

# David in Sha'ul's Service

## First Samuel 16: 14-23

**DIG:** How was the Ruach HaKodesh at work in the life of David and Sha'ul? In what ways was David especially suited for the work YHVH had for him to do? How could the evil spirit tormenting Sha'ul be from God, when He is holy and loving? Why do you think YHVH sent an evil spirit to Sha'ul? Why is music advised for Sha'ul's troubled soul? What was David's most attractive attribute that the servant saw in him?

**REFLECT:** When have you sinned and tried to find relief through remedies other than repentance? When others look at you, can they see the LORD working in your life? What do you think the servant meant when he said: The LORD is with him (16:18)? Can the same be said of you? Explain.

**1028 BC**

Sha'ul had run afoul of Ha'Shem and His prophet Samuel. The LORD had given Sha'ul one last chance to obey His word, but Sha'ul had followed his own counsel and the people's greed instead of God's commands. As a result, Samuel told him, "Because you have rejected the word of ADONAI, ADONAI has rejected you as king over Isra'el" (First Samuel 15:28b CJB). God's rejection had two immediate results.

First, the Spirit of YHVH had departed from Sha'ul (First Samuel 16:14a CJB). The chaotic situation during the rest of Sha'ul's life reflects the fact that the Spirit was no longer empowering Sha'ul to serve as King. It is important to remember that whereas the indwelling of the Ruach HaKodesh in the Dispensation of Torah (Exodus 19:1 to Acts 1:26) was selective and temporary, in the Dispensation of Grace (Acts 2:1 to Revelation 19:21) the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is permanent among believers (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer](#)). But as the Ruach departed from Sha'ul . . . that same Spirit filled David.

Second, an evil (Hebrew: *ra'ah*) spirit from YHVH would suddenly come over Sha'ul (First Samuel 16:14b CJB). Just as God had sent an evil spirit to perform His will during the days of Abimelech (Judges 9:23), so He also sent a demon to Sha'ul. The Hebrew implies that the demon terrified Sha'ul. The presence of this evil spirit was manifested in Sha'ul by his manic depression, insecurity, periods of intense despair, homicidal tendencies for no reason, and delusions of plots against him.

**Sha'ul**, once so impressive a young man, had become gloomy and unstable. His court of course, noticed this. His attendants believed music was the answer, and they said to him, "See an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the lyre (similar to a harp, but smaller). He will play when the evil spirit from God comes on you, and you will feel better. So Sha'ul said to his attendants, "Find someone who plays well and bring him to me" (First Samuel 16:15-17). The king agreed to the solution. Yet their remedy was superficial. In ancient times the playing of the lyre was widely held to combat evil spirits, and even today we know the soothing power of music. However, Sha'ul's true problem was his sin against ADONAI. Spiritually sound advice would have urged the king to turn to YHVH in heartfelt repentance. God's grace is always available to anyone who will repent and believe: Return to Me and I will return to you (Zechariah 1:3).<sup>30</sup> But Sha'ul was a suspicious and revengeful man, and this gave the demon a beachhead for his operation (Ephesians 4:25-27).

God, who plans for the future before it happens, had a servant in Sha'ul's household who knew of David's feats of mighty strength in defeating wild animals and of the Lord being with David. One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Beit-Lechem who knows how to play the lyre. He is strong (Hebrew: *gibbor*), with the heart of a warrior (evidently David's defense of his sheep from the lion and the bear was well known). He speaks well and is fine-looking. But how would a member of Sha'ul's household know about someone from such an obscure Judean village? The reader, however, knows of David's secret anointing (see Ah - Samuel Anoints David).<sup>31</sup> And besides, ADONAI is with him" (First Samuel 16:18). This was the key to David's success in life. This was also the secret of the success of Joseph (Genesis 39:2-3, 21, 23), Joshua (Joshua 6:27), and Samuel (First Samuel 3:19). It's also the basis for success in every believer's life today. So the hand of God was beginning to move to bring David into the court of the king of Isra'el.

Then Sha'ul sent messengers to Jesse and said: Send me your son David, who is with the sheep. Unwittingly, Sha'ul summons the very one who possessed the Ruach HaKodesh and would, in due time, displace him. When Sha'ul was sitting on his tarnished throne, David's royal training began. No one appeared before the king empty-handed, so Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them with his son David to Sha'ul (First Samuel 16:19-20). So when David was about 12 years old, he came to Sha'ul and entered his service. David, however, returned to his father's house to tend his sheep when needed. Thus, David was given an invaluable introduction to the royal court.

Sha'ul liked him very much. Then Sha'ul sent word to Jesse, saying, "Allow David to be of service to me, for I am pleased with him." Whenever the evil spirit from God came on Sha'ul, David would take up his lyre and play and the Ruach would return to the

king. Then relief would come to Sha'ul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him (First Samuel 16:21-23). However, that affection was gradually replaced by envy, and then fear, until Sha'ul was determined to kill David. Sha'ul became David's enemy; but David never treated Sha'ul like an enemy. David behaved wisely and tried to help Sha'ul get over his fits of depression, but they only became worse. Like all of us, without YHVH in our lives, Sha'ul was a total failure.

The chapter ends with young David, Isra'el's future king, coming to serve a rejected and dejected ruler who is totally unaware of the implication of his welcoming him into his court. Not just "a handsome peasant with a rustic lyre," Jesse's son was the anointed king.<sup>32</sup>