

### I Samuel

#### Lesson 31 - Chapter 18 and 19

Because it's been awhile since our last lesson, let's begin by re-reading 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 18 in its entirety.

#### **RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 18 all**

The chapter begins with the story of a strong personal and spiritual bond being formed between David, and Saul's son Y'honatan. From the spiritual perspective, I likened this to being the same kind of covenant bond that ought to exist among all of members of God's earthly church. A bond based on a mutual link of love between us all and our Savior and God, Yeshua. From a personal perspective, however, it was certainly a matter of choice and preference between the two men whether they would be mere acquaintances, fast friends, or they might even avoid each other. In other words, despite the spiritual bond that links all Believers we certainly don't also share a common or equal "like" for everyone we come into contact with who calls him or herself a Christian (and unfortunately we tend to mix-up these two dynamics). Rather, we find people to connect with who have certain personality traits that we admire or certain interests or backgrounds that we share; and there are others with whom we really just don't connect because we have nothing else in common other than our love of the Lord. That's perfectly normal and fine in God's eyes.

The bottom line is that the link that connects all Believers is through Christ (like the hub at the center of a wheel) not Believer to Believer. However Jonathan and David were drawn toward one another and they wanted to establish a lifelong bond of friendship. The Scripture makes it clear that it was certain outstanding character traits of each that was the catalyst. Little did Jonathan know at the time that he would soon have to choose between his father King Saul and the God-anointed king-in-waiting David. And this inevitable trajectory should not surprise us because after all David was the prototype of the God established Messiah of the future while King Saul was the prototype of the anti-King/anti-Christ of the future.

While it is mankind's way (even in the institutional church) to constantly seek a means to get along with and befriend a wicked and perverse world at the same time that we profess absolute dedication to walk in the paths of a good and perfect Savior, in the end God will polarize mankind to such an extent as Jonathan would soon experience (and I think we see that happening at an accelerating rate in our time). That is to say that as much as we prefer one foot in our familiar temporal world and the other in an invisible eternal heaven, and often it does seem possible (although it is an illusion) to straddle that great divide, eventually that divide grows into a Grand Canyon-sized abyss and circumstances force us to choose to stand with both feet on one side and thus completely abandon the other. Ultimately Jonathan would not be able to maintain loyalty to both his father and his friend although he would struggle mightily to do so for some amount of time.

In verse 4 when Jonathan gave David his cloak, armor and weapons, it was a two-fold gesture; 1<sup>st</sup> was to seal the covenant of friendship between he and David and 2<sup>nd</sup> was to put himself on an equal (if not to some degree lesser) political level with David. This was not an act of submission, as some might suggest, rather it was an almost intuitive if not prophetic admission of David's special nature and relationship with the God of Israel. As Saul's eldest son Jonathan was by custom the natural heir to the throne. Royalty wore distinctive clothing to separate themselves from commoners and visibly announce their status. When Jonathan took his garment of royalty off and put it onto to David, it was well understood by the King, his court, and all who knew about it what that gesture meant. This was but the first of several similar events that served to unnerve Saul and make him murderously jealous of David.

The next event that shook Sha'ul is stated quite succinctly in verse 5: ***“David would go out, and no matter where Sha'ul sent him he was successful”***. This reality served to further elevate Saul's suspicions and paranoia because often David wasn't supposed to be successful; he was supposed to be killed by the enemy in battle. Politics (and politicians) being pretty much the same since the beginning of humanity, King Saul had little choice but to keep elevating David's level of military stature to appease his court and his subjects (because his prowess and battle record was obvious to everyone who witnessed it and the legends that grew from it). In no time at all David became both publically popular and politically powerful.

Soon David was again fighting the dreaded Philistines, and again he won handily. As the military victory parade wound its way back to the city of Gibeah (where King Saul's palace was located), from his perch on his regal chariot the King overhead the songs of some women admirers comparing David to Saul and they saw David as the Rock Star and King Saul as just a member of the band. “Saul has killed his thousands” they sing, “but David his tens of thousands”. This infuriated the King, who was supposed to get all the credit for his nation's military victories. It was fine for the people to honor a good soldier and leader such as David, but never to glorify him above the King. Combined with the earlier events this one seemed to cement in Saul a lethal distrust in David that, in the world of kings and potentates, meant there was little choice but to do away with this potential rival.

As we go along today I would like you to keep in the mind the pattern that is being painted: the king versus the anti-king, the deliverer versus the anti-deliverer, and the evil spirit possessed man against the God-anointed elect. Of course we see this pattern played out about 1000 years later as Yeshua makes His 1<sup>st</sup> earthly appearance and is immediately confronted by the evil King Herod and later by the Prince of the Air, Satan himself.

In verse 10 the scene shifts to Saul's palace and David is there playing the lyre. David is not only the King's chief musician he is also a well-known military leader now and so is in front of not only of the King's inner court but also the public. Try as Saul might to push David to the rear and even to kill him, everything is thwarted and David just keeps gaining the loyalty and admiration not only of the people but even of the King's own family! Thus as David is quietly playing music to soothe one of Saul's infamous dark moods, suddenly the King throws his spear at David with the intent of pinning him to the wall; twice it happened and both times David was agile enough to dodge the deadly missile.

We'll see as we move along that Saul's spear was always in his hand. This was not usual for a king; normally a king held his royal scepter as the symbol of his power. But for Saul his spear had become his scepter. This weapon of death was Saul's emblem. Sha'ul had literally come to fear David because while he didn't know that David had already been consecrated as Israel's king by Yehoveh, he did recognize a threat to the throne. David was able and immensely popular; the worst sort to have near the king (especially if the king sensed that he couldn't manipulate this fellow or match the adoration the public held for David).

Verse 15 continues an underlying and terribly important theme of the story of David and Saul; in the end Saul was afraid of David because Yehoveh was with David. And David was successful in all of his endeavors for the same reason. God being with David (and at the same time being opposed to Saul) is the **reason** that all of what we see happening, happens. Remember that Samuel had informed Saul that he was no longer the legitimate King of Israel, but Saul's response was to ignore the Lord and fight to keep his throne. And since Samuel was God's Word (God's oracle) on earth to King Saul (representing God's presence with Saul), and Samuel had permanently separated himself from King Saul, Saul understood to some level or another that he had lost contact with God. He also seemed to comprehend that what he formerly possessed for himself (God's spirit) was now removed from him and resting upon David. But as much as Saul feared David, the people of both Israel and Judah loved David because of his victorious exploits. No doubt the obvious contrast between Saul's demeanor and character and David's also played a role in their ever-growing adulation of David.

Here is a good time for me to reiterate something very key from here on in the Bible: Israel and Judah are mentioned separately because they were seen as separate tribal coalitions (and later kingdoms) almost from the minute the 12 tribes stepped foot into Canaan ending their exodus from Egypt. The northern coalition of tribes (that would eventually count 10 of the 12 as belonging among them) was here being called "Israel", while the southern tribal coalition of Simeon and Judah were being called "Judah". Thus as we get further along into the ending chapters of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel, and then proceed into 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, we're going to see David forced to deal with this centuries-old political reality by first becoming king over the southern tribal coalition (headed by his own tribe, Judah) and then only later over the northern coalition. The result would finally be a unified sovereign nation of all 12 tribes; a nation recognized by her neighbors as being a legitimate nation for the first time in history. The nation was called "Israel" but that would only last a mere 80 years until David's son King Solomon died and a civil war split the nation of Israel back into the two kingdoms or coalitions that were traditional.

At first those two kingdoms re-incorporated the use of their former names: Israel in the north, Judah in the south. But in a matter of only a handful of decades the north STOPPED calling themselves "Israel" and instead began calling themselves "Ephraim". This reflected the new reality that the tribe of Ephraim had become the most powerful, and the other northern tribes more or less submitted to Ephraim's overwhelming domination. It was standard Middle Eastern practice for a territory to be named after the most dominant tribe residing there, so it was natural that the northern region would eventually be called Ephraim. The southern region retained the name Judah because Judah remained the dominant tribe in that territory (as it had been since shortly after Joshua led the Israelite forces over the Jordan River). This important

piece of history plays a pivotal role in redemption history right on up to today and even into the future. Not too long from now I hope to repeat an updated seminar on the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel that addresses this matter in depth.

In verse 17 Saul begins a series of 2 attempts to get rid of David by means of offering David first his older and then younger daughters. It is a cunning plan because on the surface, for David, it appears that he was but finally receiving the agreed to prize for his killing of Goliath.

***CJB 1 Samuel 17:25 The soldiers from Israel said [to each other], "You saw that man who just came up? He has come to challenge Israel. To whoever kills him, the king will give a rich reward; he'll also give him his daughter and exempt his father's family from all service and taxes in Israel."***

Saul's idea, then, is to use his daughter as means of treachery to both spy on David and to be a snare to him. So Saul offers his daughter **Merav** but the offer comes with hook and a raising of the bar. Saul promised to give his daughter to the Israelite soldier who slew Goliath but now says he wants David to continue "fighting Adonai's battles". In other words now that David has killed Goliath for him, Sha'ul wants David's promise to continue being a battlefield commander who fights alongside his men (with the obvious intent that sooner or later David would get killed). I'd like to focus for a moment on that part of Saul's statement where he refers to "fighting Yehoveh's battles". Saul invoked the Lord as a means of masking his real intentions and at the same time making himself appear pious. While in one sense indeed the centuries-long battle for Canaan was an ongoing Holy War, in another sense not every battle or cause of conflict against gentile nations in that region met that high standard. Holy War had God-ordained rules, and a battle under that lofty banner had to be God-led.

The battles that Saul sent David to fight (usually against the Philistines) were the result of ulterior motives by Saul. It was not for the purpose of conducting Holy War under God's direction, often it was for the purpose of Saul carrying out a personal agenda. This is a warning to us. We and the leadership in God's church tend to carelessly bandy the Lord's name about when trying to get someone to do something we think ought to be done, or as a means of attaching a measure of holiness or divine acceptance to an assignment or project we're determined to see accomplished. In other words the name of God is invoked as a kind of manipulation, or as a means to forestall any debate because (for example) if your Pastor says the Lord wants you to lead a project to raise money and construct a new building, who can argue with it? We should be very reticent in using the Lord's name as a means of pressuring others to sign on to something we think is good or perhaps advantageous; and we should be equally as reticent in automatically accepting that if a church authority has an instruction for us that they say is "from the Lord", that it is truly so.

David gives to a Saul a rather typical Middle Eastern response to when someone (especially a person of higher status) makes such a generous offer (in this case of his daughter in marriage), and so it is simply dripping in somewhat exaggerated humility. "Who am I that I should become the King's son in law?" he replies. Recall, however, that back in the Valley of Elah, the shepherd David was running around asking every Israelite soldier who would talk to him if it was true that Saul had offered money, tax freedom for the family, and the King's

daughter in marriage to the man who killed Goliath. David wanted to be certain of those rewards before he went out to face the Philistine giant. So we must take David's response to Saul's offer with a grain of salt.

As part of his reply to Saul, David continues to deflect the offer by saying that his family has no rank in Israel. But is that really true? We know from earlier passages that **Yishai**, David's father, was of the ruling clan of Judah and reasonably well to do. Again this is where we must notice the context of the words: indeed while David's family DOES have rank in Judah (the southern tribal coalition), it does NOT have rank (influence) in Israel (the northern coalition of tribes). David is aware that Judah is not well-regarded by the north. Judah is, in general, less wealthy than Israel and far smaller in population because so much of Judah consists of the desert regions. They have no sea ports and they have no tribal rights to the riches of the Sea of Galilee. The north is heavily involved in trade and a variety of industries, Judah is primarily involved in raising flocks and herds and in tending orchards and vineyards. So despite the customary self-effacing nature of David's response, there is also his own concern that he might not be very accepted by the tribes of the north, Israel, and this could cause a real problem for the king.

Without explanation we're told that when it came time for the formal giving of Merav to David, Saul changed his mind and gave Merav to someone else. However in the meantime another of Saul's daughters had fallen in love with David: Michal. Now many Bible commentators speculate (and I think with merit) that likely Merav was not anxious to marry David, but Michal was, and so Saul gave-in and used Merav to form some type of sought after alliance with this **Adriel the Mecholati** (which is what the marriage of daughters of kings was usually all about). Mecholah is thought to be a place near the Jordan River, possibly on the east side in Gad's territory. All we really know is that Adriel is the son of a fellow named **Barzillai**, and apparently this family was important to Saul.

Again we see in verse 21 that Saul's hope was to use Michal as a means to entrap and kill David, not to honorably conclude his promise to the soldier who killed Goliath. Michal loving David was an opportunity for Saul, but once again the Lord would intervene and turn matters on their head. Saul's family was, one-by-one, giving their loyalty to David; first Jonathan, now Michal.

It is interesting that THIS time Saul didn't approach David directly but used some representatives to speak to David about Michal. Without doubt Saul is putting David in his place by not coming to him as a father would to a potential son in law. And of course the servants' message is full of disingenuous flattery: "The king is pleased with you and all his servants (meaning his court) love you". David again in typical Middle East fashion counters that it is an important matter for a man to marry the king's daughter, and so obviously a bride-price fitting a king would be necessary. But David doesn't have any wealth of his own, so he has no means to pay anything. The messengers go back to Saul with this information and Saul tells them to return to David and tell him that no bride-price of material wealth is needed. Rather, David should go and kill 100 Philistines and present King Saul with their foreskins (an example, I think, of when a battle against Israel's enemies isn't necessarily being conducted as Holy War). When David was informed of this counter-offer he immediately accepted Michal



as his bride.

David, because of his character, hurried (even before it was necessary) and went out and killed a bunch of Philistines. Most Bible versions say that he was so pious and honorable that he killed 200 Philistines (instead of merely the 100 that was agreed to) and brought their foreskins to Saul. However when we look at 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 3:14 it says that David only supplied 100 foreskins. Or does it?

***CJB 2 Samuel 3:14 David sent messengers to say to Ish-Boshet the son of Sha'ul, "Give me back my wife Mikhal. I betrothed her to myself for 100 foreskins of the P'lishtim."***

Many Bible scholars point to this as an obvious contradiction to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 18:27. Perhaps. But on the other hand, I think that what is being said in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel is merely that the agreed-to betrothal price was 100 foreskins of the Philistines. That David brought his new father in law 200 foreskins (indicating the deaths of 200 Philistine soldiers) is rather beside the point (the extra 100 was NOT part of the bride-price, it was like a gift).

This chapter ends by expressing Sha'ul's extreme frustration with the David issue. Everything he tries to counteract David goes awry. Despite Saul's best efforts David's rise was meteoric: from Shepherd to Champion, from Champion to Court Musician, from Court Musician to deft warrior, from deft warrior to popular hero, then a commander of a large force and now part of the King's own family through marriage. And while in earlier times the Philistines had so much success in attacking Israel, now with David on the scene all Israel knew was victory.

Things couldn't have been worse for King Saul.

Let's move on to chapter 19.

### **READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 19:1 - 10**

David was now Saul's official enemy, and Saul was no longer hiding that fact. He became obsessed with killing David. Thus Saul made the smart political move and made David not just his personal enemy but the kingdom's enemy. Saul's attempts to get David killed at the hand of the Philistines had failed; so now he would take a more direct approach and make it a standing order that anyone who could ought to kill David.

Sha'ul either didn't understand that others didn't share his hatred of David, or he miscalculated his own popularity. Either way when Saul instructed Jonathan (along with some others) to go and kill David, Jonathan immediately ran to tell David of the plot. Apparently Saul didn't fathom the depth of the bond between his son and David. Jonathan found himself defending David, which put him against his own father. But from a spiritual level it was a matter of Jonathan choosing to side with God's anointed king over the illegitimate king. This is that abyss I spoke of to begin our lesson. Jonathan had been living with one foot in Saul's camp and the other in David's, but the gulf between the two was widening. Soon a gut wrenching choice would be required of Jonathan. Following God's anointed is never painless; it would come with a cost.

***CJB Matthew 10:34 "Don't suppose that I have come to bring peace to the Land. It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword!<sup>35</sup> For I have come to set<sup>36</sup> a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, so that a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.***

***CJB John 16:1 "I have told you these things so that you won't be caught by surprise.<sup>2</sup> They will ban you from the synagogue; in fact, the time will come when anyone who kills you will think he is serving God!<sup>3</sup> They will do these things because they have understood neither the Father nor me.<sup>4</sup> But I have told you this, so that when the time comes for it to happen, you will remember that I told you.***

Jonathan's first step is to try and mediate between the two sides. But he is worried about the outcome so he sets up a meeting between him and his father in a private place, a field in the countryside. Jonathan tells David to go and hide nearby so that the results of the meeting can be quickly transmitted to David in case things go badly.

Jonathan tries logic and rational thought to persuade his father that David ought to be treated as anything but an enemy of Israel. He tells the king that David has committed no trespass against him, and in fact has been wonderfully good towards king and kingdom. He's been brave; he personally led battles against the Philistines and won victory after victory. David has been fully loyal to Saul.

Jonathan concludes that if his father agrees that David has done no wrong, then should King Saul follow through with his death threat that it would bring blood guilt upon Saul. Blood guilt is one of the classes of sins whereby the Law provides no means to atone. No sacrifice will do, no substitute can be made, and no gift can be given. God will accept only the blood (the life) of the one who committed the crime of blood as proper justice. Thus Saul, operating under the Law of Moses, would be condemned. But as Numbers and Deuteronomy point out, the very land and nation upon which bloodguilt occurs will also bear the curse unless they act to punish the criminal and that action can be no less than death. So if Saul insists on killing David even Saul's kingdom will bear the brunt of God's fury. And the only solution for it will be to execute the king!

Jonathan's argument is persuasive and so in verse 6 Saul swears an oath: "As YHWH lives, he shall not be killed!" Saul has just dug his spiritual grave deeper (if that's even possible). Saul has sworn to Jonathan a vow and sealed it with God as the guarantor of the vow. It carries as much weight as did that rash vow that Jephthah made back in the days of the Judges (that cost his daughter's life). It was a lie. Saul had no intention of keeping that vow; he probably only made it as a deception because the passion with which Jonathan presented David's defense made it clear to Saul that Jonathan sided with David. So Saul made this vow in front of Jonathan so that Jonathan would think all has been straightened out.

Jonathan who is none the wiser goes to David and tells him all is well. So convinced is he of his father's repentance and sincerity that he even brings David to Saul! And Saul allows David back into the court, so that things appeared to be back on an even keel.

Let's stop here for today and we'll pick up next time as Saul makes yet another attempt on David's life.