lord and accepted food from the angel, and was encouraged when God told him 7,000 others had not bent the knee to Baal.

Saul accepted the grace of David's music... for a while... but eventually he rejected it.

Jeremiah

This prophet was plagued by loneliness, and feelings of defeat, discouragement and severe emotional distress:

- **Jeremiah 20:14, 18** - "Cursed be the day I was born ... why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?"

Especially as he surveyed the destruction of Jerusalem:

- **Lamentations 1:12** - "...see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

In The Garden of Gethsemane

The Messiah would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, according to Isaiah 53.

sorrows = *mak'ōb* - grief, mental pain, anguish

He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (**Hebrews 4:15**)

The best example of a struggle with depression is Jesus Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. He "began to be sorrowful and very heavy..."

- **Matthew 26:37-38** - "And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

sorrowful = *lypeō* - to grieve, to be in heaviness, to be sad, uneasy

very heavy = *adēmoneō* - to be troubled, great distress or anguish, depressed; to be

sated to loathing, to be in mental distress

"unto death" indicates the extremes that His mind was pointing to. What if He wasn't capable of completing His mission, with the salvation of the human race depending on Him, maybe the responsibility was too great.

In His temptation in the wilderness, it was the voice of Satan tempting Him, which He answered with scripture. Here, it seems the struggle was with his own thoughts alone.

Jesus was also "sore amazed" (**Mark 14:33**) - *ekthambeō* - a word that includes the ideas of fear, terror and alarm.

Because Jesus experienced all this, One who was without sin, we know that depression in itself is not sin. But sin can come in how we react to it.

In fact, depression is always a possibility for believers:

- **1 Peter 1:6** - "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness (*lypeō*) through manifold temptations..."

Peter also describes what to do in that situation:

- **1 Peter 5:7** - "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Paul was also no stranger to inner turmoil. But God comforted him when he was beset by fears or mental heaviness:

- **2 Corinthians 6:9-10** - "... as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful (*lypeō*) yet always rejoicing ..."

- **2 Corinthians 7:5-6** - "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforts those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus"

How did Jesus respond to this overwhelming feeling?

The tendency in depression is to isolate yourself.

But Jesus reached out and included his disciples in what He was experiencing, and asked them to "watch" with Him - to be awake and watchful, giving vigilant attention to this moment with Him. He didn't ask them to advise Him, or even to pray together with Him, simply to be there, and to be present with Him.

[In similar fashion, when Moses was despairing of dealing with the Israelites, to the point of asking God to kill him, God told Moses to gather the elders, so he wouldn't have

to bear the burden alone. (**Numbers 11:15-17**)]

Then Jesus presented the cause of His heaviness to God in prayer: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

Finally, He let go of the situation, affirming it was in God's hands: "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

Jesus actually did this *twice* on the same night.

God provided an angel who appeared to Him from heaven, who strengthened Him (**Luke 22:43**).

strengthen = *enischyō* - fill with inner strength to overcome, with the idea of returning to sound health.

But even after this, Jesus' stress and heaviness *ONLY INCREASED*:

- **Luke 22:44** - "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

agony = *agōnía* - a severe mental or emotional struggle

Obviously there is more than just depression involved here. But the "heaviness" of despair was certainly part of it.

Because Jesus experienced depression and mental anguish, He can offer us healing, comfort and a way through it:

- **Isaiah 61:1-3** - "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

- **Matthew 9:36** - "When Jesus saw the crowds He was moved with compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless (distressed and dispirited), like sheep without a shepherd."

- **2 Corinthians 1:3-5** - "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ."

Jesus' incarnation validated our humanity, while the cross condemned our self-seeking.

Our suffering - whether physical, mental or spiritual - has value and meaning because Jesus become one of us and experienced it.