

# 1st Samuel

## Lesson 42

### (3) Michal Let's David Down Through a Window (19:11-17)

Saul suspected that David would go home to his wife and that he did. When David's wife heard the news, she was concerned. The writer tells us how Michal lets David down through a window. Verse 11.

*"Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, 'If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death.'<sup>12</sup> So Michal let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and escaped.<sup>13</sup> Michal took the household idol and laid it on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with clothes.<sup>14</sup> When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick.'<sup>15</sup> Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, 'Bring him up to me on his bed, that I may put him to death.'<sup>16</sup> When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol was on the bed with the quilt of goats' hair at its head.<sup>17</sup> So Saul said to Michal, 'Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?' And Michal said to Saul, 'He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I put you to death?''* (19:11-17)

David escaped from Saul at night and went home to his wife. From the context of Saul's command, he evidently did not want David killed in the house, a house on Saul's family property that probably belonged to Saul. The instruction was to wait until morning with the intent of killing David as he left the house. Michal knew her father. She wanted David out and safe that night, in the dark of the night. We must wonder why she let David out through a window. Did she see her father's men waiting in the front of the house? Probably. Therefore, David was let down from a window. This fact tells us that David was not living in a tent. He was living in a wood and brick home. The tents did not have windows. Solid structures did. It may have been a home built by the Canaanites and taken over by the Israelites when the Promised Land was taken. Remember, the LORD promised Israel they would live in homes they did not build. We also know that Saul's hometown was a walled city. It had a protection wall around it. We know this because of the civil war between the eleven tribes of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin that occurred at Gibeah in Judges 22, many years before. Out David went through the window. Michal had a plan. When David left the house, she would prepare for her interaction with her father's men in the morning.

Let us set the timing found in this verse. More than likely, David returned home several hours before dawn. He immediately went out the window. Saul's men did not see David leave and waited outside the front door until daylight. When David did not come out as expected, they came to the door to ask for him. Michal said he was sick, and the men went back to Saul. Saul sent them back to bring David on his sickbed. It was probably mid-morning, and David was far away by this time. Michal's plan had worked.

But let us look at that plan. The writer tells us that Michal took a "household idol" and used it in the bed as a decoy. Why did Michal have a "household idol?" Was it hers? Was it David's? Did David know about it? The LORD had forbidden idols. Would the LORD allow David to be king in the future if he was worshiping idols in his home with his wife? The purpose of an idol in a home is false worship of a god besides the true God. I think not. What is going on here?

At this point in the Scripture, I paused and took a week to read what all the scholars of the past have written on this passage. All of them have taken the same position, but I will disagree with their conclusion. Let me explain.

In the Ten Commandments, the LORD said, “*You shall not make for yourself an idol or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God*” “*You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God....*”<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew word for *idol* is the word *pesel*, and it means a graven or carved image of wood, stone, or metal. Concerning these *idols* (*pesel*), they were not to be *worshiped*, as stated in the last sentence of the passage. The context is that it was a sin to carve an image out of wood, stone, or metal for the purpose of worship. What kinds of things could not be carved according to the LORD? He said, “*any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.*” Such carvings would forbid cherubim, brazen serpents, oxen, birds, fish, clouds, trees, stars, planets, wheels, carts, mountains, rivers, valleys, etc. When we see it in this light, no artist could create any piece of artwork of any kind because it might resemble something God created in heaven or on earth. The LORD does not mean that in His words. In this commandment, the LORD prohibits the creation of any carved *idol* (*pesel*) for the purpose of worship. He is not forbidding the artist’s work but rather the human use of that work in worship.

However, our writer does not use the word *pesel* in relation to the item Michal used to create a fake David in the bed. Instead, he used the Hebrew word *teraphim*. The first time we saw *teraphim* used in the Scripture was in Genesis 31, where Rachel stole her father’s *teraphim* when Jacob moved the family from Haran back to Isaac’s home in Southern Canaan Land, as it was not yet the possession of the nation of Israel which will develop from the sons Jacob was returning with at the time. Some of our English translations use the word *teraphim*. Some of our translations use the words *household idols* just as our text does here. A *teraphim* is not a *pesel*; therefore, it is not an *idol*. Follow me here. A *teraphim* is a carving of wood, stone, metal, clay, or other material that is used for decoration, not for worship. In Genesis 31, the items Rachel took from her father’s home were pretty decoration objects. To Laban, her father, they were his gods. Even in Genesis 31, the carvings were not called *pesel*, but it is clear that Laban used the carvings as his *pesel*, while at the same time, Rachel thought of them as *teraphim*, simply pretty items to use to decorate her house. We saw the word *teraphim* next used in Judges 17 – 18. There, in Micah’s personal household items, he had a robe (called an ephod), idols (called *pesel*), and *teraphim* (pretty household decorative items). In Judges, we are not told that Michah worshiped the *teraphim*, but he most definitely worshiped the *idols* (*pesel*).

Now, the third time we see the word *teraphim* used, it is in David and Michal’s home and being as a substitute body for David, under the covering blanket. May we correct another problem with the translator’s use of the word *household idol* instead of the decorative term *teraphim*. By calling this object a *household idol*, the mere term lends itself to thinking that the object had a head that needed to be covered with the goat’s skin. But a literal translation of the Hebrew tells us something different. The literal Hebrew rendered in English says, “*Michal took an image and laid it in the bed and a cover of goat’s [hair] put for his head and covered with clothes.*” The *teraphim* Michal used to form the body in the bed did not have a head; therefore, she used a goat’s hide to create a head and covered it with a cloth. The *teraphim* was not a household idol; it was a pretty object that David and Michal had in their home. Look around your home and see how many *teraphim* you have. Do you have pictures of your family on the walls? Those are images, printed images, and *teraphim*. Do you have pretty vases, candlestick holders, tables, chairs of wood, clay, stone, metal, etc.? They are all *teraphim* unless you use them as a *pesel* and bow down to worship them. Any *teraphim* can become an *idol* and be

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<sup>8</sup> *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Edition: Paragraph Version* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ex 20:4–5.

worshiped. But in this case, David and Michal did not worship the decorative item Michal used to imitate David in the bed.

The trick worked. When the messengers of Saul saw that David was not coming out the front door, they must have knocked. Michal told them David was sick in the bed. She was the king's daughter. Who were they to question her words? They returned to report to Saul what they had learned. Saul did not care and ordered them to go and bring him on his sickbed so Saul could kill him. When they found the fake David instead, they delivered Michal to Saul. When questioned by Saul about why she helped David, Michal lied. She said it was David's idea to protect her. It was not. It was Michal's idea to protect David. She did not want her father to know her true love for David. She really did love David. But, when the rest of the story continues in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, we will see that her love will wane as the years' pass.

#### (4) Samuel Protects David (19:18-19)

When David climbed out the window and ran in the night, where did he go? He went to Samuel. Samuel protects David. Verse 18.

*"Now David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naoth.<sup>19</sup> It was told Saul, saying, 'Behold, David is at Naoth in Ramah.'* (19:18-19)

Word travels fast. Saul quickly heard where David and Samuel were in "Naoth in Ramah." Where is "Naoth in Ramah?" It is evident that Naoth was some were in or about Ramah. The word *Naoth* means *habitations, huts, or dwellings of a school*, perhaps a school that Samuel presided over as Elisha would do so many years later at Gilgal near Jericho. The school was within the boundaries of the village of Ramah. Samuel presided over the prophetic school at Naoth, as we will see next.

#### (a) Saul's First Messengers Changed (19:20)

The writer tells us of Saul's first messengers being changed. Verse 20.

*"Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied."* (19:20)

There are two kinds of prophecy in the Old and New Testaments. The first is *predictive prophecy*. *Predictive prophecy* is what we all think about when we hear the word prophecy. We think about a person telling the future. The second is *admonition prophecy*, and it can be either accusative or exhortative. Admonition is an old word. A modern word would be simply *a speech*. Today, we would call it a *sermon*. In these sermons with Samuel at the school in the earshot of the messengers of Saul, the messengers heard the preaching of sermons from the Scripture that was already recorded with all its blessings and warnings. If they preached blessings, they were exhortative sermons. If they preached warnings, they were accusative sermons. In the case of Samuel, these prophets were not telling the future.

The verse also says about these prophets that Samuel was "standing and presiding over them." The literal Hebrew says Samuel was the *standing leader over them*. It does not indicate that Samuel was there at the time, standing where he could be seen. Samuel and David were probably safe in one of the huts. This point will become important soon.

#### (b) Saul's Second Messengers Changed (19:21)

When the first messengers failed to retrieve David, the writer tells us of Saul's second messengers, who were changed. Verse 21.

*"When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied."* (19:21a)

#### (c) Saul's Third Messengers Changed. (19:21b)

The result with the second team was the same as the first, so Saul's third messengers also changed. Verse 21b.

*So Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.” (19:21b)*

**(d) Saul Changed Samuel (19:22-24)**

With three teams changed in the presence of Samuel, Saul went to see it for himself. The writer tells us how Saul changed. Verse 22.

*“Then he himself went to Ramah and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked and said, “Where are Samuel and David?” And someone said, “Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah.”<sup>23</sup> He proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah.<sup>24</sup> He also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (19:22-24)*

All we know about *Secu* is that it is somewhere on the way from Gibeah to Ramah. Be that as it may, as Saul departed from *Secu*, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he began to prophesy a sermon from the Scripture all the way to the prophetic school called Naioth in Ramah. This was the second time the LORD had sent the Spirit of God upon Saul. The first was when Samuel anointed him to be the new king. That time he prophesied on the holy hill outside Gibeah. This time, he prophesied from *Secu* to Ramah.

When Saul arrived at Ramah, after prophesying, he took off his clothes and slept all day and all night. Now we must look at three interpretive problems in verse 24. First, when the writer says, “*He also stripped off his clothes*,” before he prophesied, it simply means that he took off his outer garments, which would have been his kingly robe, belt, and cape. Second, when the writer tells us that “*he too prophesied before Samuel*,” it means that Saul joined the other younger prophets who studied under Samuel as they prophesied that day. But we have a problem with this language. Was Saul in the presence of Samuel, or was he not? Even if Samuel was standing at a distance and Saul was with the other prophets, which he was, it would mean that we have a conflict in the Scripture. When Samuel left Saul after killing Agag, the writer tells us that “*...Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul.*”<sup>9</sup> Here is where we must address the question we asked before in verse 20. Did Samuel see Saul prophesying, or did he not? In verse 20, was Samuel standing and presiding over the prophecy going on at Naioth when Saul arrived, or, as the literal translation says, Samuel was the standing leader of the school and was not there at the time and did not see Saul when he arrived. I think it was the second. Samuel was the standing leader of the school at the time, but he was not there when the prophesying took place, and he did not see Saul, and Saul did not see him. Third, the writer tells us that Saul “*lay down naked all that day and all that night*.” Here we must confess that Saul was naked, but not as we would consider naked. When we consider naked, we think of being completely nude. But in Saul and David’s day, that was not necessarily the case. The men wore outer robes, which we had mentioned that Saul took off when he was prophesying. These robes were important to the outer look, and the men tried to keep them clean. One of the garments was a long piece of material that was used as a sheet when sleeping at night. The inner garments covered everything, and that is what Saul had on when he was prophesying. But when it came time to sleep, Saul pulled the inner garments off. That left him wearing the undergarment, which covered his upper torso but did not go below his waist. As such, Saul was naked from his waist down. He probably used the special material that we spoke about as a sheet. It was important because it helped protect from insects. But all this was said by the writer because as Saul arrived at Naioth, David departed. More than likely, Samuel accompanied David for a distance while the prophesying was going on at the school.

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<sup>9</sup> *New American Standard Bible, 1995 Edition: Paragraph Version* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 1 Sa 15:34–35.

We come to an unfortunate chapter break at this point in the Scripture. This story continues in the next chapter with David running from Naioth to find Jonathan, Saul's son.

More of David's music was recorded at this time. Here are his Psalms.

### C. Psalm 4

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by stringed instruments. 1 Answer me when I call to you, O God who declares me innocent. Free me from my troubles. Have mercy on me and hear my prayer. 2 How long will you people ruin my reputation? How long will you make groundless accusations? How long will you continue your lies? Interlude 3 You can be sure of this: The LORD set apart the godly for himself. The LORD will answer when I call to him. 4 Don't sin by letting anger control you. Think about it overnight and remain silent. Interlude 5 Offer sacrifices in the right spirit, and trust the LORD. 6 Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let your face smile on us, LORD. 7 You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine. 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O LORD, will keep me safe. (Psalm 4)*

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by the flute. 1 O LORD, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning. 2 Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for I pray to no one but you. 3 Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly. 4 O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked. 5 Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil. 6 You will destroy those who tell lies. The LORD detests murderers and deceivers. 7 Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house; I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe. 8 Lead me in the right path, O LORD, or my enemies will conquer me. Make your way plain for me to follow. 9 My enemies cannot speak a truthful word. Their deepest desire is to destroy others. Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with flattery. 10 O God, declare them guilty. Let them be caught in their own traps. Drive them away because of their many sins, for they have rebelled against you. 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy. 12 For you bless the godly, O LORD; you surround them with your shield of love. (Psalm 5)*