

Young David

Genealogy is important to Jews and mine is a bit strange because my grandmother was Gentile. But I experienced powerful evidence that the LORD, God of Israel, was with me.

I am the youngest of eight brothers, so you can imagine what our home was like. I got “sheep duty” more than any of the others. Yet it was for the best because I practiced both my music – the sheep didn’t seem to mind – and my martial arts. I started by slinging stones at rocks and bushes but when the occasional predator threatened the sheep, I found that a stone, properly placed, was a deadly weapon.

When the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem for a special sacrifice, my father was invited and told to bring his sons. Dad did not even invite me but left me with the sheep. When the elderly prophet – he was a legend in Israel – said that he was there to anoint a king, my brothers all walked before him. They are all pretty impressive guys and even looked right to Samuel until God said to him, “The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

When I finally was invited to come, Samuel anointed me as king. Now this was puzzling because, Israel already had a king, namely Saul. Samuel had anointed him years before. But I guess there had been a falling out between them. However, the most amazing to me was that I was thought to be king material. And if the great warrior, Saul, had fallen from the favor of the LORD Jehovah and his prophet, how was I going to carry out that great responsibility?

Well, to start with, it was confusing. I went back to the sheep and not only did Saul continue as king, he even invited me to do “music therapy” when he had “attacks.” His people had heard about my singing and instrumental accompaniment but had no knowledge that I had secretly been anointed as king to succeed him! That was awkward! But I would play, and he would feel better. I didn’t understand why until later.

Then, when I was back with my father, he assigned me the task of bringing supplies to my brothers who were fighting in Saul’s army. When I got there, no fighting was going on, but a champion of the Philistines came out and challenged the armies of Israel to send out a man for one-on-one combat to decide the whole war. Nobody was willing to accept the challenge. Now the fact that he was 9 foot 6 inches, did mean that the odds were in his favor, but what was immediately obvious to me, and apparently not to anybody else, was that he was challenging the LORD God of Israel! That fact, plus, maybe just a little bit that my brothers were teasing me about coming, “just to watch the battle,” made me angry. Saul heard that someone in the camp was talking about “removing this disgrace from Israel.”

The king, the real king, at least at that time (have I mentioned that it was confusing because I had already been anointed as his successor?) looked at me and mentioned the obvious. Goliath was a giant, an experienced warrior whose armor weighed about as much as me and I had no combat experience. I related how I had killed lions and bears but gave credit to the LORD. I think that must have pricked his conscience because he agreed to give me a chance. He wanted to protect me with his own armor. Walking around it in convinced me that it would not work for me because it prevented me from doing what I was accustomed to do, move freely and fight with a sling.

You may have heard what happened, the story has really gotten around. I made sure Goliath knew who was challenging him – not a teenaged overconfident soldier wannabe, but the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel. That was the last thing he heard because my first stone struck his forehead and knocked him unconscious. I then finished him off with his own sword. It was not a lucky shot. It was the power of the LORD, using the preparation that He had also arranged, fighting for the lives of the sheep back home. And the four extra stones were not for misses but for Goliath's four brothers – who decided to not show up that day.

It was a great victory for Israel as the commanders did not believe the promise that the Philistines would serve them if Goliath lost. The armies of Israel pursued them and defeated them.

Saul seemed confused. He asked his advisors whose son I was, despite the fact that he had hired me as a music therapist and also tried to outfit me with his own armor when he approved of my challenge to fight Goliath. I guess he had a lot on his mind those days. Now I could handle bears and lions, even giants, with a sling and a stone, but politics and psychology were mysteries to me. I later found out that these situations also involved spiritual warfare.

But Saul's son, Jonathan, about my age and truly a kindred spirit, became my best friend and even saved my life a number of times. I really had to depend on the LORD because Saul had such incredible mood swings and violent outbursts. He could be apparently perfectly normal one moment, even soothed by my music, then suddenly try to nail me with his spear. Even when he promised his son Jonathan that he would not harm me, he broke his promise and tried to lure me into harm's way.

Well, I could understand that Saul would be upset. His kingship was way down in the polls and my popularity was way up. I didn't do anything to prop it up, but the LORD kept giving me victories. What can you do? Saul gave me difficult assignments, like the requirement for getting his daughter Michal as my wife, hoping I would be killed, but the LORD continued to win the battles for me. Saul then plotted to kill me himself and Jonathan was my eyes and ears in the court and was able to warn me to get away. I was in hiding and on the run for a long time. I learned suffering and I learned mercy. Twice I had the opportunity to kill Saul when he was unaware of my presence and completely vulnerable, but I did not. And I even called his attention to the fact later, hoping it would change his attitude towards me.

I learned the danger of being given power. Saul had begun as a good and humble king, but he did not stay true to the LORD or obedient to his commandments. The LORD's Spirit was withdrawn from him and an evil spirit was allowed by the LORD God Almighty to have access to him. There was a battle of unseen forces going on around and among us. My victory over the giant was assured by the army of heaven. The deterioration of Saul and his kingship was accelerated by spiritual forces he had unleashed by disobeying the LORD and giving himself over to the powers of darkness.

They say that a poet and musician has to suffer to be creative. I wrote many Psalms, at least in my head, while in caves or on the run. I experienced the whole range of human emotion and recorded it so all of Israel could learn from my experience, both the good and the bad. And in it all I tried to keep a tender heart towards God.