

1 Samuel 19:1-24

David Warned to Flee from Saul

Saul's increasing jealousy toward David is a warning to us. Saul first gave way to envy, and instead of struggling against his bad feelings, he nourished them secretly. Then his murderous intent came out publicly only when he was in the grip of a mad rage.

In incremental steps Saul bolstered his fear of David with justifications to himself. Saul attempted more and more overt efforts to kill David. He justified this by imagining a danger to his own reign and to his family's position. He begins to view David as a usurper and a traitor. The rabbis suggest additional reasons - that he viewed David as popular only for his military victories, whereas a king should reign because of his wisdom and piety, not just valor in battle. Of course, the evil spirit from the Lord amplified all this. Now his intentions become public.

Compare the outburst by Henry II of England against the archbishop Thomas à Becket: "Will no one rid me of this meddling priest?"

Also, remember that the "seed of the serpent" had an implacable hatred for the "seed of the woman" (**Genesis 3:15**), in trying to prevent the Deliverer from arising through David's line. That, combined with the fact that every human heart is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (**Jeremiah 17:9**), provided more than enough fuel for Saul's unrepentant and murderous musings.

See **Jeremiah 17:9-10** - "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways." So, Saul was given over to the malice in his heart.

- **Proverbs 14:30** - "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

- **James 3:16** - "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

1 Samuel 19:1 - "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David."

Saul and everyone knew that Jonathan and David were close friends. But maybe Saul thought that Jonathan's loyalty to his father would be greater, and he could convince him that David presented a danger as a rival to his succession to the throne.

1 Samuel 19:2-3 - "But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee."

Jonathan's Defense of David

1 Samuel 19:4-5 - "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

Jonathan, acting as a mediator, was hoping that Saul's outburst was just another temporary effect of the evil spirit, that Saul really didn't really want to kill David, and that it would pass. ...

1 Samuel 19:6 - "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain."

...And that seemed to be the case. But it would not last.

1 Samuel 19:7 - "And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past."

They seemed to reconcile.

1 Samuel 19:8-10 - "And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night."

David's music was no longer soothing to Saul.

One other note - Saul's attempt to impale David with the javelin foreshadows Christ on the cross, pierced in His side by the Roman lance.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water....For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled...'They shall look on him whom they pierced.'" (**John 19:34-37**) See **Zechariah 12:9-11**

Jesus was also pursued by enemies: They "consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him." (**Matthew 26:4**)

1 Samuel 19:11-12 - "Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain. So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped."

This is like Paul (**Acts 9:24-25**) escaping from the Jews in Damascus who planned to kill him, his friends "let him down through the wall in a large basket."

Saved by a Teraphim?

1 Samuel 19:13-16 - "And Michal took an image (*teraphim*), and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster."

The rabbis associated this verse with the description in **Exodus 25** of bringing donations of goat's hair for one of the coverings of the Tabernacle. Here the pillow of goat's hair is connected with protecting David, the type of Messiah.

Goat's hair was also used by Jacob to deceive his father into thinking he was Esau, thereby obtaining the blessing.

But why does Michal have a "teraphim?" These were originally household gods. But they served a further purpose - as proof of inheritance or primacy in the family, the right of paterfamilias. These household idols continued to be found in many Israelite households until the exile. Obviously, if David knew about them, he would have disapproved. The presence of teraphim and other idolatry in Israel was the cause of the judgment on Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple.

Rachel had stolen Laban's teraphim, which were small enough to be hidden under her saddle (**Genesis 31:34**). Here the teraphim seem to be almost life-size.

Samuel had pronounced them as evil:

- **1 Samuel 15:23** - "For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance is like the wickedness of idolatry (*uteraphim*)."

The rabbis propose that Michal kept this teraphim hoping it would cure barrenness and promote fertility. They see this as an example of "riding on your high places" because an idol was transformed into a vital piece of God's plan to save David.

- **Isaiah 58:14** - "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth,"

1 Samuel 19:17 - "And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

or "He said to me, 'Help me get away or else I will kill you!'"

This made David seem like a potential murderer himself, but the lie seemed to satisfy Saul, although anyone else would not have believed her, knowing David's character and reputation.

David Flees to Samuel

1 Samuel 19:18 - "So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth."

The Targum says "he and Samuel went and dwelt in the house of doctrine" - this was the school of the prophets, situated in perhaps a safer location for asylum.

The Targum says it was a house fo scholars, used for Torah study. The Midrash says David learned more from Samuel here than a gifted Torah student could learn in hundred years. Because Naioth means "splendor," the Sages explain they were studying the future Temple - the splendor (noy) of the world - and the appropriate site for its location. Samuel assured David that it would be built by his son. All this explains the quote in Psalm 119:109 - "My life is always at risk, but I did not forget your Torah."

Prophesying

1 Samuel 19:20-21 - "And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also."

Saul had no hesitation in violating such a place of pious sanctuary. But God foiled his plan.

The Targum adds that Samuel's disciples were "singing songs of praise."

The Spirit came over these messengers, and they also prophesied and sang hymns. They forgot their mission, and according to the rabbis, they prophesied that David would rule over all Israel and Saul would fail to kill him.

So finally Saul himself decided to go find him.

1 Samuel 19:23-24 - "And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?"

"Is Saul also among the prophets?" - Repeated from 1 Samuel 10:12, when the Spirit came upon Saul the first time.

This was a powerful sign from God to Saul that God was protecting David, and that Saul could not contend with God. It was also an opportunity again for Saul to repent.

This also brings to mind the experience of Paul (*Saul* of Tarsus), on the road to Damascus, on his way to persecute believers, but struck with a vision of Christ (Acts 9). Perhaps Paul thought about this incident of his namesake King Saul as he sat, struck blind, for three days.

Apparently Saul did relent somewhat because of this experience, because in the next chapter David is expected to feast with the king at the new moon, and Saul wonders why David does not attend.

“naked”- Rashi says Saul stripped himself of his royal garments.

But other rabbinical sources see deeper insights from this action relating to prophecy.

In prophecy, one’s physical and emotional state of consciousness or self-consciousness, vanishes. Metaphorically, you take off your physical body like a garment, revealing your soul. “When one wants to prepare himself for a spiritual endeavor such as prophecy [or prayer], one must experience an ‘unclothing’ of physicality to expose one’s soul.” (see Rabbeinu Yonah to Berachos 25b; Shulcan Aruch Orach Chaim 98:1) Although Saul could conceal his purposes and agendas toward David, here he is overwhelmed by the Spirit, and his veils and garments were removed. (Munkatcher Rebbe, cited by Mishbetzoz Zahav) There can be no hiding or defensiveness, no lingering self-consciousness under the power of the Spirit.

Read Psalm 59

David has left us an amazing spiritual commentary on this whole episode in Psalm 59.

- **Psalm 59:1** - "To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him."

It is a psalm that also expresses the state of mind of Jesus as He approached the cross, pursued and pressed by the religious authorities, the Jewish king Herod and the Roman authorities.

Take it one more step inward, and recognize Christ in you being pursued and persecuted by the flesh, our old man, whose self-interest is always contending with the Spirit of God.

Psalm 59:1-2 - "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men."

"iniquity" = *'aven* - iniquity, “from an unused root, perhaps meaning to pant (hence, to exert oneself, usually in vain)”

Self-exertion is always the enemy of faith and dependence on God. Like Saul, our self-exertion persecutes Christ in us, hunting him down, trying to eradicate faith.

- **Psalm 59:5** - "Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. *Selah*."

Rashi - "awake to visit all the heathen" - judge these wicked men according to the statutes of the nations. i.e. they are breaking even universally accepted rules and laws of the heathen, let alone your Divine Law.

- **Psalm 59:11** - "Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield."

Rashi - "lest my people forget" - the dead are simply forgotten. Instead, deprive them of their possessions, so that they are impoverished. That is the revenge that will be long remembered.

See NET - "Do not strike them dead suddenly, because then my people might forget the lesson. Use your power to make them homeless vagabonds and then bring them down, O Lord who shields us!"

- **Psalm 59:17** - "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy."

"mercy" = *checed* - mercy, loving kindness, favor

This points us to the *kappôreth*, the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant - also described in Exodus 25, along with the goat's hair Tabernacle coverings (above).