

Samuel Anoints David

First Samuel 16: 1-13

DIG: Why was Samuel mourning? Why does Samuel hesitate to go to Beit-Lehem? What do Samuel's fears say about Sha'ul's character? How does YHVH calm his fears? Why do the elders of the town tremble at the sight of Samuel? What does that say about the rift between Sha'ul and Samuel? Beyond normal worship, what does Samuel's sacrifice signify? Why did Samuel initially think Eli'av was the LORD's anointed? What is the irony here? The Jews had chosen a king that looked like Eli'av (see 10:23-24), but that would end in disaster. When else had ADONAI ignored tradition and chosen one with a heart for God to fulfill His covenant (Genesis 25:23)? What was the significance of the anointing of David by Samuel?

REFLECT: What do you look for when you search for a leader you can trust? When have you judged a fellow believer because of their appearance? What difference would it make if you saw him or her as YHVH does? What is God calling you to do despite what other people think?

1030 BC

The people had chosen **Sha'ul** because he looked like a king. But he wasn't a godly man and failed his nation and his God miserably. Therefore, YHVH spoke through His prophet **Samuel** to choose another who would be king over all **Isra'el** (First Samuel 15:1-35). After **Sha'ul's** further rebellion against ADONAI and his subsequent rejection by God, Samuel was commissioned to seek out the one who would succeed **Sha'ul** on the throne of **Isra'el**. This one had already been identified as a man after God's own heart (First Samuel 13:14) and one of **Sha'ul's** neighbors who was better than he (First Samuel 15:28). David had been chosen from eternity past to be ruler of **Isra'el**.

The rejection of **Sha'ul** did not force **Ha'Shem** to a new course of action. Rather, God's action followed His omniscient plan in such a way as to use **Sha'ul's** disobedience as the human occasion for implementing His higher plan. YHVH had permitted the people to have the king of their choice. Now that that king and their mistake in choosing him had been clearly seen, the LORD proved the superiority of His own wisdom in raising up a king who would come in fulfillment of His perfect will.²²

As the story begins, we see an aged man. He is the greatest man of his time, one of God's mightiest servants. At one time, this man had been used by God to rescue His people in one of their darkest hours (First Samuel 2:12-3:21). But now Samuel, Isra'el's last judge and still God's prophet, trembles and weeps. The cause of Samuel's grief is Isra'el's king, whom Samuel had tried to serve and help for decades. King Sha'ul, chosen by the people because of his worldly qualifications, proved to have none of the spiritual qualities needed for leading God's people. Sha'ul would not obey the voice of the LORD, so Samuel was called by YHVH to rebuke and ultimately reject him as king.²³ In the end, God regretted that He had made Sha'ul king over Isra'el, and Samuel grieved over Sha'ul (First Samuel 15:35).

Samuel's Journey: ADONAI said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Sha'ul, since I have rejected him as king over Isra'el? It was very difficult for Samuel to accept the fact that Sha'ul had failed, and God was replacing him with another king. But YHVH is a God of action, and He commanded Samuel to move forward despite his sense of personal loss. Fill your horn with oil (for the purpose of anointing) and be on your way.

Earlier in First Samuel ADONAI selected someone of His own choosing after His own heart (First Samuel 13:14), someone better than Sha'ul (First Samuel 15:28), to replace him as king. I am sending you to Jesse of Beit-Lechem (see the commentary on Ruth Bd - Coda: The Genealogy of David). I have chosen for Myself one of his sons to be king" (First Samuel 16:1 CJB). The people had chosen King Sha'ul, but this time ADONAI will make the choice. Now Samuel knew that Ha'Shem had rejected Sha'ul as king over Isra'el (First Samuel 15:26), but he didn't know who the new king would be. Here, at least, the search was whittled down to Jesse and his sons.²⁴

As Isra'el's judge and prophet, Samuel had the right to travel where he pleased. But the times were difficult because Sha'ul was a suspicious man, and his spies were everywhere. The road from Ramah where Samuel lived, to Beit-Lehem where Jesse lived, went right through Gibeah, where Sha'ul lived. If the king found out that Samuel was in Beit-Lehem to anoint a new king, he would have viewed Samuel's actions as treason. So Samuel said: How can I go? If Sha'ul hears about it, he will kill me. So YHVH said: Take a heifer with you and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD." If questions arose about his visit to Beit-Lehem, Samuel could simply say he was there to sacrifice to ADONAI. He told the truth and protected his life at the same time. Secrecy is not the same as deceit. Samuel only told Sha'ul only what he needed to know at that time. This principle is seen in the B'rit Chadashah when Yeshua sent out His apostles. They were not to be naïve. He warned them: I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). This was a matter of life and death, requiring

honesty with carefulness to answer in a non-incriminating way. **Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and anoint for me the one I indicate” (First Samuel 16:2-3).** Since it was common for **Samuel** to go to various towns to sacrifice, this wouldn't seem unusual. **Samuel** did what **Ha'Shem** said.

When he arrived in **Beit-Lechem**, the elders of the town trembled when they met him because they knew **Samuel** and **Sha'ul** were estranged. Whenever the high officials of the court came to a village, there was only trouble and risk. Such officials never came to give, but always to take. Either **Samuel** was loyal to **Sha'ul**, which meant trouble, or he was not, which put them at risk with the king. The elders thought they were in a no-win situation. They asked, “Do you come in peace or judgment?” **Samuel** replied: **In peace**, therefore alleviating the noticeable tension. **I have come to sacrifice to ADONAI. Consecrate yourselves** (which would have been by ritual immersion) **and come to the sacrifice with me. Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons** (all but one as we shall see) **and invited them to the sacrifice (First Samuel 16:4-5).** Before the guests sat down to enjoy the fellowship feast, **Samuel** looked over seven of **Jesse's** sons.

The Rejection of the Seven Brothers: **Samuel** may have looked at their faces and their forms, but the **LORD** examined their hearts. **When they arrived, Samuel saw Jesse's first son Eli'av and thought to himself, “Surely the LORD's anointed stands here.** This was not the first time **Samuel** had considered impressive physical appearance a criterion for ruling **Isra'el** as king (**First Samuel 10:23-24**). But looks can be deceiving. **ADONAI** said to **Samuel**, “Do not consider his appearance or his height like **Sha'ul**, for I have rejected him. **YHVH** does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but **ADONAI** looks at the heart (**First Samuel 16:6-7**).

Looks can be deceiving and often are. **Samuel** needed help in learning to see **God's** perspective regarding **David**. Likewise, we need **God's** perspective in our lives. We often fail to see the **God-potential** in others (or in ourselves) because the wrong things too easily impress us. **David**, who would become the ideal anointed figure, is an unassuming sort when we first meet him. He would not have naturally attracted attention as a potential savior of his people. He is too young, too inexperienced, and too insignificant in his family's birth order. But **David** is also a forerunner to **One** greater than he, to **Messiah**, who also bore no especially striking physical characteristics: **He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not (Isaiah 53:2b-3).**²⁵

Then Jesse called his second son Avinadav and had him pass in front of Samuel. But the prophet said: The LORD has not chosen this one either. Jesse then called on his third son Shammah to pass by, but Samuel said: Nor has God chosen this one (First Samuel 16:9). Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel. The firstborn was Eli'av, also called Elihu in First Chronicles 27:18; the second was Avinadav; the third was Shim'a, also called Shim'ah in Second Samuel 13:3 and 32; the fourth Nethanel; the fifth Raddai, the sixth Ozem, and the seventh son is unnamed, which probably means that one of David's older brothers died without offspring and is therefore omitted from the genealogy in First Chronicles 2:13-15. But the prophet said to him, "YHVH has not chosen any of these" (First Samuel 16:8-10). We also learn from First Chronicles 2:16-17 that Jesse had two daughters. One of these daughters was named Zeruiah, she is the mother of David's nephews Abishai, Joab and Asah'el, all of whom will have major roles in his life. The second daughter was Abigail, the mother of Amasa, whose father was Jether the Ishmaelite (Second Samuel 17:25; First Chronicles 2:17).

David was the eighth son. The number eight in the Bible represents a new beginning. Jewish boys were circumcised on the eighth day (Leviticus 12:3) and the number eight symbolizes circumcision of the heart through Messiah and the receiving of the Ruach HaKodesh (Romans 2:28-29; Ephesians 2:10 and 4:23-24). In addition, like the Passover Lamb, Jesus was selected as the Lamb of God on the 10th of Nisan. He was crucified on the 14th of Nisan. His resurrection occurred three days and three nights after He was buried, which was at the end of Shabbat that fell on the 17th of Nisan, eight days after being chosen as the Passover Lamb (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ IX - The Examination of the Lamb](#)). Therefore, God used David to bring a new beginning to Israel.

The Choosing of David: The number seven is a number of fullness and completeness (see the commentary on [Genesis Ae - The Number Seven](#)), indicating Samuel appeared to have reached the total of sons available. No one feels it necessary to include the youngest son of Jesse. So he asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" He was apparently so unlikely a candidate it hardly seemed necessary to summon him.²⁶ There is still the youngest, "Jesse answered: He is off tending the sheep." Samuel said: Send for him; we will not sit down for the sacrificial meal until he arrives (First Samuel 16:11). Unlike Sha'ul, who was physically impressive, the LORD chose a diminutive shepherd boy, probably about ten years old. As a pre-teen youth, the youngest of eight brother's, David wasn't the tallest or the strongest. But as God had reminded Samuel, "People look at the outward appearance, but ADONAI looks at the heart" (First Samuel 16:7).

Apparently no one thought this young boy could possibly be **God's** choice. But **YHVH** often turns things upside down. It is a common theme in the TaNaKh that **Ha'Shem** often uses the least likely to accomplish **His** purposes. When twins were born to Rebekah, it was the older that would serve the younger (see the commentary on **Genesis 6m - Two Nations, One Womb**). Among the sons of Jacob, Reuben was older and Judah was stronger. But it was Joseph who acquired the right of the firstborn (**First Chronicles 5:1-2**). This, the firstborn is often displaced by a younger sibling, as with Abel and Cain, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau. Likewise in the stories of Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses and Aaron, Solomon and Adonijah, it is regularly the younger who rises to prominence in **the LORD's** economy. In addition, it is not only the youngest but often the weakest whom **ADONAI** chooses to use. **God's** salvation can come in the form of an infant (see the commentary on **Isaiah Cb - The LORD Himself Will Give You A Sign**), or a suffering servant (see the commentary on **Isaiah Iy - The Death of the Suffering Servant**).²⁷

So Jesse sent for him and had him brought in. Once summoned, however, **YHVH** quickly confirmed **His** choice: **With ruddy cheeks, red hair, and beautiful eyes, he was handsome in appearance. Then ADONAI said: Stand up and anoint him, he's the one. So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David (Hebrew: beloved) in the presence of his brothers, and from that day forward the Ruach Ha'Kodesh rushed upon him with power (First Sam 16:12-13a).** But at the same time the Spirit departed from Sha'ul. **Isra'el** would never be the same again. The anointing was not a public event, that would happen much later (see **Ck - David Anointed King Over Isra'el**), but it was a sacred act binding **YHVH** to this new vision of the Kingdom.

Samuel must have been moved to sing with Simeon: **Now, ADONAI, as You have promised in Isaiah, You may now dismiss Your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation (Luke 2:29-30; Isaiah 40:5).** Simeon was not speaking English but in Hebrew. The Hebrew word for salvation is *Yeshuah*; the Hebrew word for **Jesus** is almost the same, *Yeshua*. Both come from the same Hebrew root *yasha*, which means *to save*. The only difference is the final letter "h" which is silent. Therefore, in Hebrew the word **salvation** and the word **Jesus** sound the same. In a real way, what **he** said was not only **my eyes have seen Your salvation**, but also, **my eyes have seen Your Yeshua that You have prepared in the sight of all nations, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for the glory of Your people Isra'el** (the commentary on **The Life of Christ Au - Jesus Presented in the Temple**).

Then Samuel went home to Ramah (First Samuel 16:13b CJB). His job was done, he had fulfilled his calling. It is likely that Samuel privately told David that he had been chosen to be the next king. If so, David's behavior while serving Sha'ul was remarkably mature for a young boy who would one day wear the crown. No doubt it was the assurance of this future hope that helped to keep David faithful during the ensuing years of trial and persecution. But his trials during those wilderness years helped to build his faith and develop his godly character and prepare him for the ministry that God had planned for him.²⁸ Samuel may have gone back to Ramah, but the narrative is sent in more powerful directions than Ramah: toward Yerushalayim, kingship, and power.

Yeshua sees us with the eyes of the Father. He sees our defects, errors, and blemishes. But He also sees our value. What did Jesus know that enabled Him to do what He did? Here's part of the answer. He knew that each human being is a treasure. And because He did, people were not a source of stress for Him, but a source of joy.²⁹