

Sha'ul Tries to Kill David

First Samuel 19: 1-24

DIG: Why is Sha'ul so eager to kill David? How did David respond to Sha'ul's hatred of him? What did that say about David? How is Sha'ul fighting God's will? Why would a person knowingly do this? Why do you think Y'honatan seems more loyal to David than to his own father? Why did David seem to trust Sha'ul's vow at this point? Why did YHVH send an evil spirit to Sha'ul again? What is the LORD trying to do? Why did David play the lyre again, after all he and Sha'ul had been through? Like Y'honatan, does it surprise you that Michal, David's wife, was more loyal to him than to her father? The prophesying here was probably singing and praising ADONAI. Why did this seem to keep Sha'ul's men from capturing David? Why is it ironic that Sha'ul ends up prophesying also? How might this have been God showing His mercy toward Sha'ul?

REFLECT: Has someone ever hated you for no good reason? How did you react? How has your loyalty to friends been tested recently? Did you pass the loyalty test? How so? Is there any situation in your life right now in which you feel like "the enemy is closing in?" Have you devised a plan of escape? Have you had to make good on it yet? Do you have any less than loyal plans that ADONAI might be frustrating? What would it take for you to submit to the Lord's stronger and wiser will? How can praise and worship help you in your times of trouble?

1017 BC

Sha'ul - ever fearful and threatened, as well as aware that his dynasty was cursed and his kingdom would not last - soon grew suspicious of the young champion, saw him as his rival, and sought to murder him. Under this deadly threat, David would have had no chance. But he had an ally in the court, his friend and brother-in-law, Y'honatan. Their lives had been knit together in such a way that they made a covenant of loyalty to each other even though David, who was about 23 years old at the time, was half Y'honatan's age (First Samuel 18:3).⁵⁹

Sha'ul Tries to Kill David by His Servants: Sha'ul was tired of behind-the-scenes plots and was out to destroy his son-in-law in the quickest way possible, so he told his son Y'honatan and all his servants to kill David. Apparently Sha'ul was not aware of the deep friendship between his son and David. When this happened the prince warned David of his

father's intention. But Y'honatan was very fond of David, and told him, "My father Sha'ul is out to have you killed. Therefore you must be very cautious tomorrow morning. Find a well-concealed place to hide in. The conspiracy was well planned. I will go out and stand next to my father in the countryside where you're hiding. I will talk with my father about you; and if I learn anything, I'll tell you" (First Samuel 19:13 CJB).

Y'honatan even interceded with his father and spoke well of David, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. YHVH won a great victory for all Isra'el, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason? Sha'ul, enjoying a sane moment, listened to Y'honatan and took this oath, "As surely as ADONAI lives, David will not be put to death." So Y'honatan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Sha'ul, and David was with Sha'ul as before (First Samuel 19:4-7). It's remarkable that such a magnificent son could belong to such a wicked father! Had Y'honatan been selfish, he could have helped to eliminate David and secure the crown for himself, but he submitted to ADONAI and assisted David.⁶⁰

Sha'ul Tries to Kill David by the Spear Again: After an initial and successful attempt by Y'honatan to smooth his father's feelings toward David, Sha'ul continued his jealous attack against Isra'el's future king. Once more war broke out, and David again went out and fought the Philistines and again he was extremely successful. He struck them with such force that they fled before him. Sha'ul was elected king to free the nation from the Philistines, but David was more successful than Sha'ul ever thought of being. Therefore, all of Y'honatan's efforts left Sha'ul unmoved and murderous in his resolve. So YHVH treated Sha'ul like Pharaoh and hardened his heart, and knowing the evil intentions of his heart, gave him over to an evil spirit as he was sitting in his house with his spear (scepter) in his hand. **The Adversary is a liar and murderer** (John 8:44), and because the Evil One controlled Sha'ul, he tried to pin David to the wall with his spear while he was playing the lyre. But David eluded him as Sha'ul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape (First Samuel 19:8-10).

David was then a hunted man, sought by the king. David was thus far in the narrative completely passive. He took no initiative, nor are we told of his responses to Sha'ul. The story simply gives room for the venom of Sha'ul to have its full, self-destructive play.⁶¹

Sha'ul Tries to Kill David by the His Messengers: Sha'ul can now think of nothing except the threat of David. So he sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, knowing her father's thought processes, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." So Michal let David down through a window (evidently an unguarded position with the messengers watching only the doors), and he fled and escaped. While Michal was scheming, David was praying (see Aq - **Sha'ul Sent Men to Kill David**). Then Michal took one of her own idols (the house of Sha'ul was not totally free of idolatry) and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goat's hair at the head. Apparently the men went back to Sha'ul and told him that David never came out. But when Sha'ul sent the men back a second time to capture David, Michal said, "He is ill." They did not enter the house to check out Michal's story so Sha'ul sent the men back a third time to see David and told them, "Bring him up to me in his bed so I may kill him." But when the men entered, they discovered what the reader already knows: David was not there. There was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goat's hair. Only then does the father speak to his daughter. Only then do we hear the anguish in Sha'ul's voice: **Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so he escaped?**" Sha'ul's sadness, however, wasn't enough to compel Michal's honest respect. She told him, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you' (First Samuel 19:11-17)?"

We seem to be watching a soap opera. There is nothing here about ADONAI, ADONAI's will, or ADONAI's Kingdom. We are watching calculating humans that do not measure up to our expectations. Michael despised David in her heart so she chose to do wrong out of a selfish heart- just like her father. The hardened and selfish heart attitude of Sha'ul had infected the whole scene. David had escaped and Sha'ul was left with his evil spirit and without the object of his intense hatred. As a result of his obsession to kill David, Sha'ul had lost a son, and then a daughter.⁶²

David Flees to Ramah: When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at his home in Ramah and told him all that Sha'ul had done to him. This was a logical place because it was Samuel who anointed David as the next king in place of Sha'ul. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth, a section of Ramah containing the school of the prophets, which would provide a measure of sanctuary, and stayed there.

But Sha'ul's spies were everywhere, and they reported to the king where he could find David. Word came to Sha'ul, "David is in Naioth at Ramah," so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing there as their leader, the Ruach HaKodesh came upon Sha'ul's men, and they also prophesied.

Keep in mind, this is not a blessing - but a judgment. **They** fell into a trance-like state that made it impossible for **them** to harm **David**. **Sha'ul** was told about it, and he sent more men a third time, and they also prophesied. Finally, in sheer exasperation, **Sha'ul** takes matters into his own hands by going to **Ramah** and went to the great cistern at **Seku**.

And he asked, "Where are **Samuel** and **David**?" **David's** presence in **Ramah** was no secret because the people knew where they were. "Over in **Naioth** at **Ramah**," they said. So **Sha'ul** went to **Naioth** at **Ramah**. But the **Ruach HaKodesh** came even on him, which was a judgment because it made it impossible for **Sha'ul** to carry out his wicked plan. And he walked along prophesying until he came to **Naioth**. He stripped off his garments and he too prophesied in **Samuel's** presence. This would be their last meeting until that fateful night when **Samuel** came up from **Sh'ol** to pass judgment on the king (See **By - Sha'ul and the Medium at Endor**). **Sha'ul** lay naked (a person was called naked whose outer clothes were thrown aside, leaving nothing but a long tunic next to the skin) in judgment all that day and all that night. And this gave **David** ample time to escape (**First Samuel 19:18-24a**). This pitifully embarrassing scene is that of this once great man, still tall but no longer great, prostrate on the ground, clearly not in control, shamed, now rendered powerless.

Sha'ul had a similar experience after **Samuel** had anointed him king at **Ramah** (**First Samuel 8:4**) and from it came the proverbial saying: **Is Sha'ul also among the prophets** (**First Samuel 10:9-13**). These two events prove that a person can have a remarkable religious experience and yet have no change of heart. In **Sha'ul's** case, both experiences were actually sent by **Ha'Shem**, but **Sha'ul** didn't profit from either one. **Judas** preached sermons and even performed miracles (**Matthew 10:1-8**), yet was not a believer. He ended up betraying the Lord and ended up committing suicide (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lm - Judas Hangs Himself**). **Sha'ul**, like **Judas**, had many opportunities to see **God's** hand at work, and yet he never had a life-changing experience.⁶³ This is why people say, "Is **Sha'ul** also among the prophets" (**First Samuel 19:24b**)?

Even though in both cases the people asked: **Is Sha'ul also among the prophets?**-this question, however, can be asked in two very different tones of voice. In the first instance the question can be asked with expectancy, suggesting this surprising king, then powerfully energized by the **Ruach HaKodesh**, would rule in obedience to **YHVH**. But all that is left in the end is an empty shell of hate, no longer a king. **Sha'ul's** career will be winding down for a while, but the narrator wants us to see that his rule is, in fact, finished.⁶⁴

While **Sha'ul** was occupied at the school of the prophets, **David** slipped away from **Ramah** and went to meet **Y'honatan** somewhere near Gibeah. **David** and **Y'honatan** would make one final attempt to reconcile with **the king**, and it would almost cost **Y'honatan** his life. **Sha'ul** was **double-minded and unstable in all his ways (James 1:8)**. He would try to rule Y'hudah and defeat the Philistines while also chasing **David** all over the landscape trying to **kill him**. The longer **David** eluded **him**, the more fanatical **Sha'ul** became until **he** finally ended **his** own life on the battlefield, lacking the help of the one **man** who could give him victory.⁶⁵