

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 473

1 Samuel 24

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Episode Summary

Saul was hunting David in the wilderness of En Gedi when he and his men went into a cave to relieve themselves. David and his men were hiding in the back of the cave, and David's men urged him to kill Saul while he had the chance. But David refused, saying that he would not harm the Lord's anointed. Instead, he cut off a corner of Saul's robe and followed him out of the cave. When Saul saw that David had been there, he was ashamed and said that David was more righteous than he was. Saul promised David that he would not harm him or his descendants. This chapter demonstrates David's mercy and his commitment to the Lord.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 473: 1 Samuel 24. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Tim Mackie. Hey, Tim! It's really great to have you back!

TM: Yeah, Trey... It's great to be back. It's an honor. Again... I mentioned this last time that I came on. You know these are sobering, sad circumstances for why I'm here. But at the same time, it's such an honor to get to celebrate Mike's life and legacy and to contribute to this podcast. I have learned so much from this podcast over the last many years, so I'm grateful to be able to contribute.

TS: Well, I'm grateful for you saying that. It absolutely brings joy to me, the fact that I can play a small part in helping you and others, and vice versa...

TM: Yeah.

TS: ...and what y'all do at the Bible Project. And speaking of the Bible Project, is there anything new or interesting going on that you'd like to talk about?

TM: [laughs]. Always! Always something interesting and new! Both, in fact. I mean, we're always working on new videos, so we have new projects coming down the pipeline. One thing we're excited about that we'll start releasing at the end of 2024 and then all through '25 is a ten-part series crawling through the Sermon on the Mount. Two times over, actually. We're going to do one series

through it that's going to be like a color animated really, really beautiful exploration of the ideas in the Sermon on the Mount. And then we're also going to do an even-more-part series with a newish-style called "visual commentary," where we're kind of exploring what a multimedia version of a Bible commentary could look like. So taking the ideas of what you can do in a print commentary, but trying to turn it into a media learning experience. So we're going to do that. That's cool.

TS: Yeah!

TM: Sermon on the Mount, you know... I know it's not a separate book of the Bible... For many Christian traditions and for a lot of church history, it has kind of functioned as a little mini book of the Bible within the Gospel of Matthew. So there's no better place to go if you want to get the heartbeat of Jesus than the Sermon on the Mount. And then we have a Bible Project app that's been out for about a year and a half. There's a lot of new updates happening in that. We've been for a number of years now filming classes, like seminary-level classes taking you through books of the Bible. Those are now available within the Bible Project app. In a really convenient way, you can listen to them as podcasts and that kind of thing. So that's a cool thing going on. So there you go. Those are a couple cool things.

TS: Yeah, those Classrooms are perfect. I love those. And please tell me Jon is excited about Apple's new VR headset that just...

TM: [laughing] Totally!

TS: Tell me he's geeking out on that. I know he is.

TM: He's totally geeking out on it. As is true for the whole history of the Project, is it's about Jon (my partner and co-founder in the Project)... He sees things coming years down the line in terms of technology. So he's actually seen the headset coming for years. I don't know how much I can say, but I'll say we're going to have an experience available for the headset that will be there pretty close to when things become available. Jon's been working on it for a number of years. It's pretty cool. But it's really amazing to think about another layer of multimedia learning experience that just opens up opportunities for biblical study in really cool ways. And so we want to be at the forefront of that if we're able to.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. If anybody at Apple is listening, I hope they feature y'all if that's true. This is a fantastic app. And it makes me almost want to pay \$3,500 just for the headset just to experience it!

TM: [laughing] Yeah, totally! It's really cool. I think that's all I'll say: it's really cool. It's actually finished. I know they're just doing some finishing work so that it can

5:00 be available in the right places at the right time. But it's pretty awesome. I'll just say that.

TS: If I ever find myself in Portland, tell Jon I may stop by so I can get a sneak peek if that's possible.

TM: Actually, we have some headsets here (not the Apple ones, but the Oculus). If you come to our studio, you can have the virtual reality experience.

TS: Wow. You heard that, folks. I've recorded that.

TM: Don't quote me, but I guess I just said it, so... [laughs]

TS: All right, well, Tim, I can't tell you how much overwhelmingly positive feedback I got when you tackled 1 Samuel 16 last time.

TM: Oh, great! Oh, awesome.

TS: We really appreciate you coming on and doing chapter 24 for us today. I'm excited and we're all yours!

TM: Mmmm, great, yeah, awesome. When you invited me to participate in this, two chapters sprang to my mind immediately in the Samuel scroll. Chapters 16 and 24 are really high on my list. So today we're considering 1 Samuel chapter 24.

Where we are in the story... Of course, for those of you listening and following week to week, you know that chapter 23 (obviously) came before this one. But we're in a section of the David story that has its own kind of integrity and unity to it. We crossed an important threshold in chapter 21, and that's where David truly fled away from Saul and just needed to get away. So after the defeat of Goliath and chapters 18 and 19, where everybody loves David and then Saul turns on David and tries to kill him four times in the palace... That section concluded with Jonathan and David making a pact—a covenant—to each other, and Jonathan saying, "Hey, I know you're going to become king, and will you do kindness to me and my family when God makes you king?" With that, David had to truly flee from Jerusalem and... Sorry, not Jerusalem. [laughs] That's much later in David's story! Not Jerusalem, from Gibeah and all the places where Saul had made his headquarters.

So David flees in chapter 21, and he is pretty much on the run until the end of the 1 Samuel scroll in chapter 31, where Saul dies. But the section that starts in chapter 21 is really, really remarkable in how it's designed. It begins with David running to the priest to get the special Sabbath bread from the priests of Nob. Then Saul follows him and murders all the priests. That's a terrible story. Then

the next story, chapter 23, is where there's this city, Keilah, getting attacked by Philistines. Normally, Saul has been the one delivering Israel from its enemies, and so even though David isn't recognized as Israel's king publicly, he had been anointed privately and Saul really has a problem with that. What's ironic is that David ends up being the deliverer of Israel at Keilah. That's what chapter 23 is about.

What happens next (and what we're looking at in this episode) in chapters 24, 25, and 26 is a really tight-knit, three-part unit. So there are three stories here. One of these stories is about whether David will be patient and trust God to deliver the kingdom of Israel into his hands, whether God will do that through David using violence and scheming and intrigue. Or will David surrender and trust that God will elevate him to be Israel's public king at the right time? Chapter 24 is a story where David passes that test of trust in a really cool way. Chapter 25 is the story about David and a guy named [laughs]... "Evil Idiot" is how you would translate his name. His Hebrew name is Nabal, but it really means an idiot who has ill intent, so "Evil Idiot." And there, David actually wants to kill Nabal, and it's only Nabal's wife, Abigail, who persuades him not to use violence to take authority. And then you go back to chapter 26, and chapter 26 is the mirror of chapter 24, but in interesting and different ways.

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So I know this isn't an episode about chapters 25 and 26, but they really are a tight, three-part bundle. Chapter 24 both summarizes the theme so far (David is running in the wilderness for his life from King Saul), but then this little three-part unit in chapter 24 is previewing the themes that are to come. So we'll work our way through chapter 24, but I'll be pointing out things along the way. Because you do have to ask, "Why did these two stories..." There's one in 24 here where David spares Saul's life and chooses not to kill him and then there's another story about David sparing Saul's life and not killing him. That's chapter 26. And those have been placed right where they are surrounding the story about David and the guy named Evil Idiot in chapter 25. And all three of these stories are meditating on the test of trust that David has about whether he will wait for God to exalt him on God's timing, not David's timing.

So that's what this section of chapters is about. But chapter 24... We're just going to dive in. Actually, the literary unit of this section begins in the last sentence of chapter 23. So in our English Bibles, chapter 23:29 is where the literary unit actually begins. In the Hebrew Bible, chapter 23 verse 29 is actually chapter 24 verse 1. It's an interesting example of how different manuscript traditions developed slightly different chapter and verse ordering structures. Usually they're the same, but there's a number of places where they're not, and this is one of them.

So I'm going to start with 23:29. This section basically tells the whole story. It goes all the way down through verse 7 of chapter 24, and it's the story of where

David spares Saul's life. Then David's going to run out of the cave (because he's been hiding in a cave) and he's going to give a long speech to Saul that lasts from verses 8 through 15, and then Saul is going to give his own speech in response to David's speech, and that's verses 16 through 21. So it's a three-part chapter. There's a story, then David's speech about the story, and then Saul's speech about David's speech about the story [laughs]. So let's first read the story, which is the first third. So chapter 23 verse 29 [translating from Hebrew]:

Now David went up from there and he dwelt in the fortresses of En Gedi. And it came about when Saul turned away from after the Philistines, that they reported to him saying, "Look! David is in the wilderness of En Gedi!"

So the story begins with David fleeing and going from the wilderness of the Ziphites or Ziph and he just rescued Keilah, and he knows that Saul is after him because he consulted and got wisdom from God, and God said, "Yeah, Saul is coming after you." So David flees into the wilderness. And so he goes into the fortresses of En Gedi. This word "fortresses" (or maybe your English translations have "strongholds") is a fascinating little word. In plural, it's the Hebrew word *metzudot*, but it's essentially on top of rocky high hills. And this is really true in the central hill country of Israel/Palestine, where you have these high hills and then the dirt has eroded around the kind of foundation rocks of the hills. And so you get these huge rocky protrusions on top of these really tall hills. And so all throughout Israel's history, even into the times of Jesus, those rocks made natural fortresses and people would often build onto them (and so on) and make actual human-made fortresses on the natural fortresses. So that's what this word (*metzudot*) refers to. So David is literally cruising in and around the hills of Israel and Judea and using these natural fortresses of rocky strongholds.

But we're given one more detail about where he's at. He's in the rocky strongholds of En Gedi. So this directs our attention that David actually fled out of the central hill country. He went down. So En Gedi... This is really cool. The word *ein* means a spring or fountain and *ge-di* is the Hebrew word for goat. So literally this is "goat springs" (what En Gedi means). So this a spring fountain that's on the western shore—way down on the shore of the Dead Sea. So if you go down to the Dead Sea, you know... You go down the hill east from Jerusalem and you get down to the Dead Sea... It's one of the lowest bodies of water on earth, super-salty, nothing can live in it... And if you start going down the coast, you're going to hit Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found and so on. Eventually you'll get to the big, rocky *metzuda* called Masada, which is that famous fortress where the Jewish rebels held out against the Romans in 70 A.D.

But in between Qumran and Masada are the springs of En Gedi, or Goat Springs. It's really a remarkable place. I encourage you to just Google it and look up pictures because it's a dry, desolate place on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Very hot all year round. But there is this one canyon that just looks like the

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Garden of Eden. It's a spring, or what we would call a creek or a stream, that just comes from way up in the hills. And over thousands of years it has carved this deep, deep network of ravines in the hillsides. There are lots of caves. Everywhere the stream goes is just lush, lush garden pools. And it's full of mountain goats [laughs], which is why it's called Goat Springs. So that's cool. And it makes perfect sense why David would choose a spot like this. You can leap up the cliffs if you're really nimble. If you know the cliffs really well, you could escape from somebody so easily by going up these ravines and jumping into a cave, and so on.

So this is where David chooses to hide out. So one, that's just cool because it's geographically such an interesting place. However, the fact that David chooses the hideout of En Gedi certainly had some personal military strategic reasons. But the biblical narrator also, I think, has another reason for highlighting the fact that David is in En Gedi, and that's because the letters that make up the word "En Gedi" are actually also the same letters (just mixed around) that spell the phrase "Garden of Eden." I kid you not. So Garden of Eden is *gan eden* (גַּן עֵדֶן) and En Gedi is *ein gedi* (עֵין גֵּדִי). You just transpose the consonants.

And so why is that significant? If this were the only time that happened, that wouldn't necessarily be significant. However, consistently throughout the Hebrew Bible (especially the big narrative block from Genesis on through 2 Kings), the biblical narrators are constantly setting later stories on analogy with earlier stories in the collection. And often the way they do it is through wordplay and by setting up the reader's expectations by alluding to earlier locations where events took place. And often through wordplay. So the reader, now, is going to look for further clues for allusions back to those earlier stories. The reason why I think En Gedi is an allusion (or what I call a hyperlink) back to the Garden of Eden is because this whole story is going to be about David's test, similar to Adam and Eve's test in the Garden of Eden. They're going to have a choice to trust God's word in the Garden of Eden and not take what is good in their own eyes—what they think will lead to life but will actually lead to death. And David is going to have a choice about doing what is good in his own eyes about bringing death to someone else so that he can bring life to himself. David's test of trust in this opening story here is all set on analogy through verbal links and echoes and allusions to the story of Adam and Eve's test in the Garden of Eden. So I'll point those out as we go along, but I think those clues begin with the location of the story in En Gedi.

Okay, so we just heard that David fled to... [laughs] That was a long explanation of the very opening line! I'd better speed up here. What we hear is that Saul also stopped following the Philistines and he heard that David was in En Gedi. So verse 2:

Saul took 3,000 men, chosen men from all of Israel, and he went to seek David and his men.

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So this becomes a tale of two guys and their men. You have Saul and his men and you have David and his men. And where is Saul looking for David and his men? Against the face of the rocks of the mountain goats. Mmm, hmm. And of course, En Gedi is a place where there are a lot of those. Verse 3:

So he [Saul] went by the sheep folds (or the sheep pens) of the flock by the road.

So apparently he's cruising down on the western shore of the Dead Sea, or perhaps he's up on the hills on the upper end of the spring of En Gedi. The story doesn't say. But one way or another, there are sheep folds nearby. And we're told that he saw a cave there. There was a cave there, and so Saul went in to... [laughs] In Hebrew, the phrase is *la-hasek et-raglav*, which means literally "to cover his feet." Our different English translations read "to relieve himself." But it's referring literally to cover your feet by pulling up... You know they wore tunics and robes. He's going to go poop. So if you pull up your robe to expose your backside, a whole bunch of it is going to bunch over, and if you're kneeling or crouching down, it's going to cover your feet. So that's what this figure of speech means. If you're covering your feet, it means you're taking a dump.

So he's taking a dump in a cave. That's what Saul is doing here. Again, there is a very subtle illusion here, but if you are exposing yourself for that purpose, what you are doing is exposing your nakedness in the cave. It's very interesting. What's funny is that the word "cave" actually is spelled with the same letters as the word "nakedness" from the Garden of Eden. So Adam and Eve were *arum* [from עָרְוָה] and the cave is spelled *me-arah* (מְעָרָה). And actually, the word for cave (*me-arah*) in Hebrew comes from the same root, which means "to expose." So he is exposing himself in an exposed place, which is all an allusion back to Adam and Eve's nakedness in the Garden (or at least I think so). Because look what happens next.

But David and his men, they were sitting in the far back reaches of the cave.

So man, what a classic scene! David and his guys are like in the back. We don't know how deep the cave was, but you're supposed to laugh. Surely you're supposed to laugh here. So they're like lining the back of the cave, hiding the shadows, and in walks Saul [laughing], you have to image somewhat impatiently. He's gotta go! And so he crouches down, he's going to the bathroom, and David and his men are like down... It's just a classic, classic scene.

So that's the setup. Verses 4 through 6 are going to now shift the camera and we're going to be down in some little spot where David and his men are like whispering to each other, not far from Saul. And this is the conversation that they have (verse 4):

So the men of David said to him, "Look, today is the day that Yahweh has spoken to you about, saying 'Look! I will give your enemy into your hand.' So you should do to him what is good in your eyes."

Okay, so that's the setup here. David's men are appealing to some promise that Yahweh made, saying that he would give his enemies into his hands. Now, something like this was said back earlier when God said he would rescue the town of Keilah and give the Philistines "into your hands." So that was just in the previous chapter. But this idea of God delivering Saul into David's hand, well we don't have any record of Yahweh saying anything quite like that. So we're a little suspicious of these guys. Why are they putting words in Yahweh's mouth. Although they do believe that God has appointed David to be a victorious leader, and that's true. God has said that to David. But notice this little line. What they say is, "David, you should do to him what is good in your eyes." This is also language that comes right from the Garden of Eden story, particularly the moment when the woman saw the tree, that it was good, that it was desirable to the eyes and desirable to eat and desirable for gaining wisdom. So with this little line here, David is being portrayed as standing at the moment of decision. We know what the woman and then Adam did when they saw what was good in their eyes. They made the wrong choice. They didn't trust God's word and they took matters into their own hands—literally into their hands (the fruit).

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So now here, David's men are saying, "Look! God is giving your enemy into your hand! He is in your hand! You should take it!" So in this moment... It's so funny! Saul crouching over going to the bathroom becomes an image of the Tree of Knowing Good and Bad and whether David will take his enemy into his hand or not and do what is good in his eyes.

So David got up and he cut the edge of the robe, which was on Saul, secretly.

What we're told is that David gets up and we go, "What, is he going to, like, stab him from behind? What's he going to do?" And David gets out his knife, in fact, and he does cut! But what he cuts is the edge of Saul's robe. Okay, this is super key. The "edge of the robe" (that phrase)... This is a good example of a hyperlink back to an earlier story, but this time within Samuel. So this same phrase was used to describe the moment in chapter 15 when Saul really blew it with the Amalekites and he didn't do what God asked him to do. Samuel, if you recall, came and said, "You blew it. You didn't do the word of the Lord. Yahweh has rejected you from being king." If you recall, Saul came running after Samuel and grabbed the edge of his robe, and Samuel turned away and Saul tore away the

edge of Samuel's robe. It's the same phrase as here: *kenaf me-il* (the hem of the robe). And Samuel turned around to Saul and said, "Just like you ripped my robe away, so Yahweh is ripping the kingdom of Israel away from you and is going to give it to your companion, one who is more good than you."

So here we are again, and now it's the edge of Saul's robe that is getting ripped away, so to speak. It's as if David is taking the symbol of Saul's royal leadership by taking a piece off of his royal robe, but comically-like, without Saul knowing it and while he's going to the bathroom. Come on... that's funny.

What David doesn't do is cut off Saul's head. He cuts off an edge of his robe. This is not what David's men told him to do, so we're a bit surprised. Let's keep on reading. Verse 5:

Now it came about after this that David's heart struck him.

So we're told that after David kind of pulled this maneuver, based on the persuasion of his men... Even though he didn't kill Saul, he just took a piece of the robe off, but his heart strikes him anyway. This is surely a depiction of the very soft, sensitive conscience of David, so that even not taking Saul's life but taking part of his robe, David views as wrong and as an offense—something that he shouldn't have done. So he says to his men:

"Far be it for me by Yahweh if I should ever do this thing to my lord, to the anointed one of Yahweh, to send out my hand against him because he is the anointed one of Yahweh."

This is so fascinating how this is designed. David's men give a speech to him, saying, "Do what is good in your eyes." Then you get the description that David got up, he cut the edge of the robe, then his heart struck him. And then in verse 6, it seems he comes back to his men and he takes an oath. He actually, like takes an oath upon himself, swearing that he would never do this thing—that is, to take Saul's life. So what's funny is the ordering of the sequence of events in the text right here has actually been a puzzle for scholars for quite a while. Because David's men give this speech saying, "Do this." David gets up and doesn't do it; he does this other thing, but then his heart strikes him even about that thing. And then in verse 6, David gives a speech to his men, but it kind of seems late. It seems like it's the speech that David gave to the men to say, "No, I'm not going to do that thing." Then he would get up and cut the edge of the robe. Just to notice here, if you turn to certain more critical commentaries that are interested in source criticism (or trying to reconstruct the order of composition of the text and trying to look for layers of editing or compositional history), this is a section that many scholars who are looking with that lens look at this text and say, "Look, it's out of order! You get the speech from David's guys, then you get a narrative of David acting contrary to that speech, and then you get David's

speech that says the reason why the act is contrary to the speech." So people often locate verse 6 after the men's speech.

David Tsumura, a Hebrew Bible scholar, researched and wrote the 1 Samuel commentary for the New International Commentary on the Old Testament. It's the blue cover on it. In the course of his many years' study on Samuel, he identified a really important literary stylistic pattern that the author typically follows. He calls it a "literary insertion pattern." But what it connects with is actually a larger set of studies within Hebrew Bible scholarship as a whole on literary design, and specifically on symmetrical design in biblical narrative. So I'm thinking here of the work of Jerome Walsh (*Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*), and the work of David Andrew Teeter in his important essay, "Biblical Symmetry and its Modern Detractors." And what these scholars are noticing is that very often, biblical authors will organize parts of a story not in what we would think of as a linear event sequence. Rather, they'll arrange a story or a section in a symmetrical, poetic sequence to make a point. And actually, I think David Tsumura identifies this moment in the story as one of these. I just wanted to highlight it.

So what you have is two speeches. You have the speech from David's men to David. That's at the beginning. And then it ends with the response speech of David back to his men. Think of it like a sandwich. Those are the two pieces of bread on the top and on the bottom. And what you have in the middle (think of this as like your cheese or lettuce or tomato or choose your protein, like ham or bean burger or something like that)... What's in the middle is the narrative action. Tsumura's point is that this forces the reader to slow down and consider all of the parts of the story and to see that the part located in the center relates to both the outer ends—both the thing at the beginning and the thing at the end. So it doesn't make a lot of sense to modern Western readers, for whom we think mostly in terms of linear, logical sequences. But biblical authors didn't think that way. They often thought and organized their poetry and narratives in a more symmetrical fashion.

So I think this works as a beautiful little piece here, where you have David's men giving him their reasoning for why he should do what's good in his own eyes. That is framed on the other end of this unit by David's response ("I'm not going to do what's good in my eyes because he is God's anointed one"), and then you get David's actions that result from the two speeches.

I took a long time to explain that because it's just a wonderful example of how the literary style of the biblical authors is really different than modern narrative style. And so sometimes when we come across things that feel funky or "off" to us in terms of the ordering or the wording that's used, usually it's because we are not familiar with how the biblical authors developed their own style and conventions for writing narrative. And this is a really good example.

After that, we're going to go down to verse 7. This is fascinating. David's response now after he's taken the robe and feels really bad about it... David responds to his men once more. We're told in verse 7 that David... This is a hard verb to translate (and I'll talk about it). For the moment I'll just say this:

David tore apart his men with words. And he did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And so Saul rose up from the cave and he went on his way.

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So not only will David not kill Saul, but he has to hold back his men from rising up against Saul in the cave, too. And to prevent his men from killing Saul, what we're told is that David... This is the opening verb in verse 7. In Hebrew, it's *vai-shasah*. The verb *shasah* is really unique. It appears nine times in the Hebrew Bible. That's pretty good, actually, for a rare-ish kind of word. But if you look at the other times this word appears, it's really fascinating. It's used of splitting or tearing—what the priests do to a bird in sacrificial rituals. They use knives to cut goats and bulls open, but for birds, they just use their fingers and rip them open. And *shasah* (or *shaseah*) is the word for that. This is also the verb used when Samson tears open the lion—when a lion attacks him and he tears it open and then he leaves the carcass there and the bees make the beehive in the torn-open carcass. And that's that verb. This verb is also used to describe the split hooves of the ritually pure kosher animals in the kosher food list in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. So it's a really strange word—to split or to tear open. And this is what David is said to have done to his men with words.

Most of our English translations are going to go with something like "he persuaded them" or "he rebuked them." The old Greek Septuagint translation (from before Jesus) used the Greek word *peitho*—"to persuade" his men with words. The early Aramaic translations actually went in a different direction. They used an Aramaic word *paies*, which means to calm down his men. The early Latin Vulgate translated this word with the Latin word *confregit*, which means to break into pieces. Basically, nobody knows what to do with this throughout the history of interpretation.

Why is David depicted here as "tearing apart" his men with words? Well, there's at least a couple of strong possibilities in my mind. I guess I should say there are technically three. One is, maybe there is a nuance of meaning for this word that is lost to history and we just don't know what it is—some figure of speech—and we just need to deal with it. That's possible, and those types of situations do occur still in the Hebrew Bible, where we don't quite know the precise nuance of meaning of a word.

It's also possible that this is a literary wordplay or semantic wordplay connected to the theme of cutting throughout the story. Remember how David cut the edge of Saul's garment? What's interesting is to remember that was a hyperlink all the way back to when Saul tore Samuel's robe. And then what's also interesting is at

the end of the story, Saul is going to ask David not to cut off any of his future children when he becomes king. So this theme of cutting off related to the kingdom is connected to the story here in a deep way. And so the fact that David would have to tear apart or "split into" his men with words maybe is some kind of wordplay there.

Also, there's one other possibility that just occurred to me this morning as I was prepping for this. And that is that this is exactly, like I said, the word used of when Samson tears open the lion. There's another moment later in the story that we'll look at in a few minutes, where David quotes an old proverb to Saul, and the proverb has a really similar ring and verbal structure to it as the proverb that Samson tells the Philistines about the lion, which is, "out of the eater comes something to eat..." And so I wonder if actually the narrator is burying a whole set of hyperlinks back to the Samson story here. But I haven't been able to follow this through because it just occurred to me this morning.

Okay, there you go. That's the story. It took me a long time to get through just the first third of the chapter, but that's the story. So you guys get it: David has refused to do what is good in his eyes. He has passed the test of trust. He's not going to strike the Lord's anointed one with his hands. Now of course, David IS the Lord's anointed one, but Saul still is publicly, and David is going to wait for God to exalt him as king in his own time.

So here's where the story goes from here. We're going to move into the second panel of the story.

So David got up after this and he went out of the cave and he called after Saul saying, "My lord, the king!"

Notice he uses very honorable titles here to refer to the king instead of just calling him, like, "Hey, man!" Which was probably more appropriate. But he calls him "my lord, the king," which is going to follow with what he says here. We're told that,

Saul looked behind him and David bowed down his face to the ground and he laid prostrate.

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So not only is David calling Saul "my lord, the king," but then he bows down to him. Just imagine what's going through the minds of David's men right now. They're like, "This guy's trying to kill you!" And David still chooses to honor him as the anointed king. And then here's David's speech. It's a rhetorical masterpiece. Verse 9:

David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of humans who say, 'Look, David is seeking evil against you?' Look! This very day your eyes will see that Yahweh gave you today into my hand in the cave. And someone said to kill you, but I had mercy on you. And I said, 'I will not send out my hand against my lord because he is the Lord's anointed.'"

So notice that David... First of all, he's portraying what just happened in the cave (back to Saul). And he's saying, "Listen, you can believe two narratives about me right now, Saul. You can hear what people are saying, but all that people have to say is what they have to say. They don't have any proof." So he flips it over and he says, "Listen, that's what you have heard people say. Let me show you something that you'll see with your eyes today—that I could have killed you." [laughs] Now, he doesn't say that. What he says is, "Yahweh gave you into my hand. And someone said to kill you..." Notice he's even kind of generous to his men here. Instead of saying, "You know, my men here said I should kill you," he just says, "You know, somebody was saying I should kill you, but I didn't." So David is really turning up the emphasis here on the fact that the only reason Saul is alive and listening to David speak right now is because David is not seeking to do anything evil to Saul. He continues on this theme in verse 11. He says,

"So, my father..."

He calls him "my dad," which is a very intimate title. It is referring to the king as like the patriarch or father of his house. David was living in the royal house. But David is pulling a rhetorical move here, using a term of intimacy. He says:

"So, my father, look today, yes—even now—look at the edge of your robe in my hand."

This is so epic. If this was a scene in a movie, this would be the moment where he pulls out the robe and it's flapping in the wind. I'll bet this is taking place at sunset or something like that. That's the scene right here. He says,

"When I cut the edge of your robe, I did not kill you. So know and see that there is not in my hand any evil, any transgression. I have not sinned against you. But you are hunting my life to take it."

So he's really pouring on the rhetoric here with the verbs of seeing and knowing. "So look! You can hear what people say, but look at what's in my hand. Look at the fact that I could have killed you and I didn't. So what I have in my hand here is your robe that shows you that I didn't do evil to you. There is in my hand..." And he uses three key words for sin and badness in the Bible. There is no *rah*, or badness. There's no *pesha*, or transgression (or maybe betrayal is actually a more likely nuance of this word here in this context). "And I haven't sinned

against you. I have not done anything that would count as a moral failure against you.

"But you, Saul, are hunting after me."

So now he flips it. And he's like, "I've done nothing against you in the past, and even now, and here you are hunting me." So he's going to close out the speech. Verse 12:

May Yahweh act as judge between me and between you, and may Yahweh bring vindication (or vengeance) on my behalf from you. But my hand will not be against you."

So then he invokes Yahweh, not just as the one who gave Saul into David's hand, but that he trusts that Yahweh will bring justice. Yahweh is going to render justice between Saul and David. And David is essentially saying, "I'm not going to try and get even with you." When he uses the word "recompense" or "vengeance," that's the word *naqam* in Hebrew, and it's essentially about... If somebody has wronged you, *naqam* is a way of gaining vengeance. Often, it's a life-for-life kind of situation.

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So David is here putting a stake in the ground: "I'm not going to kill you. You're trying to kill me; I'm never going to try and kill you. I will let Yahweh deal with you and I appeal to him as my mediator. But my hand is not going to do it." Verse 13 is fascinating. He quotes a little proverb. He says,

"You know, this is just like the ancient proverb says, 'from wicked ones comes out wickedness,' but my hand will not be against you."

So this little proverb is saying essentially, "How do you know a wicked person? Well, you look at what they do." [laughs] Someone whose life is bent towards a destructive end, all you have to do is look at their actions, and their actions prove what kind of person they are. This is kind of an indirect way of David saying, "I'm not an evil guy and I'm not seeking evil against you. Because listen, if I was, you wouldn't be alive to hear my speech right now." [laughs] Actually, R.P. Gordon (a British scholar and commentator on 1 and 2 Samuel) summarizes David's speech in this way: "Deeds express disposition." "So if I was a wicked guy, you wouldn't be alive. I would have done the wicked deed of killing you." So implication: "I'm not a wicked guy and I'm not trying to kill you."

Also, what's interesting is this ancient proverb is very similar in terms of grammar and structure to Samson's riddle that he tells the Philistines ("out of the eater comes something to eat..."). That might be another little hyperlink. So David finishes his speech. He says,

**"After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom are you chasing?
After a dead dog? After a single flea?"**

These are terms that are used elsewhere in Samuel. Basically, a dead dog... Dogs were mangy scavengers, and so a dead dog was ritually impure to Israelites. You don't want to eat it, you just stay away. And a single flea is like a tiny little speck of a creature. "You have all these soldiers out here. What are you doing? Why are you chasing a dead dog and a single flea?"

**"May Yahweh act as judge and may he render justice between me and you.
May he see and may he judge for my case. May Yahweh judge me from your
hand."**

There you go. So that's David's speech. He clearly is entrusting his life to Yahweh. He's not going to do what's good in his eyes. He's not going to do evil. He's not going to murder. He's not going to break one of the Ten Commandments. He's going to trust that God acts as judge.

A lot of this language actually comes right from the Garden of Eden story. The sending out of the hand is what Adam and Eve were said to do in Genesis 3— sending out their hand to take and do what's good in their eyes. And so the fact that David won't send out his hand, he won't do what's good in his eyes, he won't take Saul's life... This is an inverted Eden failure story. Or rather, here's David in En Gedi (which again is spelled with the letters of "Garden of Eden"), but instead of sending out his hand to take life, he keeps his hand back to preserve Saul's life. Verse 16 is Saul's response.

**So it came about when David finished speaking these words to Saul that Saul
said, "Is this your voice, my son, David?"**

Remember David called Saul "my father?" Now Saul returns the favor by calling him "my son."

"Is this your voice, my son?" And Saul lifted up his voice and he wept.

So just like David bowed down to Saul and calls him "my king" and "my father," so now here Saul weeps when he hears the voice of David. And he says to David in verse 17:

**"You are more righteous than I am because you have dealt me good, whereas I
have dealt with you with evil."**

50:00

Man, this is so good. That first line, "you are more righteous than I" is exactly what Judah says to Tamar in Genesis 38, when Tamar used scheming and trickery (but to save the life of Judah's family) and he realizes that she has tricked him. Remember, she dressed up as a prostitute and got pregnant with his child. And he thinks (before he knew that it was his daughter-in-law) that this was a prostitute and he wants to have her put to death. And then when he realizes that it was his daughter-in-law who was actually trying to save his family, whereas he was getting drunk and shearing sheep with his buddies... He realizes, "Oh my gosh! You were more in the right than I am." That's exactly the phrase that Saul uses here. And in a similar way. David was lurking in a secret way. He could have done things that were good in his eyes, but he didn't. And so David is now called more righteous than Saul because he has done good instead of doing evil. In verse 18, Saul continues,

"So you have reported today what it is that you have done for me that is good, how Yahweh delivered me into your hand, but you did not kill me."

Then Saul kind of tells a proverb of his own, saying:

"So when does a man ever find his enemy and then send him away on the road with good? May Yahweh fully repay good to you in place of this thing that you have done to me today."

So here's Saul fully recognizing what David has done (at least he seems to recognize it), and he does so in exactly the language of the story. Remember, David's men said, "Do what's good in your own eyes" and Saul says here, "You have done good to me today." And then he has his own proverb and he's like, "When does a guy ever find his enemy..." (much less his enemy pooping in a cave...) "You had a knife in your hand and you could have killed me, but you sent me on the road with goodness!" And he says, "May Yahweh repay you."

So here we have kind of a full inversion of all the themes. David's speech worked and Saul seems to get it. Verse 20:

"So now, then, look. I know that you will surely become king."

In Hebrew, this phrase is called an infinitive absolute. When you want to emphasize the certainty of the verb. You just speak the verb twice, so *malok timlok*, or "reigning you will reign." But it means, "You will surely reign as king." So here it is, from the king's mouth! "You're going to be king, David." He says,

"You are surely going to become king and the kingdom of Israel will rise up into your hand."

And then here's this last line:

"So now, then, swear an oath to me by Yahweh that you will never cut off my seed after me and never destroy my name from the house of my father."

So Saul instantly goes to thinking about the future of his household because he knows that David is going to become king. So he thinks to the line of Jonathan and to the royal lineage after it. So what's interesting is David cut off Saul's robe and now here's Saul saying, "Don't cut off any of my descendants." Little does Saul know that David long ago already made a covenant/oath/promise to Jonathan about this very thing. Jonathan said the same thing: "I know you're going to become king." And David says, "I'm going to treat your descendants with kindness; you don't have to worry." In other words, the whole narrative is emphasizing that David's rise to kingship in Israel was not a result of his plan or scheme or some military coup. David waited humbly, patiently, for God to raise him up as king. And for a long period, he suffered as Israel's true king. But he suffered in the wilderness, allowing Saul to chase him—allowing his father to chase him.

And so the story ends. David swore an oath to Saul. Saul went back to his house and David and his men went back up to the fortress. So that's the story. Man, this is such an epic story. Clearly, this story paints a positive portrait. David has passed his test of trust. Saul acknowledges that David is going to become king. And you think, "Okay, problem solved." Like this thing should be over. But what happens in the next two stories is, one, we're going to show that it's not so simple for David. His act of trust is actually a lot more difficult. It takes a lot more strength of the will because David is going to meet that guy named Evil Idiot (Nabal) in the next story. He is going to show such contempt and publicly shame David. And David is just going to be like, "Off with this guy's head!" And he almost kills him, and it's Abigail who steps in (that guy's wife) and has this amazing speech to David saying, "Listen, you're going to become king one day and you should just trust God to deal with Evil Idiot here. And if God does that for you with my husband, Evil Idiot, then surely he's going to deliver all your other enemies into your hands."

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So that story then is kind of a flip side, where David actually shows he kind of has a hot temper and he's willing to pull out the sword pretty quickly. What he needs is people in his life who will talk him back from the ledge, so to speak, when he's ready to do what's good in his own eyes.

Then chapter 26 is going to come and Saul is once again going to end up with his life in David's hands. This time David and one of his men are going to sneak down into the camp. They could kill Saul, and once again David is going to spare Saul's life. But the whole reason they're in that situation is because Saul goes back on his word here and he starts chasing David in the wilderness.

So this whole section of chapters is showing that even David's trust in God is fickle. We kind of knew Saul was a madman, so Saul's own will and desires are fickle. Through all of it, Yahweh is working out his purpose to raise up his humble, afflicted, anointed one who is waiting patiently to be exalted as king. And only after a period of long suffering, waiting patience is God's true anointed one exalted up.

And so, in the larger frame of the David stories, this section is really important. This is the section of David's story that's really going to be developed in the Psalms scroll. There's lots of hyperlinks in the superscriptions of the Psalms to songs David sung or poems that he wrote while he was running from Saul in the wilderness. And so this period in the wilderness for David is really key to his portrait within the Hebrew Bible, because it's all about a portrait of God's chosen, anointed one who is waiting, persecuted by his brothers, waiting for God to exalt him, and choosing not to take the sword into his own hand.

And so if that just starts to sound like Jesus to you, that's important because that's how it is. And this section of David's story is going to be of great interest to Jesus. Jesus is going to quote and allude to moments of David's life from this section of the story. And so it kind of stands here as this important messianic testimony in the Hebrew Bible of God's anointed one who trusts God, won't use violence to bring God's kingdom, and waits for God to exalt him on his own time. And that is 1 Samuel chapter 24.

TS: Tim, I can't get the image (thanks to you) of David crawling on his stomach probably while Saul is pooping...

TM: [laughs] I mean... right? It's pretty amazing!

TS: Being that close and then, I mean... [laughs] I'm not going to be able to get this image out of my head.

TM: He had to come from behind (pun intended). So it's a really remarkable story. There you go, man.

TS: You have to laugh at it. It's okay to laugh at it because it's...

TM: Absolutely! The point is that it's a humiliating moment for Saul to have to realize that was the moment when David showed him honor, saving his life. It's such a poignant kind of contrast.

TS: I can only imagine they had some kind of conversation after that heavy moment about his movement, you know. [laughter] I can only imagine they laughed about it afterward. I don't know, I don't know.

TM: One would like to imagine.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. Well, fantastic. Well, that was great, absolutely great. We appreciate you so much for coming on. It means a lot.

TM: Absolutely.

TS: You know, you have an open invitation any time you want to come back. We appreciate having you on. You really capture the spirit of Dr. Heiser. You're great. We love the Bible Project and all that you do, so...

1:00:00

TM: Thank you. Thanks, Trey. And again, it's a great honor. I know I mentioned this in the earlier episode where so many people got to tell stories to honor Mike. His impact on me began in my first weeks at the University of Wisconsin because he and I did our PhDs in the same program. And my first year was his last year. So I've been impacted by Mike for many years—over half my life now. So it's a real honor. I'm sad that his contributions came to an end in terms of new contributions, but man, the ways that God used him to spread such important scholarship and insight into the Bible and Christian faith throughout the years... I'm really grateful to be able to make a small contribution to his legacy.

TS: Well, with that, we want to thank Dr. Tim Mackie for coming on, and we want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.