

1 Samuel 24:1-22 (and Psalm 57)

David and 'The Son of David'

Let's step back for a minute. Why do we study these historical events concerning David?

One of Jesus' titles as Messiah was "Son of David."

This comes from a prophecy later by the prophet Nathan about David's descendants:

2 Samuel 7:12-16 - "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

Jesus was descended from David through Mary's lineage. The people hailed Jesus as the Messiah, calling Him the Son of David, and waving palm branches when He entered Jerusalem

Jesus says in **Revelation 22:16**, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." That is, He is both the Creator of David and the Descendant of David.

Samuel told Saul, "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart" (**1 Samuel 13:14**).

- **Acts 13:22** - "After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'"

Of course David didn't appear to walk always in God's will, as Jesus did. He sinned big time. But what made him a "man after God's own heart" was that he always repented and returned to the position of faith and trust. That's what we need to see absorb from these stories.

Repentance brings us back to the mercy seat, so when God looks at us, He sees only His Son.

By studying the psalms and the how he responded to the events of his life, we learn more about David's character and how it meshes with the life of Jesus.

In this confrontation with Saul in the cave, we see David's humility and his respect for

God's anointing, and his reticence to act in his own strength or by his own understanding, but to rely on God and his Spirit.

Jesus remained in a perfect and sinless relationship to the Father and to others. David had to walk in repentance constantly, as we do.

One similarity between David and Jesus was that the authorities wanted to kill them, so they were plotted against and slandered. That's why we find David fleeing King Saul.

David Spares Saul

1 Samuel 24:1 - "And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi."

En-Gedi ("the fountain of the goat,") is a little paradise, an oasis in the harsh desert that surrounds the Dead Sea, fed by two small springs that flow down from the adjacent mountains and cliffs. It is also called Hazazon Tamar (the Cutting of the Palm-trees) in **Genesis 14:7** and **2 Chronicles 20:2**. King Solomon planted the slopes up the mountains with the choicest vineyards of Judaea, scented with camphire. Solomon compares his beloved to a "cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi" (Song of Solomon 1:14).

The rabbis say that Saul assumed David would be hiding high along the cliffs and rocky places, but David instead hid his men in a large cave near the road at the bottom of the slope. Saul was directing the search from below.

1 Samuel 24:2-3 - "Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave."

Many caves are scattered along these cliffs, including Wady Charitun, which at a later time was able to give sanctuary to a 30,000-man Arab army during a sand storm. So this is a big cave. Another possibility is spacious cave called Bir-el-Mauquouchieh, with a well in it suitable for watering sheep.

Some explain "to cover his feet" means Saul was defecating, but it can also be translated he wanted a cool place to take a nap.

The sheepcotes were near the cave because the shepherds would take the sheep into the cave's coolness to shelter them from the heat of the day.

The Rabbinical tradition says that a spider put up his web at the front of the cave, so Saul assumed no one had entered for some time and that it was safe to go in.

A midrash explains that years before, David had prayed: "Master of the Universe, I understand the purpose of all your creations except for the spider, who spins all year

long but whose web is worthless, and the madman who harms people." God responded, "There will come a time when you will need each of these." The spider came in handy here, and earlier, David pretended or was actually stricken with madness in the court of the Philistine King Achish.

1 Samuel 24:4 - "And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily."

David's men wanted him to kill Saul and end this flight from persecution. In fact, it seemed clear that God had arranged circumstances for just this reason. It would also have been legally permissible since Saul was "a murderous pursuer."

But there was a greater principle involved - faith vs. self-effort. God's kingdom will not be brought into being by our own efforts, only by God's power.

- Zechariah 4:6 - "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

David consistently respected Saul's position as king because Saul's authority had been initially bestowed by God and his anointing by Samuel. Although Samuel had declared the kingdom would be stripped from him and given to "another who is better than thee," David was restrained from accomplishing this by his own hand. David had so far avoided a direct battle with Saul because he did not want to oppose or fight him.

Compare David's response to Jesus's temptation in the wilderness (**Matthew 4**). Satan tempted Jesus to claim "all the kingdoms of the world" by his own actions and His own strength, but He responded to Satan's offer by refusing, and quoting scripture.

The rabbis saw David's self-control here was a qualification for kingship - aligning with **Proverbs 16:31** - "He who is slow to anger is better than a strong man and a master of his passions is better than the conqueror of a city." (Of course, David's passions later got the better of him in the affair with Bathsheba).

David even regretted his decision to cut the piece from Saul's garment, feeling it was disrespectful.

(David of course could have captured Saul, expressed to him that he meant him no harm and released him, but this would have shown a greater disrespect to him, and possibly resulted in a fight that would cause him harm).

1 Samuel 24:5-7 - "And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the

cave, and went on his way."

David later in humility bows before Saul, calls him Lord and refers to himself as a "dead dog" and an insignificant "flea."

This respect is reflected in the Old and New Testaments in how to deal with one another. This respect is demanded not only for those in authority, but for each of us. We are each anointed by the Holy Spirit, and contain "the Lord's anointed" within us.

- **Leviticus 19:16-18** - "You must not go about spreading slander among your people. You must not endanger the life of your neighbor. I am the LORD. You must not harbor hatred against your brother in your heart. Directly rebuke your neighbor, so that you will not incur guilt on account of him. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against any of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

- **Matthew 18:15** - "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."

- **1 Timothy 5:19** - "Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses"

Even to secular government authorities:

- **Romans 13:7** - "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

Kanaph

"skirt" = *Kanaph* - a sign of both covering, protection, and vulnerability

David cut off "the skirt of Saul's robe"

The word for "skirt" is *kanaph* - the wing or corner of a garment.

We read about this in Ruth when she reveals herself to Boaz on the threshing floor:

- **Ruth 3:9** - "I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt (*kanaph*) over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman."

Spreading the corner of his garment over her would constitute a promise of marriage and thus protection and spiritual covering.

Previously, Boaz had used the same term for Ruth's trust in God:

- **Ruth 2:12** - "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings (*kanaph*) thou art come to trust."

To "uncover your father's skirt" was to have sex with your father's wife (**Deuteronomy 27:20**) and thus to disregard and breach his covering over her.

Saul had experienced this image in a different context.

- **1 Samuel 15:27-28** - "And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt (*kanaph*) of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou."

i.e. his spiritual covering (Samuel's "wing" or *kanaph*), including his anointing as king, was gone.

In fact, the rabbis explain that Samuel had told him that whoever would rip his garment in the same way in the future would succeed him as king (Midrash Shocker Tav 57:3).

David uses this imagery in the psalms:

- **Psalms 57:1** - "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings (*kanaph*) will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." (see also **Psalms 61:4, 67:7, 91:4**)

God uses the same imagery referring to dwelling among His people:

- **Revelation 7:15** - "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell (*skēnoō*) among them."

"dwell among them" = "will spread his tabernacle over them"

This could also imply something else. Israel was commanded to affix tassels or fringes to the borders (wings - *kanaph*) of their garments.

- **Numbers 15:38-39** - "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders (*kanaph*) of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders (*kanaph*) a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:"

Saul had indeed forgotten God and was seeking after his own heart and eyes, so this cutting off of the *kanaph* of his garment emphasized that fact.

David Speaks to Saul

1 Samuel 24:8-10 - "David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed."

The Proof

1 Samuel 24:11-15 - "Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand."

"the LORD avenge me of thee" - in Hebrew this can also mean "the Lord avenge me through thyself" and this is what happened, when Saul died by throwing himself on his own sword (**1 Samuel 31:4**).

Saul's Response

The clouds of Saul's vengeful madness seem to lift, and he seems to see clearly:

1 Samuel 24:16-17 - "And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil."

Saul repeats the phrase used by Judah in response to Tamar's proof of her rightness - Judah's signet, and bracelets, and staff.

- **Genesis 38:26** - "And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more."

Saul Affirms David's Right to be King

1 Samuel 24:18-21 - "And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in

thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house."

"thou shalt surely be king" - in Hebrew this is "in reigning, you will reign." This doubling language, according to the Midrash Shocker Tav, means David would reign in the present era and also in the days of Messiah, who would be a descendant of David.

"cut off my seed" - David spared Mephibosheth, **2 Samuel 21:7**, and in punished the murderers of Ishbosheth, **2 Samuel 4:12**. David did later deliver seven of Saul's descendants to the Gibeonites, who then killed them (**2 Samuel 21**). The rabbis disagree over whether David thus broke his oath.

1 Samuel 24:22 - "And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold."

David and his men in the end did not believe the pursuit had ended, and this is borne out in the next chapter.

David wrote **Psalms 57** about his experience we've just read about in this cave.

Psalms 57

In this Psalm, David is appealing to God for vindication, as before a judge.

Psalm 57:1 - "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

"in the shadow of thy wings" - wings = *kanaph* (See above)

David sees himself sheltered with God who resides in the form of his Shekinah Glory on the mercy seat between the wings of the cherubim.

David says this phrase in other places:

-Psalm 61:4 - "Let me dwell in Your tent forever; Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings."

-Psalm 17:8 - "...hide me in the shadow of your wings"

-Psalm 91:4 - "He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark."

-Psalm 36:7 - "How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings."

Psalm 57:2 - "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me."

"God who will *complete* for me" - *gâmar* - i.e. plead my cause, vindicate me.

Psalm 57:3 - "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth."

"Mercy" - to be delivered from the immediate danger.

"Truth" - to vindicate me from the lies and slander.

(Mercy and truth are repeated in verse 10)

Psalm 57:4 - "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword."

The tongue of Doeg the Edomite had spread slander about David

Rashi - My soul is among lions: Abner and Amassa, who were "lions" [leaders] in the Torah, and who do not protest against Saul.

Psalm 57:6 - "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah."

His soul - *nephesh* - is bowed down, bent under the frustration, fear, and discouragement of the circumstances. But somewhere hope arises. He sees that his enemies will fall into the pit they dug for him, as certainly as if it has already happened.

Therefore:

Psalm 57: 7-9 - "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations."

my heart - *leb* - is "fixed" - *kuwn* - prepared, ready, established, certain, confirmed, set in the right direction

Though his soul (*nephesh*, meaning his whole self as a living being - is bowed down, his heart (*leb* - his innermost understanding and mind) is fixed on God.

See Jesus in **Luke 9:51** - "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

This rouses David to praise God.

"I myself will awake early" - Instead of staying up late worrying about what the next day holds, David says, according to Rashi, "I awaken the dawn; the dawn does not awaken

me." He rises before the dawn to thank and praise God.

Psalm 57:10 - "For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." (see verse 3)

Psalm 57:11 - "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth."

David is affirming that God's "glory" - *kabowd* - is not only present in the Tabernacle Holy of Holies, where the Shekinah Glory visibly rested on the mercy seat between the wings of the cherubim. It is above all the heavens and the earth, even residing with David in his dark cave, and indeed is everywhere.