

Jonathan

My name is Jonathan. My father was the first king of Israel. He ruled 40 years, but it was a very short dynasty. I did not get to be king, but it went to a better man than me.

I joined my father's army and made a name for myself; you could say "audacious" which might be either the "brave" or "foolish" variety. My first attack, even though successful in the short term, was impulsive and led to the entire Philistine nation mobilizing against us. My father put it as, "now Israel has become a stench to the Philistines."

That actually led to the episode where my father, terrified at the massive Philistine encampment, took on himself performance of the sacrifice and was rebuked by Samuel with the statement, "But now your kingdom will not endure." Talk about a guilt trip! With one adventure I took down my dad and my own future.

I suppose I was trying to make it all up when I said to my armor bearer to "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few." Dad and I had the only steel swords in Israel because of the Philistine monopoly on steel-making technology. I decided that I would determine whether to attack depending on the verbal response of the lookouts. If they said, "come on up," we would believe that the LORD had given us the victory. Maybe it was seeking the LORD and maybe I got a little of my father's impulsiveness. But we won!

And as the enemy began to scatter, dad mobilized the army. But he made another of his foolish blunders. He bound everyone under penalty of death to not eat before the victory was complete. I didn't hear it, got weak and revived after eating a little honey. The rest of the army got so exhausted that they slaughtered sheep and cattle and ate the meat along with the blood, breaking the law of Moses. My eating honey was found out and if my father's curse were carried out, I would be dead. Well I got a reprieve but began to realize that not only was my father unwise, I was a lot like him.

I first met David after he had fought Goliath and came to visit my father. What an ironic situation that was. We were about the same age – pretty young. I had just brought down my father's kingdom, I had to face it, by the effect of a couple of ill-advised adventures. David had been accused of coming to the war just for the adventure but ended up killing the giant Philistine champion – hitting him in the forehead with a stone from his sling, then cutting off his head with Goliath's own sword. And he did it not for recognition or reward but because the name of the LORD was being dishonored!

He was everything I wanted to be, and I immediately loved him as I loved myself. It is like we were soulmates. I could not be jealous of his success but rejoiced in it as if it were my own. I had never really had a best friend, being isolated in the "royal family." And David and I got to see a lot of each other because he joined the army and became very successful. The young women sang songs about him. I guess you might call him

a “superstar” or even “teen idol.” I pledged friendship to David and gave him some pieces of clothing and even my sword.

David also played and sang to calm my father during his “spells.” During one of those, dad tried to kill David with his spear. Dad then sent David into more and more battle, hoping that the enemy would kill him. But that just led to more success for David and increase in his fame. Dad also wanted David to marry into the family. David said he was not worthy of this and refused Mirab. But when it turned out that my sister Michal was in love with him, David agreed. The bride price was 100 Philistine foreskins – David brought 200 -- and became a son-in-law to the man who kept trying to kill him. I guess it is an extreme form of a dysfunctional family.

I became David’s eyes and ears in the palace and protected him from dad’s plots many times. Sometimes it was by trying to convince dad that David was a good man and an outstanding military asset. Sometimes it was warning David when it was too dangerous to be anywhere in the vicinity. Once, Michal helped David escape from a plot by putting an idol in his bed and lowering him out the window.

David went to be with Samuel and when dad’s men came to get him, they began prophesying. The second group and finally Saul himself were then moved by the Spirit of God to prophesy. This was very confusing to me. But finally, it became clear that David had to permanently leave the palace and go into hiding. We arranged a way of getting him the message and I knew by then that he was the future king. We made an oath of loyalty and had a tearful goodbye.

Battles after that were an exercise in futility. I fought but my heart was not in it. David was somewhere in hiding. My father still going through the motions, a broken man and spiritually confused. When I saw that both dad and I were surrounded, I fought because I was still a warrior, but I knew that I had no future. When the end was near, my last view of father was of fighting against overwhelming odds. I realized what he, and I, could have been. It was too late. But I knew there was a great future for my alter-ego, my soulmate, David.

1 Samuel 13 – 31, 2 Samuel 1