

# Sha'ul's Jealousy of David

## First Samuel 18: 10-30

**DIG:** What resulted from Sha'ul's deep jealousy of David? Why do people see Sha'ul and David so differently? Why does Sha'ul offer his oldest daughter in marriage? Why did she marry another instead? Why did Sha'ul offer Michal to David? Why did David continue to refuse to become the king's son-in-law? Do you think David suspected Sha'ul's motives? Why or why not? How did Sha'ul react when his offer was accepted? What did that say about Sha'ul's relationship to ADONAI? Why weren't any of Sha'ul's plots against David successful?

**REFLECT:** How can popularity and praise from people test and prepare someone? How do you respond to someone out to get you, either personally or professionally? Why has your jealousy been aroused by someone dismissing your achievements in relation to a rival? What do such interpersonal relationships reveal about your relationship to God? In what area of your life do you compare yourself to others? Do you compare your weaknesses to others' strengths? Does that work for you?

### 1018 BC

At one time, Sha'ul loved David (First Samuel 16:21), but his attitude changed into jealousy and then hatred. ADONAI was with David, however, and Sha'ul was not permitted to harm him. During the five years that David was a fugitive (see Au - David on the Run), YHVH not only thwarted Sha'ul's plans repeatedly, but He even used the king's hostility to mature David and make him into a man of courage and faith. While Sha'ul was guarding his throne, David was being prepared to replace him.<sup>55</sup>

**Sha'ul Tries to Kill David by the Spear:** Jealousy got into Sha'ul's soul, and it ripened until it became a murderous intent (James 1:13-15). The very next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Sha'ul who went into a frenzy while David was playing the lyre, as David usually did. Sha'ul had a spear in his hand (serving as his scepter) and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." Before the music had had its effect, Sha'ul had twice made an attempt on David's life. To Sha'ul, David came to represent the enemy. Sha'ul was afraid of David, because ADONAI was with David, but had departed from Sha'ul (First Samuel 18:10-12). Note the gradual growth of Sha'ul's hatred. First, he was afraid of David (verse 12), then he stood in awe of him (verse 15), then he was even more afraid (verse 29), and in the end he gave orders for David's assassination (First Samuel 29:1).

Faith is living without scheming, but **Sha'ul** was better at scheming than in trusting **God**. If **the king** disobeyed **YHVH**, **he** always had an excuse ready to get **himself** out of trouble, and if people challenged **his** leadership, **he** simply got rid of them. Possessed by anger, paranoia and envy, and determined to hold on to **his** crown, **Sha'ul** decided that **David** needed to die.<sup>56</sup> **The king** apparently hoped that **David**, a young and inexperienced officer, (only about 22 years old at the time) would be killed leading **his** men into battle. **So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns.** But in everything **David** did **he** had great success, because the **LORD** was with him. When **Sha'ul** saw how successful **David** was, **he** stood in awe (Hebrew: *gur*) of him. And all **Isra'el** and **Y'hudah** loved **David**, because **he** led them to victory in their campaigns and **he** became the darling of the people. This only increased **Sha'ul's** fear of **David** all the more (First Samuel 18:13-16).

**Sha'ul Tries to Kill David by the Philistines:** This involved the story of two of **Sha'ul's** daughters. **Sha'ul** said to **David**, "Here is my older daughter **Merav**. I will give her to you as your wife." This should have already taken place because of **Sha'ul's** promise to give his daughter to whoever killed **Goliath** (see A1 - **David Kills Goliath**). But now there was a new condition he wanted to add: **only continue displaying your courage for me, and fight ADONAI's battles.** **Sha'ul** was thinking, "I don't dare touch him or the people would turn against me, so let the **Philistines** do away with him." Again, his hope was that **David** would die in battle. But what **Sha'ul** wanted to do to **David**, **David** would later do to **Uriah the Hittite** (see Dd - **David and Bathsheba**). **David's** response to **Sha'ul** was appreciation: **Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Isra'el, that I should become the king's son-in-law?** Now **David** probably does sense a trap. However, **he** did not clearly reject the offer and **he** fulfilled the added condition of defeating the **Philistines** in battle. But **Sha'ul** broke his promise. **When the time came for Merav, Sha'ul's daughter to be given to David, she was given to Adriel of Meholah instead (First Samuel 18:17-19 CJB).** This was not only an insult to **David**, but all **Isra'el** would know that **Sha'ul** broke his commitment.

## 1017 BC

Now **Sha'ul's** younger daughter **Michal** was in love with **David**, and when they told **Sha'ul** about it, **he** was pleased to have another chance to have **David** killed by the **Philistines**. **Sha'ul** wasn't beneath using his own daughter as a tool to get rid of **David**. "I will give her to **David**," **he** thought, "so that she may be a snare to him (he assumed she would side with him) and so that the hand of the **Philistines** may be against him." So **Sha'ul** said to **David**, "Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law" (First Samuel 18:20-21).

There were two attempts to convince **David** to marry **Michal** because at this point he didn't trust **Sha'ul**, and for good reason. First, **Sha'ul** ordered his attendants to speak to **David** privately because he didn't trust **Sha'ul**, having been deceived in the case of **Merav**. They said: Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you, now become his son-in-law. **Sha'ul's** servants relayed the king's message to **David**, but he replied: Do you think being the king's son-in-law is something to be treated so casually, given that I'm a poor man without social standing and would not have enough money to pay the bride price. **Sha'ul's** servants reported back to him how **David** had responded (First Samuel 18:22-24 CJB).

Then **Sha'ul** made a second attempt, saying: Here's what you are to say to **David**, "The king doesn't want you to pay the bride price; instead, he wants a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, so that he can have vengeance on the king's enemies. The assumption was that to kill that many Philistines, it would take many sword fights, and the odds of **David** surviving all of them would not be good. For **Sha'ul** was hoping to have **David** killed by the Philistines. When the king's servants said these words to **David**, it pleased him to become the king's son-in-law. The date was set and **David** had to kill the allotment of Philistines before time ran out. But even before it was time to be married, **David** and his men got up, set out and killed two hundred Philistines and brought back their foreskins and gave all of them to **Sha'ul** in order to become the king's son-in-law (First Samuel 18:25-26).

Then **Sha'ul** had run out of excuses, and he gave his daughter **Michal** to **David** to be his wife because he wouldn't dare to break his promise a second time. Too many people were involved in conveying this commitment to **David**. **Sha'ul** saw and understood that **ADONAI** was with **David** because he survived the dangerous exploits that he had sent him on, and that **Michal** his daughter loved him. In fact, she loved him so much that she would side with her husband over her father and would not be a snare to **David** that **Sha'ul** had hoped. This only made **Sha'ul** even more afraid of **David** and **Sha'ul** became **David's** enemy for the rest of his life. The Philistine commanders continued to attack; but whenever they did, **David** was more successful than any of **Sha'ul's** officers, so that his name became well known, which only increased **Sha'ul's** jealousy of **David** (First Samuel 18:27-30 CJB).<sup>57</sup>

Failing to understand the spiritual reality of the situation, **Sha'ul** was placed in an impossible circumstance. **David** drives **Sha'ul** crazy, but only **David** could soothe **Sha'ul's** soul. Therefore, **Sha'ul** was left with an endless cycle of rage and comfort, where the comforter evokes more rage, which requires more comfort. Given this no-win state of affairs, **Sha'ul** gave up trying to have **David** killed by the Philistines. He would try more direct methods.

By the end of this chapter, **Sha'ul** is a remarkably isolated **man**. **He** sees clearly that **he** is losing control, and like sand slipping through **his** fingers, **he** is helpless to hold on to it. In every instance **YHVH** is keeping **His** promise to give the Kingdom over to this **one after His own heart (First Samuel 13:14)**. **David** takes no initiatives. **He** doesn't assert **himself** or express any ambition. **He** only receives what is given. **David** has received the submission of **Y'honatan**, **Sha'ul's** heir apparent. **He** is married to **the king's daughter** who loves **him**. **He** is the hero to the people. A new history had begun in this **man** by the power of **God**. The defeat of **Goliath** started **David's** rise, but it was not a sufficient explanation for **his** enormous success and popularity. The only explanation is that **ADONAI was with him**. **Sha'ul** was not yet ready to yield . . . but **he** already knew.<sup>58</sup>

Needless to say, fighting against **God** is a losing battle!