

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 464

1 Samuel 16

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Episode Summary

In 1 Samuel 16, the Lord tells Samuel that he has rejected Saul as king of Israel. Samuel is sent to Jesse's home in Bethlehem to anoint a new king. Jesse presents his seven oldest sons to Samuel, but the Lord does not choose any of them. Jesse sends for his youngest son, David, who is tending sheep. The Lord tells Samuel to anoint David as king, and the Spirit of the Lord comes upon David from that day on. This passage teaches us that God does not choose leaders based on their outward appearance or their human accomplishments. Instead, He chooses those who are humble, obedient, and willing to be used by Him.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 464: 1 Samuel 16. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Tim Mackie.

Hey, Tim! We really appreciate you taking the time to do a Bible study with us. It's just fantastic to have you with us today.

TM: Yeah, it's an honor to be able to do it. Obviously, the circumstances of why I'm here are not ideal, but I'm just happy... Mike's work and just who he is has meant a lot to me over the years. So it's an honor to be able to contribute whatever I can offer here on the podcast. So happy to be here.

TS: Well, thank you for that. Absolutely. But before we jump into meeting David in chapter 16, I have to ask if you like any sports of any kind. Because Mike and I bonded over sports [TM laughs heartily], probably to the annoyance of most of our listeners. But I have to ask you if you're into sports.

TM: I'm a listener of the podcast, too, over the years, so I always enjoyed your banter about sports. But Trey, I feel bad because I've got nothing. Unless you're into talking about professional skateboarding... [laughs]

TS: Yeah, I know you're a skateboarder!

TM: ...which I happen to know a lot about! Yeah, well I used to be until middle age happened.

TS: But that didn't translate over to sports? No basketball, no football, no nothing? Just watching it? Just nothing?

TM: Nah.....

TS: Just pure Bible study is what you're telling me.

TM: I mean, well, not now. No, not... no. No sports now. My dad was into football, so we'd have Sunday football on when I was growing up. But no, I just never had any interest. I don't know. I don't know what to tell you. It's some deficiency in me, I'm sure.

TS: No, you're making a ton of people happy out there by saying that, I'm sure. [TM laughs] They're just clapping and cheering you on. It probably kept Mike away from his Bible studies. It was his escape, you know. What was great about Mike is that he could turn off the scholar piece of his brain and just enjoy a football game or something and talk about it. So that was fun to bond over.

TM: Yeah. You know, maybe the equivalent of that in my life right now... I have two little boys who are nine and eleven, so we're in the throes of parenting. The thing is that they have come to love Star Wars and Lego...

TS: Oh yeah, there you go.

TM: ...I think because I love Star Wars and Lego! [laughs] I think my release from all of the stuff I do in my workdays is go home and build. Literally this morning, I was helping my boys make plans to rebuild a Millennium Falcon set that they had and let fall apart, and now we're going to rebuild it again. So there you go. That's my release.

TS: That's awesome. My son is into the same thing. We just got for Christmas a big Star Wars Lego—one of those STAT tanks in Clone Wars. They love that.

TM: AWWW, yeah! Yeah!

TS: He got one of those big things to put together. So I hear ya.

TM: I love it. That's a good set!

TS: Absolutely. Well, Tim, again... I can't thank you enough for helping us finish the 1 Samuel book study here. Having said that, it's all yours!

TM: Yeah, okay! Sure. Here we go! It's so funny because, like I said, I have been an avid listener to the podcast over the years, so I'm familiar with how it goes, which is that Mike just goes for it [laughs]. So I'm gonna just go for it!

1 Samuel 16. This is a significant hinge moment in the Samuel scroll. The story of Samuel and Saul that has made up the main focus from 1 Samuel 1-15 is now going to pivot as a new character is introduced—a young man named "Beloved" or "Da-veed" in Hebrew. His name is spelled with the same letters as the word "beloved" from the Song of Songs. Did you know that, Trey? Isn't that great? I think that's really cool. And highly significant.

TS: I did not know that, but that is fascinating.

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TM: Yeah. So in 1 Samuel 16, the first sentence is a link back to the previous story. So to really get the full context of why this story is significant, tuning into the previous episode on 1 Samuel 15 is going to be really key.

The way that David's story begins is that it overlaps with the downfall of King Saul. And they're going to overlap... This David story and the Saul story are going to overlap from this chapter (chapter 16) all the way through the story of Saul's death in 1 Samuel 31. So Saul has a really long downfall. I won't go into the reasons for the downfall of the Saul (that was what chapters 13-15 were all about), but you'll recall that it concluded with Saul being really sad and dismayed when Samuel told him that God has rejected him as being king. And you'll recall that Saul grabbed the cloak of Samuel and it tore, and Samuel says, "Yahweh has torn the kingdom away from you." This is 1 Samuel 15:28 [Mackie translation]:

Yahweh has torn away the kingdom of Israel from you today and will give it to your companion—one who is more good than you.

And now we have with the story of David the story of the one who is "more good."

So 1 Samuel 16 has two main scenes. It goes verses 1-13 (and this is all about Samuel and David) and then in verses 14 to the end of the chapter (verse 23) is all about Saul and David. So there are two panels here, and these two panels have lots of overlapping linked words that kind of connect the themes between them. I'll flag it because it's super-important from the opening line: the key repeated motif word throughout this whole chapter is the word "see." In Hebrew, רָאָה (*ra-ah*). I'll be highlighting where that word appears. It appears lots of times, (although you can't always spot it in our English translations), and that's going to be really key.

With that intro, we'll dive in. The translation I'm going to be reading is my own translation that I prepped for this, but I'll kind of mark points that differ from many of our modern English translations because that's always where the good stuff is. So chapter 16 verse 1:

And Yahweh said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn about Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill up your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have *seen* a king for myself among his sons."

This is the opening line of chapter 16, and it's all a divine speech to Samuel. So the last lines of chapter 15 were when Samuel was mourning about Saul because God rejected him as king, so this literary unit just begins by linking back. It's almost like... Think of the first sentence of chapter 16 as being like a piece of thread that picks up the last words of chapter 15 and kind of sews the two chapters and binds them closely together.

We're told that Samuel is commanded to fill up his horn with oil. This is because he's going to be anointing David—that is, pouring olive oil on his head. And he's carrying the olive oil in an animal horn. This is the first of *many* ways that the narrative is going to set David on analogy with Saul—as a contrast figure to Saul. So Saul was also anointed with oil by the same guy (same prophet—Samuel) and even though both of their stories begin in the same way and there are all these similarities between Saul and David (starting with this anointing), they are going to highlight even more the differences between them.

So he is supposed to fill up the horn. Presumably, it's an animal horn that would have been emptied. I've done a lot of hiking, so I've come across animal horns before [laughs], like elk horns or something. But they're never hollow. So apparently there are animal horns that are hollow that you can fill with oil and put a little strap around it, and that's like your little oil-carrier. That's pretty cool.

10:00 "Fill up your oil and go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite." So Bethlehem was a small town about five miles south of Jerusalem. Of course, Jerusalem didn't exist with that name yet in David's day. It was called "Yevus" or "Jebus." David is going to take it over, actually, and make it the capital of the tribes and name it "Jerusalem." So Bethlehem is just south of that, about five miles.

What God says is, "I've seen for myself a king among his sons." So literally, this is the first time the word "see" appears in the chapter. Most of our English translations are going to have something different. They're going to provide maybe an interpretation of that word "see." So the New American Standard has, "for I have selected a king for myself." The English Standard Version has, "I have provided a king for myself." The New International Version says, "I have chosen one of his sons." [laughs] So "chosen," "selected," "provided" are all interpretations of this Hebrew word, "to see." This is fascinating! The word "see" is being used here with a nuance of meaning that we have in our English usage of the word see. If somebody asked you, "Hey could you go pick up a gallon of milk from the store," you could say, "Ah, I'll see to it." It's the English turn of

phrase that means you'll see that it is done, or you'll see that it's accomplished, you'll see that the request is fulfilled. You'll see to it. So this is roughly similar to a nuance of meaning of the Hebrew word "see," where you can see something... God says, "I will see for myself a king among his sons." This is precisely the same use of the word "see" that's important in the story of Abraham and Isaac, where Isaac asks Abraham, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" And what Abraham says is, "God will see to it." It gets translated, again, usually as "provided" or "he will provide it" (in the NIV, for example in Genesis 22).

So that's the meaning that's going on here. And that connection to Genesis 22 is actually highly significant. David is being introduced, and I'm going to highlight that there are other places where the narrator is wording this introduction to David with the same wording that is used in Genesis 22 about the story of Abraham and Isaac. It's part of a narrative strategy that's introducing David as also on analogy to Isaac. He's going to be one who is going to be raised up as the seed of Abraham to bring blessing to the nations, but it's going to be through a period of suffering and testing in his life. Just like Isaac, so also David. You don't have to buy that at the moment, but I'll point out some other things in the story that I think make that clear as we go along.

That's verse 1. Let's go to Samuel's reaction now in verse 2:

But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears, he will kill me!" And Yahweh said, "You will take a calf from the herd with you, and you will say, 'I've come to sacrifice to Yahweh.' You will invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will make known to you what you will do. You will anoint for me the one whom I tell you." And Samuel did what Yahweh said.

I'll just pause right there. So Samuel is freaked out. Apparently, he really doesn't trust Saul anymore [laughs]. Saul has proven himself more than once to be somebody who thinks that he is on good terms with Yahweh. He thinks he's an obedient king. But in reality, he's deeply self-deceived and does what is good in his own eyes instead of obeying the word of Yahweh. So that has disqualified him as king. And Samuel now fears for his life! In the moment that God says to him, "I've got another king in line," the first thing in Samuel's mind is, "Oh my gosh, Saul is going to go on a rampage if he finds out about that!" It's like a political coup that Yahweh is planning.

15:00 So what is so fascinating is that God's response to that is to plan a counter-deception with Samuel. In other words, Samuel says, "Listen, if I go to Bethlehem, Saul is surely going to find out what I'm up to there and figure out that we're planning a coup!" And what Yahweh suggests is like a ruse. "So take an animal and say you've come to sacrifice, and then have a big sacrificial meal." Remember, in Israel, if it wasn't a whole burnt offering... If it was either a sin

offering, a guilt offering, or one of the peace offerings, then only part of the animal gets burned up, but the rest of it gets given back to the worshiper to have a party with your friends. So apparently, they're going to make a sacrifice to Yahweh like a peace offering and have a big party and meal, and he's supposed to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrificial meal.

So notice this. He's going to do this, but it's a ruse; it's a trick to throw Saul off the scent. So it's this interesting kind of theme. Saul has proven himself to be this deceptive or self-deceived figure back in chapter 15, where God said to destroy Amalek for his attempt to destroy Israel back in the book of Exodus. And Saul doesn't do that, and then he begins to lie and try to deceive about the status of the animals and what he did with the plunder and so on. And so this is a really important theme that's at work in Samuel: to bring down deceptive, corrupt figures, Yahweh and his prophets will engage in counter-deceptions to deceive the deceiver. And this theme is not new. This goes all the way back to the Genesis scroll and the theme of deception with the snake in the garden, with the theme of Jacob, and Laban, and the brothers of Joseph, and all of these deceptions and counter-deceptions, and the way God uses the deceptive schemes of humans to accomplish his purposes. So that's a theme coming out here. God is going to counter-deceive the royal deceiver to bring about his downfall.

So that's God's instruction to Samuel. What we're told in verse 4 is that Samuel did what Yahweh said. That little phrase there, "he did what Yahweh said," is also a contrast. Doing what Yahweh said was one of the most repeated main phrases in chapter 15. When Saul was told to do what Yahweh said, he didn't do what Yahweh said. Samuel comes to him saying, "Why didn't you do what Yahweh said?" and he says, "I did do what Yahweh said!" So this phrase, "doing what Yahweh said"... Here's Samuel actually doing what Yahweh said to begin a counter-deception to replace the king who didn't do what Yahweh said. So it's another contrast with chapter 15.

So here we go, down to verse 4. I'll keep on reading.

So Samuel, he came to Bethlehem, and the elders of the city came trembling out to meet him, and they said, "Uh... have you come in peace?" And he said, "I do come in peace. I've come to sacrifice to Yahweh. So ya'll make yourselves holy and come with me to the sacrifice." And he [Samuel] sanctified [made holy] Jesse and his sons and he called them to the sacrifice.

So the elders freaked out. I guess it's the equivalent... You know, when I was a kid, this was like the equivalent of the principal walking into the classroom [laughs]. You're like, "Why is she here? Who is she here for?" It's kind of like a sign that something has gone wrong and she's here to hold somebody

accountable or something like that. That's something like the response that the elders have. "Why is Samuel here? He's often with the king. This can't be anything good." And Samuel says, "No, I come in *shalom!* We're going to have a party—a sacrificial party to Yahweh! Since these parties are about meals dedicated to Yahweh, we should make ourselves holy." Likely, that means a period of making sure you haven't touched anything ritually impure. You wash yourself with a ritual washing... things like that.

So the elders and everybody are there. Jesse and his sons are invited. Then in verse 6, we pivot to the sacrificial meal. This is so good, you guys. Verse 6:

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So it came about when everyone came, that he [Samuel] saw [TM: there's that word "see" again] Eliav...

As we're going to see, Eliav is the firstborn son of Jesse, father of David.

He saw Eliav and he said, "Ohhhh.... surely his anointed one is before Yahweh."

This is a key moment where the firstborn son of Jesse walks into the room. And Samuel makes a conclusion based on what he sees with his eyes. Now, why? Why does Samuel notice Eliav first? We're going to find out in what Yahweh says to him, but just notice that word "see" and watch for the repetition of the word "see" in Yahweh's response to Samuel. This is in verse 7:

But Yahweh said to Samuel, "Do not look at [TM: it's the same word: *r'h* in Hebrew: "do not see"] his appearance or the height of his stature because I have rejected him. For not what the human sees does God see, for the human looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart."

If you're looking for a key line that summarizes what this whole scene is about, 1 Samuel 16:7 is ground zero. This is the key theme of what this whole story is about. So what we realize is that Samuel noticed Eliav... Oh, his name means, "my God is father" (*el-i-AV*). And Samuel notices Eliav because he's really tall. He has height of stature and he has some kind of really impressive appearance. So both of these words are super, super important for a few reasons. One is that the stature (the high stature of Eliav)... These two words (*govah* and *qomah*) are precisely the words used to describe Saul back in the story when Saul was selected as king. Back in 1 Samuel 9, we're told that Saul "from his shoulders and above was higher than all of the people," and then again in chapter 10:23, he was "higher than all the people from his shoulders upward." So Eliav is being set on analogy to Saul. Because look at what God says. He says,

"Don't look at Eliav, the height of his stature..."

...which is exactly what Saul looked like. And back here in 1 Samuel 16, Yahweh says:

..."because I have rejected him."

And this is exactly the same word used to describe Yahweh's rejection of Saul from the very previous scene in chapter 15. So this is a good example of what biblical scholars call "narrative analogy." There's lots of biblical scholarship on this. The Israeli scholar who's done the foundational work on the Samuel stories is a scholar named Moshe Garsiel. He shows in his work about how in the book of Samuel, the narrator will use the repeated same words throughout different stories to set characters in contrast or comparison with each other. And this is such a wonderful example.

So Eliav is being set on analogy to Saul. Eliav is the rejected son. He's not going to be accepted as king, and he's really tall. So he becomes an image of Saul in this scene right here. Yahweh's response to Eliav is set on analogy to Yahweh's response to Saul. In both cases, David is going to be the chosen son in the place of his brother, Eliav, and he's going to be the chosen king in the place of Saul. Both of these rejected ones were high—high in stature.

But there's another phrase used to describe Eliav, and that's when Yahweh tells Samuel, "Don't look at his appearance." That word "appearance" is a noun in Hebrew built off the same root from the Hebrew word "to see." *R'h* (ראה) is the verb "to see" or "to look," and then *mar-eh* (מראה) is the noun "appearance." And then this contrast between what humans see and what God sees is kind of the main emphasis of what God says next:

For God doesn't see what a human sees. The human looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart.

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That phrase, "humans look at the outward appearance..." Literally in Hebrew, it's "humans see with the eyes." "Humans see what the eyes see, but Yahweh sees the heart." So there's this contrast. And this is Samuel that he's saying this to! And Samuel is a good guy [laughs]. He's not a bad guy in the story. He's not known for having a distorted view of reality. But here in this moment, even Samuel is taken in by the appearance of Eliav. He's very tall. And this is echoing a theme... Actually, tipping my hat and honoring Mike, it goes all the way back to the Nephilim—to these tall giant warriors, "men of the name." In the Genesis scroll and the ancient Near East, these giant warriors (tall people that are closer to the heavens) were considered to be more like images of God. And so throughout the biblical story, there's this polemic or criticism of humans assuming that big, tall warriors who look like gods are the chosen ones that God wants to

rule the world through. In contrast, Yahweh loves to raise up creatures from the dust to be the rulers. That's Genesis 1 and 2. He loves to raise up a no-name like Abraham or the younger son, like Jacob or like Joseph. Or in this case, he's going to love to raise up and honor the small son in contrast to the big, tall brother.

So "seeing" is really key here. What humans see is not what God sees. This is a major theme in the Samuel scroll. It's also why the story of Hannah and Peninnah is at the beginning of the scroll. Yahweh sees and notices the suffering and the oppression of Hannah and raises up from her Samuel, who is the guy in this story right here. He raises up David in place of Saul. And this is just a huge theme in the Hebrew Bible as a whole. So 1 Samuel 16:7 has all of these contrasts. What humans think is important or powerful is not what Yahweh thinks is important or significant. Yahweh looks on the heart.

So that is itself... You could just stop right there and go for a long walk and have a cup of tea [laughs] and think about the ways that humans value things and then what God values.

One other note before we go on. This is super cool. The phrase, "God doesn't see what humans see... humans look at the appearance (or with the eyes) but Yahweh looks on the heart..." This is language that's all hyperlinked by the narrator to the Garden of Eden story. When you see in verse 7 that God doesn't see what people see or what the human sees, it's the word *adam*. I'm just going to read it literally, just so you can kind of hear the Eden echoes that the narrator has placed here. Again, what God says is:

For God does not see what *adam* sees, for *adam* sees with the eyes, but Yahweh sees the heart.

This is all language taken from the early chapters of Genesis, where Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:6) see the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad, that it is "good of appearance." It's exactly the same word used to describe Eliav. And then they see it with their eyes. It's beautiful to the eyes, beautiful to look at, and so they see and they take it. This is fascinating. Samuel, through this language, is being set on analogy to Adam and Eve, looking at the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad. So Eliav, who is this big tall guy, represents this choice that Samuel has to trust God's word (that HE selected someone), or should Samuel choose a king based on what his eyes see. And what God says is, "Don't see what *adam* sees." [laughs] I'm laughing because it's so creative the way these narrators allude back to the Garden of Eden story to try and help us see that this is Samuel's test moment. Is he going to trust the word of the Lord or is he going to trust what his eyes see? And Samuel passes the test. He does choose to see what God sees, and he doesn't see what *adam* sees. And that's where the story goes from here. I'm not going very fast, am I? Verse 8:

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So Jesse called Abinadab [TM: son number two] and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "This one also Yahweh has not chosen."

So notice that this is actually the word "choose" (*bahar* in Hebrew)... This is the same kind of phrase as what Yahweh said up in verse 1, "for I have seen for myself a king from among his sons." And then once we get down to verse 7, this is all about seeing the king who really sees the king. But here in verse 8, we have a new vocabulary word that's now a synonym for seeing the king, which is choosing the king. Verse 9:

Jesse made Shammah [TM: this is the third-born of Jesse] pass before Samuel and he said, "Yahweh also has not chosen this one."

Verse 10:

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "Yahweh has not chosen any of these."

So the seven sons of Jesse have passed before him. Seven is a key word and numerical image in the Hebrew Bible for completion or completeness. That's because the word seven (*sheva*) is spelled with the same letters as the Hebrew word *savah*, which means to be filled up or complete or satisfied. So you would think, "Oh! Well that's it... all the sons!" All seven sons—the complete number of them —has passed before Samuel.

So Samuel said to Jesse, "Well, are all of the young men here?" And he said, "Well, the small one still remains, but look, he is out shepherding the flock." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Well send and bring him, for we cannot gather around until he comes here."

So we have son number eight, who is out shepherding the flock, and this is David, whose name, you remember, means "the beloved one." A couple of interesting things here. I'll just flag it. Here in this narrative, we're told that Jesse has eight sons. The narrative makes that clear. He has seven sons pass before Samuel and then David is the plus-one to the seven. This is clarified in the next story in chapter 17 verse 12, in the David and Goliath story, where we're told straight-up that Jesse had eight sons. But there's this interesting challenge with that, because if you go to the Chronicles scroll at the end of the Hebrew Bible, you get all these genealogies of the different families of Israel. And there, when it gets to the tribe of Judah and then when it gets to Jesse's family, we're given a counted list of Jesse's sons. And there, David is listed as the seventh and final son, whereas he is son number eight. So this is a deep rabbit hole. I just want to

flag it, that it's one of these instances in the Hebrew Bible where when you have lists or chronologies... Very often, when you compare parallel accounts in different scrolls of the Hebrew Bible, there are differences in the number. Sometimes they're big and sometimes they're really small. This is an example of a really small one.

I'm not going to go down the rabbit hole (which maybe I shouldn't have brought it up if I'm not going to go down it), but I think it's probable... There's really only two possibilities. Either David is the eighth son and the Chronicler has adjusted the number in the genealogy to make David the seventh for the numerical symbolism—that David is the final and complete seventh seed from the line of Jesse... But it's also possible that David was in Israel's records the seventh son and that the Samuel author has adjusted the number, making David the eighth instead of the seventh. And that would also be for numerical symbolism, because to be the one that comes after the seventh... This is what is at work in the Genesis 1 creation story, where creation is completed on the seventh day, and so then the day after—the eighth day—becomes the dawning of the new creation into its fulfillment.

35:00

So either way, whether David is the seventh or the eighth, both have important numerical symbolism. Throughout the centuries, scholars have debated which one they think is more probable than the other. At least as I've tallied and worked through it, both of them seem possible to me. We don't actually have any other ancient evidence to try and discern between the two. I just think it's interesting because for me, it shows what the biblical authors do with genealogies, with the age of people, with numbers. It's not that they're making all of this up out of fiction, but it does show that there was use of creative number symbolism at work in how they shaped the stories. And in fact, actually it was on the podcast here years ago when you guys were working through Exodus and Mike was covering the first time the Israelites are numbered when they come out of Egypt. The number is around 600,000. And he referenced the work of a scholar named [David] Fouts, both an article and a dissertation, about symbolic numbers in the Hebrew Bible. And he's trying to say that the biblical authors... We're not being skeptical here. We're trying to honor the fact that in their ancient literary context, biblical authors were part of a literary tradition where the adjustment of numbers for symbolic purposes was an accepted literary strategy. I think it's probably what's going on here with these differences about David being the seventh or the eighth son.

I just wanted to name and bring that up. I honor the fact that there are people who passionately disagree [laughs] about that. They believe there are ways to harmonize these numbers, and so there are arguments you could make for that, too. But it's a good opportunity to just pause for this moment to say that differing numbers in the Bible don't have to be something that causes a crisis in one's faith. I know many people for whom these kinds of differences really bother them.

But once you acknowledge that biblical authors come from a different cultural setting than we do and the way they shaped their stories were according to different literary instincts... We're honoring that fact and honoring that God inspired these authors to use those strategies that were natural in their time and place. That is a perspective that can be really, really helpful, but I recognize that some people may disagree.

That was a little rabbit hole [laughs] on whether David is the seventh or the eighth son. Other things to note about David are that he is called in verse 11 "the small one." Many of our English translations have "the young one." It literally is the word "small" (*qaton* in Hebrew). For sure, the word *qaton* can mean "younger son." It's used that way in the book of Genesis. But for sure, David's smallness is a contrast to the big tallness of both Eliav and Saul, so that God chooses the small one and raises them above the big tall one. That is for sure part of why the word "small" is being used to describe David here. Whether it means he was literally short and small... It doesn't necessarily mean that. But it surely is supposed to evoke that idea in our imaginations.

He is also called a shepherd. Let me just quickly name other latecomer second-born brothers or siblings that are elevated by God in the biblical story. You know, shepherds like Abel in Genesis 4 [laughs]. Or Abraham. Or Jacob. Or Joseph. Or Moses. And you get the idea. This is a major motif. These are all younger sons chosen by God, elevated over their siblings to be the one that God chooses for his purposes. David fits into that bigger pattern that's at work throughout the storyline of the Hebrew Bible.

So what Samuel says to Jesse is, "Send and get that boy!" So verse 12:

He sent and brought him. Now [TM: the narrator pauses and says] dear reader, you should know: David was red with beautiful eyes and good of appearance. And Yahweh said, "Get up. Anoint him. This is the one." And Samuel took the horn of oil and he anointed him in the middle of his brothers. And the Spirit of Yahweh rushed upon David from that day onward, and Samuel got up and went to Ramah.

So David comes and we also get a description of his appearance. In fact, the words used in verse 12 are keyed in to the description of Eliav up in verses 6 and 7. So David is "good of appearance." We know he's the small one, but he's also good of appearance. He has beautiful eyes. Yeah? These are all words used in God's conversation with Samuel about Eliav. And also that he's "red"... that's the Hebrew word *admoni*. It's a very unique phrase. This word is actually only used elsewhere to describe Esau, who was called "Edom," which means "red." Here, the word *admoni*—red—is based off of the same root word as the name Edom, or red. So whether the redness refers to the color of his skin [laughs] or to the

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color of his hair, scholars have debated this, and the text just doesn't make it clear. But it does associate David with this younger/older interplay of just as Jacob and Esau... Remember Jacob was like the younger one and he was smooth, Esau was red and hairy. And now we have here a contrast between older and younger brothers. Eliav is the tall one and David is the young one and he's very handsome looking, but he's also red. In other words, David has a combination of features that remind the reader both of Esau and of Jacob. Isn't that interesting? I think this is a hint forward to the fact that David is going to be like a Jacob figure for a long while, as he is the young one like Jacob that God exalts over his older brother. But eventually, David is going to have his own downfall connected to his own bodily appetites, namely for sex with Bathsheba. And so here David is just painted with the little paintbrush colors here that remind the reader of both a Jacob figure and of Esau. At least that's what I think the narrator is doing here.

So he is handsome and he is the anointed king. Notice that the pouring of the oil... The liquid pours down him. At the same time, it's coordinated with the Spirit of Yahweh rushing on him. This is the phrase that was used of the Spirit coming upon Samson. Multiple times we're told the Spirit of Yahweh rushed on Samson. It's a unique phrase that is only used to describe Yahweh coming on Samson in the book of Judges. I'm pretty sure that's significant but I haven't gone down that rabbit hole. My hunch is that the narrator also wants to create a narrative analogy or hyperlink so that we compare the story of David with the story of Samson, which is fascinating. I commend that to you.

So there you go. That was verses 1-15. Wow, I did not go fast through that! So there's the first scene. That's Samuel and David. The next scene just picks right up. Verse 14 is going to be about David's relationship to Saul now that the Spirit of God has come upon David to anoint him as king. So in verse 14 we pivot from the scene at the meal to now a scene in Saul's courtroom. It's kind of like, "Meanwhile..." "At the same moment..." Verse 14:

Now the Spirit of Yahweh had departed from Saul and a bad spirit from Yahweh would terrify him.

So the moment that the Spirit of Yahweh rushes upon David, empowering him to become Israel's king, it's like a camera shift. The camera cuts and it goes to that very moment in Saul's courtroom. And what we see is that the royal, empowering Spirit of Yahweh that raised up Saul as king now withdraws. But apparently, in the spiritual realm... The spiritual realm abhors a vacuum, so to speak. And so in place of this royal empowering Spirit, now the Spirit of Yahweh brings about disaster for him.

I'm going to pause here and go down a little rabbit hole. 1 Samuel 16:14 has bothered a lot of people because most of our... In fact, almost all of our English translations read something like this. I'm reading from the NIV:

14 Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.

The ESV has:

...a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him.

New American Standard:

...an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him.

I remember vividly the first time when I had a pastoral teaching ministry and someone from my church came up and was like, "What does this mean? Would God ever do something like this to me? And what's an evil spirit (which makes many people think of a demon) doing in Yahweh's presence that Yahweh would send an evil spirit? What is going on here?"

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A couple things. There are some Hebrew language things to deal with and then some biblical theme pattern things to consider here. So the first thing is that the word that gets translated "evil" in our English translations... "Evil" is an unfortunate choice [laughs]. I don't ever want to erode trust in our English translations, but there are moments where we need to just acknowledge that sometimes things at work in Hebrew... There are nuances of meaning that are hard to capture in English, and sometimes English words lead us astray from what the Hebrew word means. Unfortunately, when it comes to the word "evil," that is the case. The Hebrew word is *ra'ah* (רעה).

[Transcriptionist note: It sounds the same as *r'h*, "to see," but one consonant is different. Compare רעה and ראה.]

It goes right back to the Garden of Eden story and the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad. And bad (or *ra'ah*) in Hebrew in its most basic or clear meaning does not mean the same thing that "evil" does in English. We tend to use "evil" to talk about a thing's nature or essence. "That person did an evil deed." That deed is evil in its essence. Or we've come to talk about evil in an abstract essential form. The phrase *ruach ra'ah* (bad spirit)... That's not what it means. "Bad" is a pretty good English word. It's not perfect, but it's pretty good. *Ra'ah* is not being used here as an adjective to describe the essence of the spirit. *Ra'ah* can be attached as an adjective to a word to describe the unfortunate harmful or disastrous outcome or result of whatever the noun is. So for example, the phrase "evil men"... Like in Proverbs, "the evil man" doesn't mean a man who is in his essence evil. Because we know from Genesis 1

that humans are not in their essence evil. Humans are *tov*—they're good! [laughs] Now, they're deeply compromised—deeply compromised with evil and are under the deceptions of the evil—but nothing in God's good creation is in its essence evil. Genesis 1 makes it very clear that "God saw all that he had made and it was very good." So whatever it means for something to be *ra'ah* or evil means that it has both pivoted away from its essence, which is good, and embraced some distorted form of existing that is harmful and destructive. And that's what *ra'ah* means. Actually, I think the English Standard Version captures it pretty well in talking about a "harmful" spirit.

We could do a long word study on *ra'ah*, but that's what I'm trying to flag there—that *ra'ah* in Hebrew is talking about the results, the outcome, the consequences of whatever the noun is doing. So what does it mean that Yahweh would send a spirit that brings about a bad or harmful result? This is echoing all the way back... This is actually a big, glowing hyperlink to an earlier story in the book of Judges, where the phrase "a bad spirit from God" appears for the first time. This is not the first time God has done this. In other words, this phrase here in 1 Samuel is a link back to a story where this phrase was used for the first time. And that's in Judges 9. The narrator wants you to go back to that story, upload it and its meaning, and then bring its meaning to bear here in this story.

In Judges 9, this was about the son of Gideon. This is after Gideon has saved the people from the Midianites. What the people of Israel told Gideon when he had a son was, "Hey, you should make your son king!" And he was like, "No way! God is king and I'm not going to make my son king." But then after he dies in Judges 9, his son makes an effort to become king. And what he does is he betrays his 70 brothers (that's a lot of brothers because Gideon married a lot of women) and he murders all of his brothers except one that escapes. And he murders them in the town of Shechem. And so what we're told is that to bring about Abimelech's downfall, God sends a bad spirit between Abimelech and the people of Shechem. Let me just read it. This is Judges 9:23. This is after a murderous coup and the people of Shechem assist Abimelech to become king through all these assassinations and so on. What we read is:

Then God sent a bad spirit between Abimelech and between the men of Shechem. And the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech.

Why? Verse 24:

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So that the violence done to the 70 sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon) would come, and that their blood would be laid on Abimelech, their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers.

In other words, the bad spirit that Yahweh sends is not referring to the essence of the spirit (that it's evil), but rather that it's a messenger sent from God that's going to influence the minds of Abimelech and the men of Shechem to bring about their

downfall so that the evil they did to others will be brought back upon them. All of a sudden, we are back in the territory of Yahweh dealing harshly and with counter-deceptions with people that have deceived others that led to destruction and violence in the land. So God sends a bad spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem in order to bring about their downfall.

So that story is being called upon here. Saul has proven himself to be a treacherous, deceptive king who honors what he sees and thinks over the word of Yahweh. And it's going to bring about ruin and destruction in the land. So Yahweh sends a bad spirit to begin the process that will bring about Saul's downfall—the madness and paranoia that will lead to his death. And here (just a link forward to another story where this theme plays out) is a story that Mike has taught us all about! It's the story in 1 Kings 22, which is where Micaiah, the prophet, tells Ahab, the king, that he saw a vision of Yahweh's divine council. And the host of heaven was brought in by Yahweh to debate about what to do with corrupt King Ahab. And what happens in that scene is a spirit that is deceptive is sent by God to deceive Ahab through his prophets to bring about Ahab's downfall.

So this is all about these motifs. How is Yahweh to deal with corrupt human rulers who are so full of themselves and full of their own wisdom that they're wreaking havoc, destruction, and ruin in the land? This is a theme right throughout the Hebrew Bible. It's the same with Pharaoh's heart in Exodus. Yahweh will use the deception and evil and madness of tyrant rulers and sow the seeds of their own downfall. Even their madness can be a tool in the hand of Yahweh to accomplish his purposes to bring down the tall and the arrogant and the violent and to raise up the humble and the small ones. In a way, that's what the bad spirit from Yahweh represents here. I know that was kind of a long rabbit hole, but those have been perspectives that have been helpful for me.

The servants of Saul have an idea about what to do about Saul's madness. Here's what they say:

"Look, please! It's a bad spirit from God that's terrifying you. So please, let our lord speak. We're your servants. We're here before you. Let us seek a man who knows how to play on the lyre [TM: the lyre is an ancient stringed instrument] and it will be that when the bad spirit from God is on you, he could come and play it! And there will be *tov* [goodness] for you." And Saul said to his servants, "Oh, please! See for me a man who is good at playing and bring him to me."

So now Saul needs someone to see a man for him. This is exactly what God said in the opening line. So it sets up a contrast. God has seen for himself a king among Jesse's sons, and now Saul will see for himself a man from Jesse's sons who is good. It's interesting: What God sees is a new leader for Israel. What Saul sees is a guy who can help me with my paranoia and migraine headaches [laughs] or something like that. But it's clearly a contrast. Saul sees what is good for him, whereas Yahweh sees what is good for his people.

Notice that David is described as a musician here. This is the first time that theme comes up (David as the poet and songwriter, you know). This is where that whole idea connected to the Psalms. It all begins right here. You can imagine David out there hanging out with his sheep with a little harp [laughs] writing psalms. That's the image that's up here.

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Also, there's this connection here between the spiritual realm and music. Do you notice that? Apparently, these servants of Saul just assume that if there's something happening in the spiritual realm that's disturbing or terrifying, that if you play music, that will bring God's peace. So here we're invited into ancient perceptions of music. And I have not gone down this rabbit hole, but I know it exists. Music is perceived as a vehicle of the divine voice and of the divine presence in many cultures. It doesn't take long... Turn off the lights in a room or go to a symphony and just feel what's happening to your mind and your heart and your body. There's something about music that makes humans feel like we are connected to something bigger and transcendent. So the worldview at work here is that in the spiritual realm, music is one of the ways you can engage the presence and power and love of God's spirit. It's also one of the ways that you can resist the forces of destructive spiritual beings. Just think how this connects to Paul's comments about spiritual growth and formation connected to the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in Ephesians and in Colossians. My point is that it's not random that David's musical abilities are connected to his ability to resist destructive spiritual forces. Now remember, these are destructive spiritual forces that come from God [laughs], and that's a twist on this. But there you go.

So there is going to be good for Saul if he finds a man who is good at playing music.

So then one of the servants answered and said, "You know, it's so strange!"

That's my commentary; I'm sorry, I shouldn't say that. Well, I should say but I shouldn't pretend like that's the translation... it's my paraphrase.

"This is so strange! I've seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, who knows how to play. He's a warrior of substance. He's a man of war. He's discerning in speech. He's a man of form and Yahweh is with him."

So lo and behold, one of the servants says, "I happen to know this guy in Bethlehem and he has a son..." And we get six descriptors of David. He knows how to play an instrument, but also, he's like... [laughing]... not quite... I was about to say he's a brawler, but he's a *gibbor hayil*—a warrior of substance. Ooh, this is exactly what Saul's father, Kish, was called in 9:1. He's a man of war (*ish milchama*). This is what Yahweh is called in the Song of the Sea after Yahweh rescues Israel from Egypt at the Sea of Reeds. In the famous poem the Israelites sing, they call him a man of war who defeated the Pharaoh. So he really knows how to engage an enemy if you need him to, but also he's smart, he's discerning of speech, he's a man of form (meaning he's handsome). And Yahweh is with him. So if you're looking for a description of

someone like a new Adam figure—a figure who is a true image of God who can bring God's power and wisdom and beauty into a situation, David is your man. That's what all these descriptors mean.

So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." So Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a skin of wine and one young goat, and he sent them to Saul by the hand of David, his son.

This is kind of funny. At least I think this is funny. In verse 20, my translation reads, "A donkey loaded with bread." Most of our English translations read something the same. But truly in Hebrew, the phrase says *chamor lechem*, literally "a donkey of bread." This is just a funny rabbit hole in the history of Bible translation, where even ancient translators who translated the Syriac Peshitta or the old Greek Septuagint had trouble with what to do here. A donkey made of bread obviously doesn't make a lot of sense. Some people think that instead of *chamor lechem*, the original text had *omer lechem*, which is one letter different. But an *omer* is an ancient measure in Hebrew that would be just about like a loaf of bread, and if you're giving a gift to a king, you're going to send a lot more than one loaf of bread. So it certainly means a donkey loaded with bread, but it's just kind of a funny phrase to imagine a donkey made of bread. Maybe that wasn't funny and nobody thinks that's interesting at all, but I thought it was interesting.

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So he sends all these gifts to the king.

And David came to Saul and he stood before him and he [Saul] loved him [David] very much. And David became Saul's armor carrier.

This is the first use of the word "love." Saul loved David. This word is going to get repeated throughout chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20. It's going to be the reason why Saul eventually comes to hate David (because everybody loves David). Jonathan, Saul's son, loves David. All the young maidens love David. All courtiers around Saul come to love David. And eventually Saul becomes jealous and hates David. But in this first moment he loves David. He becomes the carrier of Saul's armor. That's a link forward previewing the significance of armor carriers in the story of David and Goliath.

Saul sent word to Jesse saying, "Let him stand before me. He has found favor in my eyes."

Verse 23, final line:

And it came about when the spirit of God came to Saul [TM: that is, the bad spirit], David would take the stringed instrument and play it with his hand, and there would be relief for Saul.

That word "relief" there is unique. It's the word *ravach*. It's spelled with the exact same letters and comes from the exact same root as the Hebrew word for "spirit"—*ruach*. So when the *ruach* (the bad *ruach*) came to Saul, David would play and bring *ravach* for Saul. So we have God dealing harshly with his rebellious, corrupt, tyrant king. But also God uses David's wisdom and skill with the instrument to bring *ravach* for Saul.

And there would be good for him and the bad spirit would depart.

So it is this moment in the story where all of a sudden, David becomes this gift to Saul that brings relief. And so where this brings us now is that David is now going to become this test for Saul. How is Saul going to respond to this one that God has raised up in his place? This is language and imagery connected to sibling rivalry. I think it's connected to why all of the Jacob and Esau stories, the stories of Abimelech and his brothers, the story of Cain and Abel... This is all about how someone responds when God elevates one from a lower position to take their place. We know how Cain responded. We know how Esau responded. We know how the brothers of Joseph responded. But here, it's now a question of how Saul is going to respond. That's how this chapter ends, and it's going to set up what's really going to become this test of Saul. Will Saul acknowledge David as this chosen one, anointed with the spirit to bring good to the land, or is he going to respond... Will his love for David turn to hatred? And will that hatred become his own downfall?

All of that is kind of previewed in just these few little lines here at the end, where at first David was a gift to Saul, but then eventually how Saul responds to David will become his downfall.

Just a closing comment. I just want to pay attention to the narrative artistry, that a big part of how the Samuel story works is by key words that have been used either in earlier stories in the Torah or in the prophets. There, the narrator is assuming the reader has processed all of the text in the story leading up to this point so they can just link backwards. But then on the flip side, there's all this loaded language here that points forward so that when you come back to this story after reading the stories to follow, you can see that the hints of the future conflict of David and Saul were hinted at right here in this story.

So there you go. That's 1 Samuel 16. There's a lot more to explore, but those are at least some of the things that I think most of us will notice and some of the rabbit holes that are really cool.

1:05:00

TS: Fantastic. What a blessing to have you on this episode, Tim. And a new rule: If you bring up a rabbit hole, you've got to come back to go down it, because we're all about rabbit holes on this show. [laughter]

TM: Yeah, well me, too. I tried to at least poke my head down the most interesting ones.

TS: Yeah, that was perfect. Absolutely perfect. And I agree, man. Amen to biblical differences, like the numbering in the Bible. It shouldn't cause Christian-on-Christian crime, so I appreciate you at least bringing it up, and some of these hard, weird passages, which we're all about trying to shed light on them. So it was fantastic. It was awesome.

TM: Yeah, good. Again, just as we conclude, this was an honor to get to be able to do this and to just honor Mike's legacy. I learned so much from him. I think I'll be back to do another chapter in Samuel in the future, which I'm excited to do. But it's an honor to be able to contribute this to the podcast, Trey.

TS: We appreciate it. Again, Tim, I want to thank you for covering chapter 16 for us, and we'll be blessed to have you back, like you said, later on in 1 Samuel. What an honor to Mike. You're correct and we thank you. We can't thank you enough, so thank you. And I want to thank everyone else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.