

## Day 90 1 Sam 16.1 -17.58

### The Commissioning of David

1 Sam 16.1ff The Lord calls Samuel from his mourning for Saul, and sends him to anoint a new heir to the throne. He sends Samuel ‘under-cover’ of sacrificing to the Lord, and brings him to the house of Jesse, a descendant of the tribe of Judah, grandson of Ruth and Boaz. He calls Jesse and his sons to the feast.

As Samuel looks at Jesse’s fine sons, he thinks any number of them could be king, but the Lord reminds Samuel that it is not the looks that matter – after all, Saul was head and shoulders above other men – but the heart that counts, the inner being, the character (v.7)

Samuel is so sensitive to the voice of the Lord that he goes through all seven of those presented to him without finding the candidate. He asks Jesse who else there is, and Jesse reveals that the youngest is still out with the sheep. When he arrives, this handsome, rugged young man, the Lord speaks the word, ‘This is the one.’ Samuel anoints David with oil, the one whose name means ‘loving’ (Heb דָּוִד *Da-vid*) and, as with Saul before, the Spirit of God ‘breaks out’ upon David, (Heb וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ יְהוָה אֶל-דָּוִד *va-titzlach ruach-Adonai (YHWH) el-David*) and is with him from then on.

It is of note that again God brings the least significant to the fore for his purposes. David is not the eldest; keeping sheep was not a worthy occupation, it was a ‘had to be done’ task. But David had been trained and shaped through it, as will become apparent shortly.

1 Sam 16.14ff We find Saul tormented. The Holy Spirit has left him, and here again, the term ‘evil spirit from the Lord’ is used, which is hard for us to reconcile with a God of grace and love. However, the evil spirit is not frustrating good purposes in Saul, whom God has rejected as king; rather it is feeding from Saul’s sin and selfishness, to which Saul is giving himself. Thus, God will use Saul’s rebellion to further His purposes, albeit with a demonic oppression. We just need to learn that God has all things under His rule, including the curse of evil.

Saul’s servants recommend Saul’s rages be soothed by some music. It just happens that David is a great harpist, and so Saul takes him into his household and employs him to play when the evil spirit plagues him – God therefore has used Saul’s anger and bitterness as an opportunity to install His key man into the flow of the story of His planetary purpose. And David’s Holy Spirit-anointed playing drives away the darkness from his employer.

1 Sam 17.1ff The Philistines again mass their armies to try and regain power over the territory of Judah. The lines are drawn up between Israel and Philistia in the Valley of Elah, a river valley descending from the Judean hills to the Philistine plain below.

The valley is at about 900' above sea level. (Co-ordinates 31.40.54N 34.59.20E )  
 The armies square up to each other either side of the valley. A giant of a man named Goliath from nearby Gath challenges the Israelites to send a champion who will fight him and decide the whole battle on the strength of one-to-one combat with him.

The Israelites are in panic; they do not have a match for the Philistine warrior.

1 Sam 17.12ff While David's three eldest brothers are part of the army, David has been shuttling back and forth between his service to Saul and continuing to shepherd Jesse's flocks. He is away at Bethlehem when Goliath makes his challenge, every day for nearly six weeks. When he arrives with provisions from Jesse for his brothers, the armies are setting up for a full confrontation. At this point, Goliath again shouts his challenge, and David watches as the Israelites back off in fear.

Saul has offered rich rewards to the Israelite who takes on and defeats Goliath – personal wealth, the hand of his daughter in marriage and no more taxes for his family!

David is insensed at the insult which Goliath represents, not just to his people, but to the Lord his God, the living God (Heb. אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים *Elohim chayyim* – literally, the God of life.) His eldest brother Eliab tears him off a strip for criticizing the apparent weakness of the Israelites, and accuses him of arrogance. But David doesn't give up.

1 Sam.17.32ff David goes to his master, Saul and offers himself for the challenge. Saul laughs off the suggestion, as David is just a boy. But David then reveals his qualifications to stand against Goliath. He has faced a bear and a lion in his keeping the sheep safe for his father, and has succeeded against them. The Lord will also deliver him from Goliath's sword.

Saul consents, and they dress him up in armour, which stifles him. He throws off the armour, and goes out to face the Philistine with just a sling. He takes five smooth stones from the Elah brook in the valley, and goes to fight.

This is one of the most enduring images of the whole Scripture; the tiny figure of young David, standing before the towering might of Goliath. It has been the inspiration for countless enterprises which seem doomed from the start, and has passed into the language even of unbelievers to describe the triumph of the underdog over the bullies of power.

1 Sa. 17.41ff Goliath is insulted that a boy is being sent against him, and he curses David. But David proclaims the Lord as the One in whose name he dares to come. His words are all of faith, all of glory to the Rescuer-God. They move us still.

כִּי-לֹא בְחַרְבַּ וּבַחֲנִית יְהוֹשִׁיעַ יְהוָה: כִּי לַיהוָה הַמִּלְחָמָה, וְנָתַן אֶתְכֶם בְּיַדְנוּ

(Above is read right to left)

*Ki lo be-cherev u-ve-chanit yehoshia Adonai (YHWH) ki lAdonai haMilchamah*

For not in sword and in spear will save the Lord for to the Lord the battle

*Ve-natan etkhem be-yadenu*

& he will give you in our hands

1 Sam 17.48ff As Goliath approaches, with a swift movement, David fires a stone with deadly accuracy and embeds it into Goliath's brain, felling him completely. As he lies out cold, David hews off the man's head with his own sword.

The battle is decisive, and the Philistines flee, their champion destroyed. The Israelites rout the enemy and plunder their camp.

Saul finally takes an interest in this young man; he has evidently forgotten or failed to recall whose family David comes from – but he now needs to know, for Israel will be in his father's debt for years to come!

## **Day 91 1 Samuel 18 to 20, Psalm 59**

### **David befriended by Jonathan, attacked by Saul**

Saul as a king bereft of God's authority and subject to hideous rage is a volatile character. Although he has made a practice of enlisting brave warriors to his forces, David's popularity becomes a threat to him. Ironically Jonathan, Saul's son, becomes strong friends with David, bringing the threat even closer to home for Saul. In this atmosphere, David becomes a target.

18.1ff The devoted friendship of two men is a strength and a joy. Jonathan's heart is knitted (Heb נִקְשָׁרָה *niqsherah*, from root *qashar* meaning to bind or tie closely) to David's, he sees in him admirable and loveable qualities, and he establishes a firm friendship with him sealed by covenant. (Heb. בְּרִית *Berit*) As signs of covenant between them, Jonathan gives David symbols of his devotion, his own coat, robe, sword, bow and belt, also symbols of protection to David. This protection will later be called upon by David.

At this stage, Saul takes David to live permanently into his household.

18.5ff David becomes a successful warrior, and is given high rank. However, even as soon as the return home from the felling of Goliath, a chant is set up by the women;

## הָכָה שְׂאוּל בְּאַלְפֹו, וְדָוִד בְּרִבְבֹתָיו

(Above is read right to left)

*Hikkah Shaul ba'alaphav, ve -Da-vid be-rihb'hotav*

Killed Saul his thousands and David his tens of thousands.

Saul is taken with jealousy, seeing David as a threat to his kingship, especially since he is now on the lookout for anyone who will try and remove him from power following Saul's words of rejection from God. Next day, as David is playing his harp for Saul, in his rage the king twice tries to spear David to the wall, but David escapes.

18.12ff Saul sends David away with a regiment of a thousand, hoping the adulation will fade, but all his campaigns are successful, because the Holy Spirit is remaining with David, but has left Saul. The nation loves this hero, while Saul fears his popularity.

18.17ff. Keeping his promise to the champion who killed Goliath, Saul offers his daughter, Merab's, hand in marriage to David. All the time, Saul is hoping David will be finished off by the Philistines.

However, David refuses the honour, seeing his family as unworthy to be linked to royalty.

But the king hears that Michal, his second daughter is in love with David, and tries to persuade him through his advisers to accept her. But David protests his humble background, and refuses. He would not, anyway, be able to offer any kind of King's bride-price.

Saul now devises a plan which will make him look good, and hopefully will finish David off. He sets a quest. Saul names the bride-price for Michal, the sum he will accept to release Michal to David which is two hundred Philistine foreskins. Saul hopes that this will bring David into such danger, that he will die in the attempt. However, David and his men succeed, and the gory, unsavoury trophies are presented, against Saul's hopes, and Michal becomes David's wife. Saul is realizing that David has divine approval (as Saul once did) to protect him in such circumstances, and becomes even more intimidated by David's rise.

19.1ff Saul's anger now turns to murderous intent, and he commands Jonathan and his servants to kill David. Warning David of the threat, and telling him to hide, Jonathan protests David's innocence and good service to his father. As a result of this appeal, Saul vows that he will not harm David.

19.8ff David is successful in another campaign against the Philistines, and gains more renown. But Saul makes a further attempt on his life while he is playing for the king, and David realises he needs to remove himself from the danger.

Guards are placed on David's house, but Michal warns him, and he gets away through a window. She puts a dummy in the bed, which, when discovered by Saul's men, infuriates him. Michal makes out that David threatened her life in order to escape. The intrigue in Saul's household is growing deeper.

David makes for Samuel's home at Ramah, whence they both go to hide out in Naioth, Samuel's birthplace.

### **Psalm 59**

It is at this point that the first of David's psalms is introduced. These are songs, to be sung with musical accompaniment, and with a skilful balance maintained between phrases for poetic effect. This is the song that David wrote, according to the introduction, when Saul had his house watched to kill him.

v.1ff In the instructions for this psalm, we find it is sung to a tune 'Do not destroy.' This may have been a song already in existence, whose tune David takes for this song to God. It is a *mikhtam* (Heb. מִכְתָּם *mikhtam* from root *khatam* meaning to inscribe or engrave.) that is, an inscription or a poem.

David calls out for the Lord to deliver him, (Heb. הַצִּילֵנִי *Hatzileni*, from root *natzal* meaning to snatch away, set free.) because he is feeling hemmed in.

The Psalm makes clear the threat of those who are pursuing him, but David's confidence is in the Lord.

v.9,10 The Lord is David's strength, the God of *chesed* (Heb. חֶסֶד) the sacrificial self-obligation of God to His covenant, which David is relying on. Some translation have 'loving God' here, but the concept is God who is faithful to his promises.

This God will not allow the enemy to triumph, even though they go about prowling after him like dogs.

v.16 David returns to the theme of God's strength and His covenant loyalty, which act as his defence. He repeats this call again at the last verse of the Psalm.

### **David Flees from Saul**

1 Sam .19.19ff Returning to the story in Samuel, Saul hears that David is hiding out at Ramah, and sends troops after them. In a strange and wonderful sign, as the troops come into sight of the school of prophets Samuel leads, all involved in a time of abandonment to the Spirit of the Lord to hear from Him, the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Saul's men, and they begin to behave ecstatically, overwhelmed by the desire to speak out God's words. Three times Saul sends more men, each time the same thing happens. Saul is so insensed at this, that he comes himself to Naioth, but on the way, the Holy Spirit falls even on him, and he acts in a most unkingly way, taking off his robes and lying in an ecstatic trance all night, bubbling out the words of God, giving another reason for the saying, 'Is Saul also a prophet?'

This Scripture gives an insight into the operation of the Holy Spirit among the Old Testament prophets. First, Samuel seems to have a school at Naioth; secondly, the nature of the prophecy is not rational, elegant speech, but is charismatic, ecstatic expression, which takes the prophet into a place of intense intimacy with the Spirit of God Himself.

20.1ff David now escapes Saul's pursuit at Naioth-Ramah, and makes contact with Jonathan, protesting his innocence of wrongs against his father, and revealing Saul's death-threats against him.

Jonathan is shocked at the suggestion that his father would try and kill David, but David wises Jonathan up, saying that Saul has been hiding his intentions from Jonathan so as not to offend him, but David swears to Jonathan that Saul is after his life.

Jonathan agrees to help; David asks Jonathan to let him know his father's reaction at the New Moon feast the following day when David is supposed to be there. Jonathan will give David's apologies, for family reasons. If Saul is accepting of them, all seems well. If Saul is angry, Jonathan will know it is because Saul intends to harm David.

David then backs up his claims of innocence by calling on Jonathan to kill him there and then if he thinks he has wronged his father. But they are covenanted together, and in response, Jonathan invokes the covenant obligation from David, the *chesed* he has promised, to deal faithfully with him and his children, whatever the outcome of this feud with his father. Jonathan calls on this loyalty not only for himself, but also for his descendants, for Jonathan knows how this is playing out, and that his father is losing his grip on the throne. Jonathan will also be aware that kings have a habit of wiping out their rivals when they come to power.

They both reaffirm their commitment to each other, at this dire juncture in the story.

20.18ff David and Jonathan now plan their communication for the next day; if Saul is intent on harming David, the signal will be three arrows fired further than the position his servant takes up on the field near the Ezel rock. They part with Jonathan reminding David of their covenant, which David will live to fulfil.

20.24ff On the second day of David's absence from the royal table, Jonathan tenders David's apologies, at which Saul flies into a rage, and insults his son, accusing him of siding with David, to the detriment of his future kingdom. When Jonathan defends David to his father, Saul makes an attempt on his son's life. The prince now realises his father's full contempt for David and his murderous intent.

20.35ff True to his word, Jonathan goes out next day, and gives the agreed signal, warning David to flee. David cannot part without embracing his closest friend, bowing down in honour before him. They weep in each other's arms, David the most. They part with a reminder again from Jonathan that they will always be brothers in covenant, they and their descendants.

There is such tenderness and power in this strong bond, the kind of bond which would live and die sacrificially for a brother. It is a model for us of the strong love of brothers, bound in covenant, unbroken even by family loyalties, which calls us to lay down lives for our friends.

The power of the covenant is very instructive for us, also, in terms of understanding the strength of the bond God has made with us, which is renewed in Christ.

## **Day 92 1 Sam 21 , 2 Sam 1 -5, Psalms 56, 34, 142 and 1 Chron. 12.8-18**

### **David the Fugitive**

1 Sam 21.1-6 David takes refuge at Nob, where the priests are based, in the territory of Benjamin, not far from modern Jerusalem. Here, he seeks Ahimelech's help, although he is not honest with the priest, who is terrified at this approach, maybe fearing some violence.

David, presumably afraid that Ahimelech will blow his cover and tell the king, pretends that he is on secret errand for Saul, and on his way to meet non-existent compadres. He is looking for food, so Ahimelech offers him all he has, loaves that have been in the tabernacle before the Lord, so long as David and his 'men' are clean. David promises the priest that he (and his phantom troop) are clean, and David gets away with the bread for his sustenance.

21.7ff Unfortunately, Saul's chief shepherd Doeg, who is there to worship, overhears the interchange between David and Saul, and reports back to Saul. Before David leaves Nob, he is also given Goliath's sword, which has been kept there as a trophy, for a weapon, with which he is pleased.

21.10f David now flees to the place he will be least looked for, to Achish the Philistine King of Gath. But Achish knows his reputation well, and David finds himself again in danger for his life before his old enemies.

### **Psalm 56.**

#### **David's Prayer in Danger**

This Psalm is set at the time when David is hiding out in Gath, and he is cornered there by the Philistines.

It is a cry for God's favour; he calls out 'Show me your favour, O God'

(Heb. חַנְנֵי אֱלֹהִים *Chaneni Elohim* from the root, *chanan*, to show favour.) This corresponds to God's declaration of His own character, *The God of compassion and favour* (Heb. אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן *El Rachum ve Chanun*) so David is confident in this prayer. He is not asking for something that God is unwilling to be to Him.

Although he is pursued by men, at home and away from home, his trust remains in God.  
Men seek his harm, but God will vindicate.

56.8 There is a very tender insight into David's situation here; he is a man of tears, as we have already seen, as well as a man of bravery. He asks the Lord to record his sorrowful song, and to keep his tears in a wineskin or a bottle (some translations have *on your scroll*) as a testimony to his depth of emotion.

He sees his enemies turned back in faith, and sees himself as delivered by the God who brings him the light of life.

### David plays crazy

1 Sam 21.13-15 David hits on an idea to turn the wrath of the Philistines away from him; he feigns a mental breakdown, going 'crazy' before Achish and his court, scratching the woodwork and dribbling on his beard.

The words the writer uses here for 'while he was in their hands he went crazy' are in Hebrew **וַיִּתְהַלֵּל בְּיָדָם** *Ve-yit-halel be-yadam*

The word *yit-halel* is from the root, *halal*, to boast, praise, and gives the feel of that word to us, since we use it ourselves in the term 'Hallelujah', meaning 'Praise the Lord.' However, given its use in this context for David's feigning madness, we would be justified in rendering 'Hallelujah' as 'go crazy about the Lord', which communicates the exuberance and excitement conveyed in the original language.

As a result, Achish dismisses David from his house, saying he already has enough crazies about the place!

### Psalm 34 –Let's Go Crazy about God

Given the previous story, it is worth reading this Psalm at this juncture, the introduction to which explains that this was written when he 'changed his behaviour' before Abimelech, which is probably a generic term for a foreign king, referring back to Abraham's encounter in Gen 20, in this case, Achish of Gath, as a result of which he was expelled.

It is a psalm of praise and blessing; note particularly verse 2

**בִּיהוָה, תִּתְהַלֵּל נַפְשִׁי ; שְׁמְעוּ עֲנָוִים וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ**

(Above is read right to left)

*B'Adonai(YHWH) tit-halel naphshi, yishme'u anavim ve-yismachu*

In the Lord will be crazy my being they'll hear, the poor, and they'll rejoice

‘Will be crazy’ is my gloss, but in the light of the foregoing events, the pun is allowable.

It is a psalm rejoicing in the Lord’s protection , whose eyes are watching the upright, and will deliver him from the wicked.

### **David at Adullam**

1 Sam 22.1,2 David takes refuge in the cave of Adullam, east of the Philistine lands, not far from the valley of Elah where Goliath was slain. Here his family come to him, and join with him, (presumably they are under threat from pursuit by Saul as well) but also those who were oppressed in some way through debt or discontent.

### **Psalm 142**

This Psalm, in its introduction, places its time of writing at the time when David was in the cave. It is a *Maskil* (Heb. מִשְׁכִּיל from root שָׁכַל *sakhal*, meaning to instruct, thus it is a song of instruction.)

The psalm tells of David’s cry to the Lord from a tight place, appealing to the Lord for his *favour* once again, telling the Lord his trouble.

There is a real sense of loneliness in this song, even though David has companions with him, he is in a place of isolation. But he takes refuge in the Lord, who is his *mach’seh* (Heb. מַחֲסֵה from root *chasah* meaning to flee for protection.) and calls to Him for His rescue from those pursuing him.

### **Gadites Join David**

1 Chron 12. 8-18. David now has some encouragement as a number of Gadites from the east of Jordan territories defect and come to join him, significant warriors who have already proved their worth on the battlefield. They are joined by some men from the tribe of Benjamin and Judah, David’s own tribe.

When David questions their loyalty, the Spirit of the Lord gives one of them, Amasai, an utterance of commitment to David. For the second time in Scripture , the term used for this charismatic anointing is וְרוּחַ לְבָשָׂה אֶת-עַמְּשַׁי *ve-Ruach lav-shah et-‘Amasai*, that is, the Spirit clothed himself (though the verb is feminine in form in Hebrew, to agree with the feminine gender of *ruach*) with Amasai, or the Spirit put on Amasai (as a garment.) He then delivers the utterance;

לְךָ דָּוִד וְעִמָּךְ בֶּן-יֵשׁוּעַ שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְךָ וְשְׁלוֹם לְעִזְרָךְ כִּי עִזְרָךְ אֱלֹהֶיךָ

(Above is read right to left)

*Lekha Da-vid ve'imkha bhen-Yissai shalom shalom lekha veshalom le'ozrekha ki azorkha*

For you David and with you son of Jesse peace peace to you and wholeness to your helpers for your help

*Eloheykha*

is your God.

David recognises the Spirit of God's work, and receives them.

1 Sam. 22.3-5 David wants his aged parents to be safe, and so he asks the King of Moab, whom he trusts, to take care of them while David is hiding out. Following a word from the Lord through the prophet Gad, David leaves Adullam and moves to the forest of Cheret, to the south-east, towards Hebron.

**Day 93 1 Sam 22.6 – 25.1, Psalms 52, 63, 54, 57**

### **The Death of Ahimelech and the Priests**

1 Sam. 22.6-23 Saul is enraged that people of Israel are defecting to David, particularly those from his own tribe, the Benjamites. He complains that they are being traitors by hiding facts about David, until Doeg the Edomite informs on Ahimelech the priest, who helped David. Saul has him and his whole priestly family brought from Nob, accusing him of arming and feeding David. When Ahimelech protests David's loyalty to Saul, Saul commands the priest be summarily executed, along with his brothers and relatives. The soldiers of Saul then refuse to touch a man of God, and instead, Doeg and his men kill over eighty of the servants of the Lord and go on to destroy Nob, their town, and all in it.

News of this reaches David, through Ahimelech's son Abiathar, who managed to escape the carnage. David says he feared this would happen when he knew Doeg had been at Nob and overheard what David was doing. He invites the priest's son to take refuge with him and his people.

### **Psalm 52**

This maskil (instruction song) is written about Doeg's betrayal of David.

The first part rails against the evil done by this warrior, accusing him of having a deceitful tongue. God's judgment against him will be sure, because he has not made God his source, his refuge.

But David affirms his trust in the Lord, firm as an olive tree in God's house, trusting in his *chesed* obligation to His covenant.

### **David takes the town of Keilah**

1 Sam 23.1-14. David hears that the Philistines are attacking the nearby town of Keilah, and looting their grain stocks. It is of note that before he makes a move, David inquires of the Lord, seeking His guidance. When the word comes back to go and save them, David's men urge him not to go. So David inquires again, and the word is the same, and this time they advance, and defeat the Philistines at Keilah. We are told in verse 6 how David managed to seek the Lord; the priest's son, Abiathar, had brought with him in his flight from Saul the priest's shoulder-covers, which also contained the urim and thummim for discerning the Lord's will.

When Saul hears that David has taken refuge in the town of Keilah, he senses he has him trapped, in a walled city. But David hears of the move, and again seeks the Lord's guidance, and is told that if he remains there, he will be handed over to Saul. So he moves on, and escapes Saul's pursuit. He lives in the desert, pursued by Saul's men.

### **Psalm 63**

This psalm was written in the Judean desert, and reflects the harshness of the life David and his men are living as fugitives.

He seeks the Lord, in a dry, waterless land, remembering how he has encountered God in His holy place, now cut off from him. He knows that God's *chesed*, his covenant-obligation to him is of more value than his very life at the moment.(v3) and he lifts up his hands in thanksgiving. (The Hebrew word for thanks and the word for hand are related.)

At night, when he is sleepless, he sings, sensing God's covering wings over him. Those who pursue David's life will come to a just end, while praise and rejoicing are the destiny of God's faithful ones.

### **Jonathan visits David in hiding**

1 Sam.23.15-18 While David is in hiding at Horesh, he hears that Saul is determined to finish him off. But Jonathan, in an act of amazing bravery and devotion, comes to David and assures David that his father will not get to him. He foresees a day when David will be king, and Jonathan will be his right-hand man. On this basis, they covenant together and part. David must have found this such a refreshment to his heart. How terrible that Jonathan would not survive to see it fulfilled.

### **The Ziphites Help Saul**

1 Sam 23.19-25 The local Ziphite clan, who know the desert where David is hiding out, offer to help Saul track him down; Saul asks them to make a list of the locations David uses, and report back to him. With their help, Saul begins to close in on David.

## Psalm 54

David writes this Psalm as a response to the Ziphite collaboration with Saul.

It is a prayer for rescue to God; David opens with the words

אֱלֹהִים בְּשִׁמְךָ הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי *Elohim, be-shimkha hoshi-eni*

O God, in Your name, rescue me.

The words ‘rescue me’ is a plea for salvation and deliverance. Later, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, the people would cry *hosha-na*, rescue, now. David is feeling hemmed in and pursued.

But still, David’s confidence is in the Lord’s protection, since He has sustained him thus far through the challenges. The psalm ends with praise because David has seen how the Lord rescues from the darkest situations.

## Near Misses

1 Sam 23.26-29 On one occasion, Saul looks as if he is going to capture David, but an emergency calls him away to chase marauding Philistines out of the land, and David escapes.

1 Sam 24.1 -22 When Saul has dealt with the Philistine attack, he returns to the hunt, and gets information that David is in the desert down by the Dead Sea, at En Gedi. In an awesome scene of suspense, Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself, not knowing that David and his men are hiding out there. His men expect David to finish Saul off, but instead, David goes and just takes a corner of the indisposed king’s coat. Saul goes out, unaware of the closeness of his adversary to him. David tells his men that he cannot kill the anointed of the Lord. (After all, David himself has received the same anointing!)

David now reveals himself to Saul, and protests his innocence of any intention to harm Saul and bows in honour to Saul. He shows Saul the piece of cloth, and swears his allegiance to the king, appealing to the Lord to judge between them.

Saul, in an outburst of remorse, sees how close he has come to death at David’s hands, and realises David’s heart is clear. However, Saul also confesses that he knows David will be king, and calls on David to be merciful to his descendants, not killing them when he comes to power. Saul is unaware that David has already vowed as much to Jonathan, and David is willing to make that promise.

Saul gives up the pursuit, and returns to his home, while David goes back to his hideout.

## Psalm 57

This *miktam*, an inscription psalm, was written after David's experience in the cave with Saul. It is full of praise and confidence in the Lord, who delivers.

The Lord has rescued David, in response to his prayer; in verse 3, God has demonstrated both his *chesed*, his obligation under covenant, and his *emet* (Heb. אֱמֶת) This latter word often goes hand in hand with *chesed*, and means dependability, integrity and truth. It is another of the declared characteristics of God's nature revealed to Moses in Ex.34.6, when the Lord says He is 'abundant in *chesed* and *emet*.'

Despite the plots of his pursuers (v.6) David is able to sing from the start of the day, because God's *chesed* is great and His *emet* reaches to the skies. (v.10)

## Death of Samuel

1 Sam 25.1a Samuel, the last of the *Right-wisemen* of Israel dies, and Israel mourns him. He is buried in his home town of Ramah.

## Day 94 1 Sam 25 – 29.11, 1 Chron 12, 1 Sam 30

### The Wisdom of Abigail

1 Sam 25.1bff While David continues his life as a nomad and semi-outlaw, keeping out of Saul's way, he is living by getting support from wealthy people like Nabal, (Heb נָבָל *Nabhal* meaning 'a dolt, fool') a Calebite. But Nabal insults David's messengers, bringing David's wrath on him.

25.14ff However, Nabal's wife Abigail, 'intelligent and beautiful' interposes herself between David and her surly husband, offering provisions to David and his men.

25.23ff She pleads for mercy from David, saying her husband is as foolish as his name suggests. (v.25)

25.32ff David is impressed with Abigail's wisdom, and gives praise to God for her intervention, which has kept him from bloodguilt. He sends her away in peace, receiving the provisions she has provided.

25.36ff When Abigail finally tells Nabal how she has avoided their being attacked by David, the shock gives him a heart attack, from which he dies ten days later. When David hears of it, he gives thanks that God has vindicated his cause and judged Nabal, without David being guilty of murder.

25.39ff David wastes no time in asking the newly-widowed Abigail to be his third wife, having already married Michal, Saul's daughter, and Ahinoam from Jezreel. Michal,

however, in the aftermath of David's falling out of favour with Saul has been given to another man, Paltiel.

### David Outsmarts Saul Again

1 Sam 26. The Ziphites, Saul's spies, give him information that David is hiding out in the desert. Despite his earlier protestations of forgiveness, the treacherous Saul pursues David once more. This time, David makes a daring foray into Saul's camp itself, and steals Saul's spear and water-jug. David's man, Abishai, encourages him to kill Saul, but David will not touch the Lord's anointed.

From the other side of the valley, David taunts Abner, Saul's commander and bodyguard. He has not been protecting his master, and David shows off his booty from Saul. Saul overhears the exchange, and sees that once again he has been spared. He invites David to come and make peace, but David only agrees to return the spear via a messenger. He does not trust Saul, and the two part company again.

27.1-7 David is convinced Saul will pursue him again, and so he goes and hides out again among the Philistines, with Achish of Gath. David is given a whole city for himself, Ziklag, which continues to belong to the Jews from then on.

1 Chron 12.1-7 At Ziklag, David is joined by leading warriors defecting from Saul; some are even Saul's tribesmen, Benjamites.

27.8 – 28.2 While being afforded asylum with the Philistines, David and his marauding band carry out raids on the enemies of Israel to the south-west towards Egypt, in the northern Sinai peninsular. They leave no survivors, but take the livestock and booty for themselves. They then lie to the Philistines, that they have been attacking Israelite and Kenite cities. As a result, Achish the Philistine begins to rely on David, and expects him to come with them on attacks against Israel. David plays along, and Achish makes David his bodyguard!

29. 1 -11 David and his men actually set out on an anti-Israel expedition with the Philistines, but the Philistine commanders are having none of it; after all, this is David about whom it is said that he has killed more Philistines than Saul has, against whom they are advancing! They (probably correctly) conclude that David is likely to turn against them and then they will be in a very weak position.

David plays a consummate act with Achish, when the Philistine king says he can't fight with them; he protests his loyalty to Achish, and appears annoyed that he cannot join the battle with them. David therefore returns to Philistia, while the Philistines move north to the Jezreel valley.

1 Chron. 12.19-22 Now some of the Manassites also defect to David, and return with him to Ziklag. In fact, more and more Israelites are coming across to his camp, so that his army is so large, it resembles the *encampment of God* (Heb מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹהִים *machaneh Elohim* )

1 Sam 30.1-31 While David and his growing army are returning from accompanying the Philistines to Jezreel, the Amalekites from the Sinai have launched retaliatory action against David's base at Ziklag. They find the city sacked and the non-combatants, including their womenfolk taken hostage. David and his men are overwhelmed with grief – witness in v.4 how the Israelite men express their grief to the full – no stiff-Brit upper lips here! They get their full anguish out!

And even though David's own wives Ahinoam and Abigail have been stolen along with the others, the angry Israelites talk about stoning David for his poor judgment in going with the Philistines. However, here is the key for David in every situation, in verse 6 **וַיִּתְחַזַּק דָּוִד, בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהָיו -** *Ve-yit-chazaq David b'Adonai(YHWH) Elohav* that is, And strengthened himself, David, in the Lord His God. David drew strength from his relationship with the God who is always his rescuer.

And then he does the next obvious thing for him – he consults the word of the Lord, through Abiathar the priest, who confirms that the Lord will empower his expedition and the rescue will be a success.

30.9ff They go in pursuit of the raiders, six hundred of them with David. But two hundred are too exhausted to continue, and remain to recover, so four hundred move against the Amalekites, and the rest remain with the supplies.

Capturing an Egyptian slave of the Amalekites, they feed him and, in exchange for his safety, get him to agree to show them where the Amalekites have camped. They find the Amalekites partying, off their guard, enjoying the rich pickings of Ziklag.

Sweeping in on them, they wipe out all the Amalekites except for four hundred who escape on their swift- getaway camels. Everything is recovered, and the women are brought back safely. They also take the booty left from the Amalekites.

30.21-25. The unscrupulous among the four hundred who have been in battle now protest that they will not share the plunder with the two hundred who stayed behind at Besor. But David upbraids them, pointing to the fact that it is the Lord, not their strength that has saved them once again. Therefore, those who stayed back with the provisions are to receive a share as well.

30.26-31, Not only does David bless the men who are with him, but in an act of generosity and political astuteness, he sends portions of the plunder to elders of Judah who are friendly to him.

David is seen here as an adventurer, who is not disinclined to lie in pursuit of his aims. However, his relationship for God is paramount, and his acknowledgment of God's grace and help is undiminished, however successful he becomes.

## Day 95 1 Sam 28 and 31, 1 Chron 10.13-14, 2 Sam 1 & 4.4

### The Terrible End of Saul and Jonathan

1 Sam 3.3- 14 The Philistines arrive in the Jezreel Valley and camp opposite Saul's army. Saul seeks God's word through the Urim and Thummim, the priestly discernment process, and through prophets, but God is silent towards him. He then does something very foolish – he consults a woman who commands an evil spirit for the purposes of clairvoyance. (Heb. **אִשֶׁת בַּעַלְת-אֹב** *Eshet ba'alat ov* – literally, 'a woman, mistress of a mumbling spirit') This is strictly prohibited by God (Ex.22.18), and Saul himself has banned such practices from Israeli territory. He finds a medium at Endor, near Mount Tabor, and despite her protests, Saul employs her to raise Samuel's spirit.

The encounter with Samuel is fascinating, in that it is the only occurrence of necromancy in the Scripture, and the question is asked whether this is truly Samuel's spirit or not. However, the woman believes it is, and she is terrified, perhaps not expecting the actual materialization of the old prophet.

28.15-25 Samuel's message to Saul is terrible; the Lord will give the battle to the Philistines, and 'tomorrow you and yours sons will be with me.'

The woman is obviously shaken by the whole event, and offers Saul food, as he is so exhausted. Eventually, Saul eats, and goes on his way.

1 Sam 31.1-13 The next day, the Philistines defeat the Israelites at Mount Gilboa, and kill Saul and his three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-shua. Saul, struck thorough with arrows, being denied a *coup de grace* by his servant, falls on his own sword, in ignominy. The Philistines behead Saul's corpse, strip his armour, and hang it in the Asherah temple, exposing the headless body on the wall at Beth Shan, with those of his sons.

When they hear the terrible news, the men of Jabesh Gilead, the city to whose rescue Saul had come earlier in 1 Sam 11.1, travel overnight from east of the Jordan up to Jezreel, and take the corpses down, burn them, and take them and bury the remains back at Jabesh, their city.

1 Chron. 10.13,14 The Chronicler gives us a clear commentary on Saul's downfall – he did not keep the word of the Lord, and consulted a necromancer. This resulted in his removal and the kingdom handed over to David.

2 Sam. 4.4 Back at the royal palace, news arrives of the terrible defeat and carnage. The nurse of Jonathan's five-year-old son, Mephibosheth (Heb **מְפִיבוֹשֶׁת** meaning, *Dispeller of shame*) snatches him up to escape from the retribution which would surely come either from the Philistines or David, and in fleeing, drops the boy and he breaks both legs. From this time on, he is a cripple. He will reappear in the story.

2 Sam. 1-16 Meanwhile, David and his troops have returned victorious to Ziklag, having recovered their women and people of the town. News then comes to him of the defeat of Saul and the deaths of him and his sons. An Amalekite messenger comes to tell David, believing that David will reward him for the news. Thus, he fabricates a story that he finished Saul off, even though Saul committed suicide. He has the crown and armband of authority, which he offers to David.

David, however, is enraged that the Amalekite has killed Saul, and has him executed for daring to touch the Lord's anointed. There is great mourning for Saul and his sons.

1 Sam. 1 17- 27 This is David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, which he commanded everyone to learn as a 'lament of the bow' (Heb קִשָּׁתָּהּ *Qashet*)

David calls for the silencing of the news in the Philistine cities in his song (Tell it not in Gath and Ashkelon.) and for no rain to fall on Mount Gilboa.

The song is a warrior's lament over the fallen, celebrating their prowess. But especially, David mourns his covenant brother, Jonathan, who had promised him fealty, describing his love as wonderful, more than that of women. Only the man who has known both a woman's love and that of his male friend could distinguish; David has lost a close *anam-chara*. (*Soul-friend*.)

**Day 96 2 Sam 2.1 to 4.12, 5.4-5, and 1 Chron. 11. 1 -3 and 12.23 – 40.**

### **David Becomes King (c. 1004 BC)**

2 Sam.2. 1-4 The first thing David does, so characteristic of his actions, is to seek the Lord. He asks what he should do next, and the Lord directs him to Hebron, in Judah, finally leaving the Philistine territory behind. He takes with him his wives. Here the men of the tribe of Judah come and anoint him king over their territory – it will be a good seven years yet, before he becomes king of all Israel.

2. 4 – 7 David, hearing of the brave recovery by the men of Jabesh-Gilead of the dead king's body, blesses them for their *chesed*, their standing by their covenant obligation. He calls also upon them the *chesed* and *emet* (faithfulness and integrity) of the Lord, and informs them that he has been made king of Judah, in place of Saul.

2.8ff Inevitably, there is conflict after Saul's death. Saul's cousin, Abner, his general, has survived the battle, and now takes Saul's son, Ish-Bosheth (his name means *man of shame*) and makes him king over a large swathe of the Israelite territory. (the eastern territories, Asher, Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin) and stakes his claim to the crown of Israel.

2.12ff In a combat to decide who takes the upper hand, Abner calls for a meeting with David at Gibeon, where there is an uneasy meeting across a pool. Abner suggests to David's commander, Joab, that there should be a hand-to-hand fighting, and twelve men from each side engage in armed combat. However, Ish-Bosheth's men are defeated by David's.

2.18ff One of Joab's brothers, Asahel, after the fighting, picks a quarrel with Abner, Ish-Bosheth's commander, possibly because it had been Abner's idea which started the terrible bloodbath of that day. Abner appeals to Asahel, who is following him, to go and fight someone else, but Asahel persists, which ends in Abner's killing him with his spear. This shocks David's troops, and Abishai and Joab, the dead man's brothers, set out for revenge on their brother's killer. At sunset, Abner and his men take up positions on a hilltop, where they point out the futility of the dispute.

In response, although they would have kept up the struggle, Joab calls off the men of David, leaving Abner to march through the night, crossing the Jordan and ending up at Mahanaim in the east bank territory.

2.30ff As a result of this outbreak of civil war, Joab has lost his brother and nineteen of his men, while Abner has lost three hundred and sixty Benjamites.

This marked a long period of hostility between the rival factions, with David gaining ground over Ish-Bosheth with the passing of time.

2. Sam 3. 2-5 (mirrors 1 Chron. 3.1-4a) At Hebron, sons are born to David, by different wives – Amnon by Ahinoam, Kileab by Abigail, Absalom by Ma'acah, a Geshurite princess, Adonijah by Haggith, Shephatiah by Abital and Ithream by Eglah.

2 Sam.3.6ff There is now a falling out between Ish-Bosheth and his general Abner, when Ish-Bosheth is angry at Abner for sleeping with his late father, Saul's concubine. Abner reacts badly and vows he will ensure that the whole kingdom is delivered over to David. Abner then sends messengers to David, asking for a truce. David says he is willing on one condition, the return of his first wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, for whom he risked great danger among the Philistines. Ish-Bosheth himself commands Michal to be returned to David, and she goes, followed at first by a weeping Paltiel, to whom Saul had given her, who is then told by Abner to give her up and go home.

3.17-39 Abner now approaches the leaders of Israel and Benjamin, and convinces them to make David King in place of Ish-Bosheth. When he has obtained their agreement, he comes to David at Hebron with only twenty men to deliver the news of his success. David sends him away in peace to conclude the acceptance of his kingship among Israel, but just as he has left, David's commander, Joab, whose brother Asahel Abner killed, arrives back from a raid with a haul of booty. Hearing that David has let him go, Joab is angry, and accuses Abner of being a spy.

In revenge for their brother, Joab and his brother Abishai then pursue Abner, without David's knowledge, and stab him to death. At this news, David is angry and disassociates himself from Joab's actions, calling down a curse on Joab and Abishai's family. David commands a funeral with full honours for Abner, David himself following the body and weeping publicly at his grave in Hebron.

David even composes a lament for Abner, sorrowing for his violent end, and keeps a fast until the end of the day in his mourning. This impresses the people, and confirms

that David did not intend the death of this old rival, who was planning to bring him the kingdom.

David also accuses Joab and Abishai, the sons of Zeruah, of undermining his reign, making him weak, and calls down retribution for what they have done.

2 Sam. 4.1-12 The game is now up for Ish-Bosheth, and two of his troopers, seeing the liability he now has become to the nation, come and assassinate him while he is taking a siesta.

Such is the grubby world of unscrupulous human politics.

The two men, Recab and Ba'anah come to David at Hebron with his rival's severed head as a trophy, far from being feted as heroes are condemned to death by David for Ish-Bosheth's murder. Ish-Bosheth's head is buried in Abner's tomb.

### **David Made King of All Israel (c. 1004)**

1 Chron. 11.1-3 (mirrored in 2 Sam.5.1-3) The nation's leaders now come to David at Hebron, and anoint him king of all of the tribes; Samuel's word had not fallen to the ground – God's chosen man was in place.

2 Sam 5.4-5 (mirrored in 2 Sam 2.11, 1 Kings 2.11, 1 Chron 3.4b and 29.26-27)

David came to Judah's throne at the age of thirty – the same age as Jesus when he began his ministry, and the age at which priests began to serve as well. After seven and a half years, he also gained the crown of all Israel.

1 Chron.12.23-40 Over three hundred thousand troops gather at Hebron for David's anointing. Among the list of those mentioned, of note are the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's own tribe, who have mostly been loyal to Saul; they are still very small compared to the other tribes, with just 3,000 coming to the ceremony.

Also, the men of Issachar, whose full numbers are not given, but who have a strategic insight into Israel's unfolding story, understanding the times and knowing what should be done – this is wisdom, indeed.

Three days of feasting ensue, and there is joy in Israel.

God has not left off at any point his planetary rescue purpose. In David, God has put in place 'a man after His own heart.' Despite David's humanity, and character weakness, his one great strength is his relationship with the Lord (YHWH). This will be seen not only in his wise rule, but also in the scores of amazing songs of praise and prayer which he composes and which become the core of Israel's ministry to the Lord.

And it is a son of David, a descendant of his, who will finally give access to the full rescue package of God, opening the eternal life of resurrection in Jesus Christ.

## **Day 97 2 Sam 5 & 6/1 Chron 11, 13, 14**

### **David Established in Jerusalem**

2 Sam 5.6-8 (mirrored in 1 Chron 11.4-5) Since the conquest of the land by the Israelites, Jerusalem (also called Jebus) has been in the hands of the Jebusites. They believe it is impregnable, but David sees a way in through a water channel.

1 Chron 11.6-9 (mirrored in 2 Sam 5.9-10) With a promise of becoming David's general if successful, Joab goes in and captures Jerusalem, which is then established as David's capital – particularly the fortress today still known as the City of David, or the Hill of Zion. God blesses David and increases his authority.

2 Sam.5.11-12 (mirrored in 1 Chron.14.1,2) In an act of trade and friendship, Hiram the King of the coastal city of Tyre sends Lebanese cedars and stone and builds David a palace in his new city. There is an interesting note here – David realises that his kingship is not about his own self-aggrandisement and prestige, but is because of God's promise to Israel to make them a blessing to the earth.

### **The Ark Brought to Jerusalem**

1 Chron. 13.1-14 (mirrored in 2 Sam.6.1-11)

Consulting with his leaders, David makes a decision to have the ark brought from Kiriath Jearim, where it had been left, since during Saul's reign the Lord's counsel had been neglected among them. Here again, we see David's priority of hearing God's voice on all matters. All the Israelites, including the priests and Levites who are set apart to carry the ark, gather to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the ark over which God dwells between the wings of the great guardians, the Kerubhim.

As the ark moves, there is energetic celebration (with all their strength) before the Lord, in an array of loud musical declaration.

However, as the ark draws near to the farm of a man named Kidon, the oxen pulling the cart stumble, and the ark starts to slide off the cart. A man named Uzzah reacts instinctively and puts out his hand to steady the precious cargo. He is immediately struck dead, and the celebration turns into fear and mourning for Uzzah, because the Lord has 'broken out' against him, hence the name of the place, Perez Uzzah.

David leaves the ark in the house of a man named Obed-Edom for three months, out of fear for what will happen if he brings it to Jerusalem, during which time, great blessing comes to the family of the house where it is located.

## God Breaks Out for Israel

1 Chron 14.8-17 (mirrored in 2 Sam 5.17-25 )

The Philistines come out to challenge the new king of their old enemy. David, before doing anything, **inquires of the Lord** as to whether they should fight. God affirms that they should attack, and they meet at a place where they defeat the Philistines, leading to its naming as Ba'al Perazim (Heb **בַּעַל פְּרָצִים** *Ba'al Peratzim*) – the Master who breaks out. It is interesting that the name Ba'al here is used of the Lord (YHWH), although we note that it means 'Master' or 'Husband', so was not out of place in the naming of this place of God's victory. After the battle, David orders the Philistines' idols to be burned.

The Philistines try another attack, and again, David **inquires of the Lord**. This time, the Lord gives a word of knowledge – Israel is to position themselves in ambush at the balsam trees. When they hear a sound in the trees like marching, it will be the supernatural sign that God has gone ahead, and assured their victory, which they win resoundingly.

As a result of this, David's fame spreads, but the nations around realise that here is a God in Israel who rescues the people who serve Him.

## 2 Sam.22.1-51; (mirrored in Psalm 18)

### A Song of Deliverance

Although the words of 2 Sam.22.1-51 and Psalm 18 are not identical, there is a huge amount of crossover in them. The Psalm is placed, from the opening ascription, in the course of David's life when he has been set free from all his enemies, as well as from Saul. Hence its inclusion here.

The Lord is given praise for His rescuing power, even from the direst of circumstances. The power of the Lord is evident in the creation, through thunder and lightning, and storms.

The Lord has personally reached down and rescued David from deep waters, because David chose the straight path of *tsedaqah* (Heb **צְדָקָה**) = right action.

22.26 (Ps 18.25) God responds to the one who fulfils his covenant obligation by fulfilling His own obligation, and to the one keeping whole God will respond from his wholeness

**עַם-חֲסִיד תִּתְחַסֵּד עִם-גִּבּוֹר תָּמִים, תִּתַּמֵּם**

*'Im chasid tit-chasad,*

*'im gibbor tamim tit-tamam*

With faithful you are faithful

with man pure you are pure yourself

But with the crooked, God is guarded and clever, not being outmanoeuvred.

David confesses God enables his military prowess, and God's delivery from all his enemies.

The Psalm ends with a cry of hope – the Lord lives! He is the one who continues his *chesed* to David and his descendants forever.