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The Life of King David
Part 1

The Mother of David

The Bible never actually mentions King David's mother by name. For a figure whose life is documented in over sixty chapters of Scripture, her identity remains one of the Bible's most fascinating background mysteries. While she is unnamed, Scripture gives us two important details about her life and her relationship with David:

- **She was deeply devoted to God.** In Psalm 86:16, David prays a deeply personal prayer: "Turn to me, and be gracious to me. Oh, grant Your strength to Your servant, and save the son of Your handmaid." Here, he describes his mother as someone who served God. So, even though her name is omitted, her legacy of faith was clearly the foundation for David's own relationship with God.
- **David showed care for her by protecting her.** When David was on the run from King Saul in 1 Samuel 22:3-4, he didn't just look out for his own safety. He traveled to the King of Moab and pleaded, "Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you until I know what God will do for me." He left his parents safely in Moabite custody to protect them from Saul's wrath.

Because the biblical text is so quiet about David's mother, the Jewish sages of the Amoraic period (3rd – 6th century AD), who wrote the Talmud, created a dramatic backstory to explain why David's family treated him like an outcast, first as a shepherd and then leaving him alone in the fields when Samuel came to anoint the king (1 Samuel 16).

In that story, which is recorded in tractate *Bava Batra 91a,* they gave her the name *Nitzevet Bat Adael* (Standing Daughter of Adael). They claimed that David's father, Jesse, began to have spiritual doubts about his own ancestry because he was the great-grandson of Ruth the Moabitess. Fearing his lineage was disqualified from Israel, Jesse separated from his wife, Nitzevet, for several years. Jesse eventually decided to have a child with a Canaanite maidservant. But out of deep compassion for Nitzevet, the maidservant secretly switched places with her in the dark. Nitzevet became pregnant with David, but because she kept the secret to protect the maidservant, Jesse and his other sons believed Nitzevet had committed adultery. This fanciful story suggests that his brothers looked down on him as being illegitimate, and Nitzevet silently bore the shame for 28 years until Samuel finally anointed David, vindicating both mother and son.

It is important to recognize that this story is pure speculation, and is not biblical in nature.

David, the Shepherd, Anointed and Summoned to Saul's Court (1 Samuel 16)

In chapter 15, after Saul committed the final act of rebellion against Adonai, according to verse 11, "Samuel was distressed and cried out to Adonai all night" and "he grieved over Saul" (v. 35).

His grief was understandable. He was personally invested in Saul, for Samuel was the one who poured the oil on Saul's head, introduced him to the nation, and mentored him. So, Saul's failure felt like a deeply personal tragedy. It is evident that Samuel had genuinely desired for Saul to be a godly leader. But, watching Saul succumb to pride, compromise, and eventual demonic

oppression was devastating to the aging prophet. But now that God had fully rejected Saul as king, it was time for Samuel to move on.

1 Samuel 16:1-3

v 1 Samuel's heartbreak over Saul's fall is acknowledged, but God reminds him that prolonged sorrow cannot stall divine purpose, namely the anointing of the next king.

v 2 God provides a tactical way to protect Samuel from Saul's wrath without compromising integrity. God instructs him to take a heifer and state that he has come to sacrifice to Adonai. This provides a legitimate cover story for a sensitive, high-stakes mission while remaining completely truthful about offering a sacrifice.

v 3 God instructs Samuel to invite Jesse to the sacrifice, promising that God will then show Samuel whom to anoint. Moving the selection to Bethlehem (within the tribe of Judah) sets the stage for God's sovereign choice, not man's, foreshadowing eventually, the greater Son of David

1 Samuel 16:4-13

v 4-5 Samuel arrives in Bethlehem, causing the trembling elders to ask if he comes in peace due to his recent execution of Agag. Samuel reassures them and tells Jesse and his sons to consecrate themselves for a sacrifice.

v 6-7 Seeing the eldest son Eliab, Samuel assumes he is the chosen one, but God states that humanity looks at outward appearance while the Lord looks at the heart.

v 8-10 Jesse presents seven sons in total, but God rejects all of them.

v 11 Learning that the youngest son is tending sheep in the field, Samuel demands he be brought before they sit down.

v 12-13 David arrives with a handsome, ruddy appearance, and God directs Samuel to anoint him. The anointing is accompanied by the empowering Spirit of the Lord from that moment forward, confirming David as God's chosen future leader.

1 Samuel 16:14-23

v 14 Concurrent with the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David, the Spirit departs from Saul, and, instead, an evil spirit from the Lord begins to torment and terrify him. This action reflects his hardened rebellion and loss of divine favor.

How do we reconcile the repeating phrase **"an evil spirit from the LORD"?**

Three factors are relevant to this description:

1. The Linguistic Translation of "Evil" (*Ra*)

- In modern English, the word "evil" almost always carries a moral connotation of wickedness or sin. However, the Hebrew word used in this text is *ra* (or *ra'ah*), which is a broad term that can also mean "harmful, distressing, calamitous, or sorrowful." In that

regard, the term can refer to the spirit's *function* (bringing misery or acting as an instrument of judgment) rather than its moral character.

2. Absolute Sovereignty vs. Dualism

The writers of the *Tanakh*/Old Testament strictly avoided "dualism"—the belief that there are two equal, opposing forces of absolute good and absolute evil fighting for control of the universe.

- To preserve the theology that the Lord is the one supreme ruler over all creation, the biblical writers attributed everything directly to Him.
- Spiritual forces, even malevolent ones, are not autonomous; they operate only within the boundaries of what God permits (a concept explicitly illustrated in the Book of Job).
- By stating the spirit was "from God," the text emphasizes that nothing happens outside of God's sovereign control, and even dark forces are ultimately subject to His authority.

3. Divine Permissive Will

Theological frameworks often distinguish between God's *intentional* will (what He desires) and His *permissive* will (what He allows).

- When Saul repeatedly disobeyed God, offered unauthorized sacrifices, and rejected prophetic counsel, he actively turned away from God's protection.
- As a result, the "Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul". When God withdrew His special presence and protection, it left a spiritual vacuum.
- In this understanding, God did not create a wicked entity to inject evil into Saul; rather, God permitted a distressing spirit to afflict Saul as a natural and judicial consequence of Saul's own choices.

4. A Purpose of Judgment and Realignment

In the narrative of 1 Samuel, the distressing spirit serves two immediate theological functions:

- **Consequence for Rebellion:** It acts as a righteous divine judgment for Saul's unrepentant heart.
- **The Rise of David:** The torment Saul experienced directly prompted his servants to seek out a skilled harpist to soothe him. This is the exact mechanism God used to introduce the young, newly anointed David into the royal court, setting the stage for the transition of the kingdom.

v 15-17 Saul's servants recognize his psychological distress and advise him to look for a skilled harpist.

v 18 One servant recommends David of Bethlehem, describing him as a skilled musician, brave warrior, a capable speaker, and—crucially—"the Lord is with him."

He is also described as being *ish to'ar,* translated as "handsome" or "a comely person," but literally "a man of form" or "a man of outline." It does not just mean handsome in the sense

of a "pretty face" or "good skin." The word *to'ar* comes from a root meaning to outline, delineate, or mark out. *To'ar* refers to proportion, stature, composure, and bodily form. To call David an *'ish to'ar* meant he was well-built and had an undeniable presence.

According to verse 12, he is, in fact, described as having *yapheh enayim*—"beautiful eyes," and *tov roi*—a "good appearance." In the entire *Tanakh*/Old Testament, there is an incredibly rare and deliberate literary pairing of these terms in the description of only two named men: Joseph in Genesis 39:6 and David here in this passage. By using these terms, the narrator is intentionally signaling words to the effect: "Pay attention, this boy is another Joseph."

- Like Joseph, David is the younger brother overlooked by his family.
- Like Joseph, David has a striking form and presence.
- And just like Joseph, David will be betrayed by those close to him, elevated to a royal court, and used by God to save his people from destruction.

Because God commanded Samuel in verse 7 not to look at his appearance *(mar'eh),* yet David is described as being handsome and well-formed, God wasn't looking for someone physically unimpressive just to make a point. David's fine stature (*to'ar*) was completely irrelevant to why God chose him. Saul also had incredible *to'ar*—he was a head taller than everyone else. The difference was that David's beautiful form happened to house a heart that was fully aligned with God.

This passage also has a key Messianic connection. These same terms are also used by the prophet Isaiah to describe the future Messiah:

> "He has no form *(to'ar)* or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance *(mar'eh),* that we should be attracted to Him" (Isaiah 53:2).

This prophetic statement has implications on three levels:

1. In His Life: God sent a Messiah who looked completely ordinary to show that true spiritual power doesn't rely on worldly, superficial charisma.
2. In His Death: He allowed that ordinary body to be completely shattered and marred to pay the price for our brokenness.
3. The Eternal Lesson: The bodily container means nothing to the Lord—He looks straight at the heart.

So, when Yeshua arrived, Israel was looking for a military conqueror with the outward majesty of a king. Because He lacked worldly flash and died a humiliating death, humanity "esteemed Him not" (Isaiah 53:3). The point is that God has always been calling upon the world to look past the outward facade to see the perfect, sacrificial heart of the Savior underneath.

v 19-20 Saul sends messengers to Jesse, who, then, sends David to the palace, along with a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat as a traditional tribute to the king.

v 21-22 David arrives and enters Saul's presence. Saul loves him greatly, and David becomes his armor-bearer—a trusted, close-range position among the royal attendants. The irony is that David has been secretly anointed to replace Saul, yet God places him directly inside Saul's

inner circle. That means, in the providence of God, David learns royal politics, military life, and palace culture from the inside without forcing or scheming for the throne.

v 23 Whenever the distressing spirit from God troubles Saul, David plays his harp. The torment lifts from Saul, and the evil spirit departs from him.

Psalm 23

This Psalm is the ultimate window into David's heart, demonstrating that his identity as a shepherd was not just his former teenage occupation, but the foundational framework for how he understood God, leadership, and his own soul. Written from the perspective of a sheep entirely dependent on a good master, the Psalm reveals David's deep humility, his emotional resilience, and his absolute security in God's provision.

v 1-3 In the ancient Near East, kings often called *themselves* the "shepherd" of their people. David completely subverts this royal ego. Despite being the highest human authority in Israel, David explicitly declares that *he* is a vulnerable, needy sheep, and God is the true Shepherd-King.

David's character is marked by a profound lack of entitlement ("I shall not want"). Having lived in the rugged Judean wilderness, he knows exactly what it takes to find rest, clean water, and restoration. He credits his mental and spiritual health entirely to God's guidance.

v 4 Long before he faced Goliath, David faced lions, bears, and treacherous ravines while guarding his father's flock in pitch-black valleys. David's character is one that grows closer to God during affliction, transforming academic theology into raw, personal intimacy.

v 5 David spent decades being hunted by a paranoid King Saul and betrayed by close friends. Yet, David's character is not one of bitterness or defensive scheming. He relies on God to host him and vindicate him publicly ("in the presence of my enemies").

David experienced a physical anointing by Samuel with a horn of oil, but here he acknowledges a *spiritual* anointing from God that makes his life overflow with abundance despite external chaos.

v 6 Where Saul hunted David with spears and armies, David confidently claims that God's "goodness and lovingkindness" (*chesed)* will aggressively hunt or pursue him for the rest of his life.

God did not choose David *in spite* of him being a lonely shepherd boy; God chose David *because* the pasture was the exact training ground required to build a king who could write Psalm 23. Saul looked like a king but lacked the heart of a shepherd. David looked like an ordinary boy, but he already knew how to care for a flock—a trait that would make him Israel's greatest leader.