

# CHAPTER 16

## INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 16

In this chapter Samuel is ordered to anoint a king among the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem, (<sup><0910></sup>1 Samuel 16:1-5) all whose sons were made to pass before him, excepting David, (<sup><0916></sup>1 Samuel 16:6-10) who being then with his father's sheep, was sent for and was anointed, (<sup><0911></sup>1 Samuel 16:11-13), after which the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and he became melancholy, and it was advised to seek out a musician for him, and David was mentioned to him as a proper person, (<sup><0914></sup>1 Samuel 16:14-18) upon which he was sent for, and acted as a musician to Saul, and also became his armourbearer, which was the first rise of him, (<sup><0919></sup>1 Samuel 16:19-23).

**Ver. 1.** *And the Lord said unto Samuel*, etc.] In a vision or dream, or by an articulate voice: how long wilt thou mourn for Saul? he does not blame him for mourning, but for mourning so long; but how long that was cannot be said; and though his affection for him might cause him to indulge to it, yet it was in vain, seeing the sentence was irreversible:

*seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?* that is, his posterity; for he himself reigned as long as he lived, though in a very inglorious manner:

*fill thine horn with oil;* with common oil; for that this was the holy anointing oil kept in the tabernacle, as the Jewish writers generally suppose, with which they say David and Solomon, and the kings of Judah, were anointed, there is no reason to believe; since the tabernacle, where this oil was, was at a distance from Samuel, and which seems to have been only for the anointing of the priests. This was not a phial he was bid to take, as when he anointed Saul; but an horn, denoting the abundance of gifts bestowed on David, and the firmness and duration of his kingdom:

*and go, and I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite;* the son of Obed, whom Boaz begat of Ruth the Moabitess, (<sup><0921></sup>Ruth 4:21,22)

*for I have provided me a king among his sons;* but which he says not; this was reserved for an later discovery; however God had in his own mind

picked him, whom he would hereafter make known; this was a king for himself, raised up to fulfil his will; Saul was chosen by him, but then it was at the request of the people, and so he was rather their king than his; but this was not at their desire, nor with their knowledge, but of his own good will and pleasure; the one was given in wrath, and the other in love; the one was to the rejection of God as King, the other to the rejection of Saul by the will of God.

**Ver. 2.** *And Samuel said, how can I go?* etc.] Which argues weakness of faith in Samuel, and fear of man, and a diffidence in and distrust of divine power; for otherwise he that sent him on such an errand could protect him:

*if Saul hear it, he will kill me;* should hear that Samuel went and anointed another king, it would so enrage him, that he would either immediately lay hands on him, and put him to death, or order him to be put to death; and indeed were it not that this was done by the command of God, he would deserve to die; it being an overt act of treason to anoint another king:

*and the Lord said, take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord;* a peace offering, which might be done any where in those unsettled times, the ark being at one place, and the tabernacle at another; and might be offered upon a private altar, and by a private person; and as it seems Samuel used to sacrifice at different places; (see <sup>(150)</sup>1 Samuel 7:9 11:15). Ben Gersom relates it as the sense of one of their Rabbins in his age, that there was a person slain in those parts, not known by whom he was slain; and so Samuel is ordered to take an heifer to fulfil the law in (<sup>(151)</sup>Deuteronomy 21:1-9) and therefore Saul would make no inquiry into his reason of going thither with an heifer, and this is commended both by him and Abarbinel.

**Ver. 3.** *And call Jesse to the sacrifice,* etc.] His family, both him and his sons, to partake of the peace offerings; as every offerer had a right to invite his friends, and whomsoever he pleased, to eat of those parts of them which belonged to him, as a feast before the Lord:

*and I will show thee what thou shall do;* when Jesse and his family were with him:

*and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee;* that is, anoint him to be king over Israel, whom he should point out so plainly to him, as if he called him by name.

**Ver. 4.** *And Samuel did that which the Lord spake*, etc.] He filled a horn of oil, and took an heifer with him:

*and came to Bethlehem*; where Jesse and his family lived, which, according to Bunting<sup>f317</sup>, was sixteen miles from Ramah; though it could hardly be so much, since Ramah was six miles from Jerusalem on one side, as Bethlehem lay six miles from it on the other<sup>f318</sup>;

*and the elders of the town trembled at his coming*; for he being now an old man, and seldom went abroad, they concluded it must be something very extraordinary that brought him thither; and they might fear that as he was a prophet of the Lord, that he was come to reprove them, or denounce some judgment upon them for their sins. The Targum is,

“the elders of the city gathered together to meet him;”

out of respect and in honour to him, and to the same sense Jarchi’s note is,

“they hastened to go out to meet him”;

(see  Hosea 11:11)

*and, said comest thou peaceably?* the word “said” is singular; one of the elders put this question, the chiefest of them, perhaps Jesse; and the meaning of it is, whether he came with ill news and bad tidings, or as displeased with them himself on some account or another; or with a message from God, as displeased with them; or whether he came there for his own peace and safety, to be sheltered from Saul; and which, if that was the case, might not be for their peace and good; but would draw upon them the wrath and vengeance of Saul; for they doubtless knew that there was a variance, at least a shyness, between Saul and Samuel.

**Ver. 5.** *And he said, peaceably I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord*, etc.] Which he could say with truth, it being one end of his coming, though not the only one for which he came, and which he was not obliged to tell:

*sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice*; prepare themselves for it, which was done by washing their garments, etc. and then attend with him, and assist him in the sacrifice:

*and he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice*; he ordered them to sanctify themselves; he distinguished them from the rest of

the inhabitants, and invited them to partake of the feast, the remainder of the peace offerings.

**Ver. 6.** *And it came to pass, when they were come*, etc.] Jesse and his sons, into the house where the entertainment was; and perhaps before they sat down, went into a private apartment by the direction of Samuel, where he acquainted Jesse with the business he came upon:

*that he looked on Eliab*; who was Jesse's firstborn, (<sup>1213</sup>1 Chronicles 2:13), called Elihu, (<sup>1278</sup>1 Chronicles 27:18)

*and said, surely the Lord's anointed is before him*; or this is the person it is his pleasure should be anointed king.

**Ver. 7.** *But the Lord said to Samuel*, etc.] By a secret impulse upon his mind, as if he had spoken with an articulate voice to him:

*look not on his countenance*; which was comely and majestic:

*or on the height of his stature*; which was like that of Saul's; and because the Lord had chosen him, who was superior to the people in this respect, Samuel thought he meant to have such an one now anointed king:

*because I have refused him*; or it is not my pleasure that he should be king; though Ben Gersom thinks this refers to Saul, that the Lord had rejected him, though of an high stature, and therefore Samuel should not look out for such a person to be king; and Abarbinel refers it to the height of stature itself, that God had rejected that, and laid it aside as a qualification of a king, or as a rule to judge of a proper person to be a king; but no doubt it respected Eliab:

*for the Lord seeth not as man seeth*; man only sees what is without, but the Lord sees what is within; only the outward visible form of the body is seen by man, but the inward qualifications and endowments of the mind are seen by the Lord:

*for man looketh on the outward appearance*; the comeliness of a man's person, the majesty of his countenance, the height of his stature, and size of his body, things which recommended men to be kings among the nations of the world; (see Gill on "<sup>992</sup>1 Samuel 9:2"), or "to the eyes"<sup>f319</sup>; the liveliness, and briskness, and sharpness of them, thereby to judge of the sagacity and penetration of the mind, as physiognomists do; who guess at

the disposition of men by them, when they are small or great, watery or dry, of this or the other colour<sup>f320</sup>;

*but the Lord looketh on the heart*; and knows what is in that, what wisdom and prudence, justice and integrity, mercy and goodness, and other princely qualifications are in that. The Jewish writers conclude from hence that the heart of Eliab was not right; it may be, full of wrath, pride, envy, etc. which disqualified him for government.

**Ver. 8.** *Then Jesse called Abinadab*, etc.] His second son, (<sup><0973></sup>1 Samuel 17:13)

*and made him pass before Samuel*: that he might take a full view of him:

*and he said, neither hath the Lord chosen this*; which he knew by a private suggestion from him.

**Ver. 9.** *Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by*, etc.] His third son, (<sup><0973></sup>1 Samuel 17:13), sometimes called Shimma, and Shimeah, (<sup><1323></sup>1 Chronicles 2:13 <sup><0132></sup>2 Samuel 13:3)

*and he said, neither hath the Lord chosen this*; which he knew in the same way as before.

**Ver. 10.** *Again Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel*, etc.] Not seven more, for he had but eight sons in all with David, (<sup><0972></sup>1 Samuel 17:12) but four more, which with the other three made seven; three of these four are mentioned by name, Nathanael, Raddai, and Ozem, (<sup><1324></sup>1 Chronicles 2:14,15), but the fourth we nowhere read of; perhaps he died quickly after this, was an obscure person, and of no fame and note, or might be by another woman:

*and Samuel said unto Jesse, the Lord hath not chosen these*; not anyone of them.

**Ver. 11.** *And Samuel said unto Jesse, are here all thy children?* etc.] For neither of these being the person God would have anointed king, and yet it was one of Jesse's sons that was to be anointed, he concluded he must have more, at least one more, and therefore puts this question to him:

*and he said, there remaineth yet the youngest*; or, "the little one"<sup>f321</sup>; not of a little diminutive stature, for he was a mighty man, a man of strength, courage, and valour, (<sup><0918></sup>1 Samuel 16:18) or of a puerile age, for the Jews

say <sup>f322</sup> he was now twenty nine years of age; but that is not likely, he hardly exceeded more than twenty, or was so much; thereabout he might be; but he is so called because he was the youngest son, as we render it:

*and, behold, he keepeth the sheep*: and from following them, he was taken and anointed king; (see <sup><1980></sup>Psalm 78:70,71). Some of the greatest of men have been taken from rustic employment, as Moses, Gideon, Saul, and others:

*and Samuel said unto Jesse, send and fetch him*; out of the field by a messenger:

*for we will not sit down till he come hither*; that is, at table, to eat of that part of the peace offerings which belonged to the offerer Samuel, and which he had invited Jesse and his sons to partake of.

**Ver. 12.** *And he sent and brought him in*, etc.] Sent messengers into the field and to the flock for him, and being come home Jesse introduced him into the room where Samuel was:

*now he was ruddy*; which some understand not of the ruddiness of his complexion, or of his cheeks, but of the redness of his hair; the former seems best:

*and withal of a beautiful countenance*; of comely features: or “beautiful eyes” <sup>f323</sup>; bright, clear, and sparkling; eyes that are black or blue are reckoned beautiful:

*and goodly to look to*; of a pleasant countenance, delightful to behold; he carried sweetness as well as majesty in his face; in this he was a type of Christ, (<sup><2150></sup>Song of Solomon 5:10,16). A beautiful aspect, as well as shape and height, recommended persons for government, as with the Ethiopians, as Aristotle <sup>f324</sup> relates; so Agamemnon is represented by Priamus <sup>f325</sup> for his personable appearance, as like a king, and fit to be one:

*and the Lord said, arise, anoint him, for this is he*; that he had spoken to him of, and who it was his pleasure should be anointed king; and therefore, by a secret strong impulse upon his mind, was put upon doing it immediately, without any hesitation or delay.

**Ver. 13.** *Then Samuel took the horn of oil*, etc.] Out of his pocket, which he brought along with him by the direction of God:

*and anointed him in the midst of his brethren*; not in the presence of them, they sitting around, or standing by and seeing the ceremony performed; which is not consistent with the secrecy with which Samuel was directed to manage this affair, and which was necessary to observe, to keep it from the knowledge of Saul; and with Eliab's treatment of David afterwards, who would never have addressed him in the manner he did, had he known that he was anointed king, (<sup>1978</sup>1 Samuel 17:28) but the sense is, according to Kimchi and Abarbinel, that he was selected out of them, and separated from them, and privately anointed by Samuel, and at most only his father Jesse present; wherefore some observe, that the words may be rendered, "anointed him from the midst of his brethren"<sup>f326</sup>; that is, he took him apart from them, and anointed him:

*and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward*; not as a spirit of grace and holiness, which probably had come upon him before this time; but a spirit of prophecy, as did on Saul after his unction; and which particularly showed itself in music and poetry, in which he immediately became very eminent, and he was taken notice of for it, and which was the means of bringing him into Saul's court; and a spirit of wisdom and prudence, in civil as well as in sacred things; and a spirit of fortitude, as the Targum, of strength of body, and courage and valour of mind; whereby he was enabled to encounter with the lion and bear, and get the mastery of them; which, with all other gifts of the spirit fitting him for government, he was now endowed with, and which continued with him:

*so Samuel rose up and went to Ramah* his native place, and where he resided; that is, after the festival of the peace offerings, to which Jesse and his sons were invited; for the anointing seems to be before that.

**Ver. 14.** *But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul*, etc.] As a spirit of prophecy as at first, as a spirit of wisdom and prudence in civil government, and as a spirit of fortitude and courage, as the Targum:

*and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him*; the reverse of the former, which by the permission of God, and as a punishment to him for his sins, came upon him; he seemed to be a demoniac, as Josephus represents<sup>f327</sup> him, as if possessed with the devil; by whom he was almost suffocated and strangled, as well as was distracted in his counsels, and became weak and foolish; lost all courage and greatness of mind, was timorous and fearful, and alarmed by everything, and was full of envy, suspicion, rage, and despair.

**Ver. 15.** *And Saul's servants said unto him,* etc.] His courtiers, who observing him to act in a frantic manner, to be dull and melancholy, timorous, and irresolute, unsteady, divided, and distressed; or his physicians, who were called in to assist him, and remove his disorder from him:

*behold, now an evil spirit from God troubleth thee:* the disorder was not from any natural cause, or any bodily disease, and therefore out of the reach of physicians to do any service, but was from an evil spirit suffered of God to harass and disturb him.

**Ver. 16.** *Let our Lord now command thy servants which are before thee,* etc.] Meaning either themselves, or some of a more inferior rank, who were in some post and office at court, waiters there, such as yeomen of the guards:

*to seek out a man who is a cunning player on the harp:* a musical instrument much in use in those days:

*and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee;* when in a melancholy mood, and Satan takes the advantage of it to distress and terrify, to spread the gloom, and stir up evil passions, and promote distraction and confusion:

*that he shall play with his hand:* upon the harp, that being not an instrument of wind, but of hand music:

*and thou shalt be well:* music being a means of cheering the spirits, and removing melancholy and gloomy apprehensions of things, and so of restoring to better health of body and disposition of mind; and that music has such an effect on the bodies and minds of men is certain from observation and experience in all ages. Music has been found to be medicine to various diseases, not only for the curing of the bite of vipers, and of the tarantula, but for easing the pains of the sciatica, and for helping persons labouring under the disorders of the frenzy<sup>f328</sup>; and Pythagoras used to compose the mind, and remove the perturbations of it, by the use of the harp<sup>f329</sup>, the thing here advised to.

**Ver. 17.** *And Saul said unto his servants,* etc.] Approving of, and pleased with the advice they gave:



*provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me; for being a sovereign prince, he could command whom he would to attend to his person and service.*

**Ver. 18.** *Then answered one of the servants*, etc.] Which the Jews say <sup>f330</sup> was Doeg the Edomite, who out of envy and ill will to David spake of him, that Saul might have an opportunity of slaying him; but this is not at all likely; rather it was one of David's friends and acquaintance, that was desirous of promoting him at court, and no doubt was directed to that motion by the overruling providence of God:

*and said, behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite*; he does not mention the name of his son, but so describes him, that he might be easily known by those who knew anything of the family of Jesse; besides it was sufficient that he was one of Jesse's sons, to find him out:

*[that is] cunning in playing*; that is, on the harp; has good skill in music, and is expert in it:

*and a mighty valiant man*; as appeared by his encountering with and slaying the lion and the bear; an event now past, as very probable:

*and a man of war* some think this character of him was given after the affair of his fighting with Goliath and killing him, but here put by a prolepsis or anticipation; and indeed if David had been taken into Saul's court before that affair, it is difficult to account for Saul's ignorance of him, since he must be so near him, and so often with him, as his musician and armourbearer; though that difficulty may be removed, as may be observed in its proper place:

*and prudent in matters*; in his talk and conversation, and conduct and behaviour; knew how to carry himself, even in a prince's court: and a comely person; which always recommended to the courts of the eastern nations; (see Gill on "<sup>2004</sup>Daniel 1:4").

*and the Lord is with him*; prospering and succeeding him in whatsoever he is engaged; and seeing the Lord was with him, it might be expected the evil spirit would depart from Saul, when this person, with whom the Lord was, was in his presence. The Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord is for his help;”

all that is said of him showed that he was fit to be in the palace of a king, and a proper person to be with Saul in his present circumstances.

**Ver. 19.** *Wherefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse*, etc.] For David; not choosing to take him without his leave, though Samuel suggests that kings would do so, (<sup><0881></sup>1 Samuel 8:11)

*and said, send me David, thy son, which is with the sheep*; he had learnt his name, and what was his employment; and which last he mentions not by way of contempt, it not being reckoned mean and despicable even in the sons of great personages, in those times and countries, to attend flocks and herds: so with the Arabs, as Philo<sup>f331</sup> testifies, young men and maids of the most illustrious families fed cattle; and with the ancient Romans, the senator<sup>f332</sup> fed his own sheep. Paris, son of Priamus, king of Troy, is said<sup>f333</sup> to feed his father's oxen and sheep; and Saul himself had done the same; but to describe him particularly.

**Ver. 20.** *And Jesse took an ass [laden] with bread*, etc.] Laden with a load of bread, as the Targum; with as much as it could carry, or was used to carry; the Septuagint version is, an omer of bread, which was as much as a man could eat in one day; and, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, it may be interpreted an heap of bread, agreeably to the use of the word in (<sup><07516></sup>Judges 15:16), and a bottle of wine; or a skin of wine, a leather bag or sack, which held more than our bottles; the Targum is, a flagon of wine:

*and a kid*; of the goats, as the same Targum:

*and sent [them] by David his son unto Saul*; some think that Jesse suspected that Saul had known the secret of David's being anointed, and was fearful that he had a design upon his life, and therefore sent this present by his son to pacify him, and ingratiate him unto him; but rather he sent it as a token of respect and subjection to his sovereign, and according to the custom of those times, when men used to carry presents when they waited upon princes, and indeed in their common visits; and do in the eastern countries to this day; (see Gill on "<sup><0881></sup>1 Samuel 9:7").

**Ver. 21.** *And David came to Saul, and stood before him*, etc.] As a servant, and ministered to him in the way, and for the purpose for which he was sent:

*and he loved him greatly*; being a comely person, and a well behaved youth, and especially as he was serviceable to him with his music, in driving away melancholy from him:

*and he became his armourbearer*; that is, he appointed him to this office, though we never read that he exercised it; nor did he go with Saul in this capacity to the battle related in the following chapter: it may be literally rendered: “and he was to him a bearer of vessels”, or “instruments”<sup>f334</sup>; and Abarbinel thinks this is to be understood not of instruments of war, but of instruments of music to play with; which he brought in and bare before him when he went in to the king.

**Ver. 22.** *And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, let David, I pray thee, stand before me*, etc.] Continue in his service; which was great condescension in him, and great respect shown to Jesse, not to detain his son without his leave, and to ask it as a favour of him:

*for he hath found favour in my sight*: was very acceptable to him which must be very pleasing to Jesse to hear; especially if he was in any fear that Saul had an ill design upon him, when he first sent for him.

**Ver. 23.** *And it came to pass, when the [evil] spirit from God was upon Saul*, etc.] (see <sup><D164></sup>1 Samuel 16:14,15) though the word evil is not in the text here; wherefore Abarbinel thinks that this here was the Spirit of God, which stirred up in him thoughts of divine things, put him in mind of what God had said, that he had rejected him from being king, and had rent the kingdom from him; and this filled him with grief and trouble, and he became melancholy:

*that David took an harp, and played with his hands*; upon it; and, as Josephus<sup>f335</sup> says, at the same time sung hymns and psalms; made use both of vocal and instrumental music:

*so Saul was refreshed, and was well*; became cheerful, his grief was removed, his black and gloomy apprehensions of things were dispersed, and he was cured of his melancholy disorder for the present:

*and the evil spirit departed from him*: at least for a while; he had his fits and intervals; of the effects of music in a natural way, (see Gill on <sup><D16></sup>1 Samuel 16:16”), though no doubt the music of David was more than natural, being attended with the power and blessing of God, in order to raise his fame and credit at court.