

# 1 SAMUEL 18

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## **18:1–4**

Jonathan was Saul’s son. Unlike Saul, Jonathan accepted David both as a leader and as the chosen one of the Lord. The two became fast friends. The phrase “knit with the soul of David” (verse 1) indicated a lasting friendship cemented by a covenant. The Hebrew word *berit* is translated in verse 3 as “covenant,” and it is the same word translated as “covenant” throughout the Bible. The root word means “to bind.”

Jonathan’s giving gifts to David was an ancient practice representing respect and friendship.

## **18:5–7**

Because of David’s fame for and ability in defeating Goliath and subsequently the Philistines, Saul made David the leader over all the armies. The word “Philistine” in this verse doesn’t refer to Goliath but to the Philistines as a whole. The women greeted David, a victorious general, on his return with music and dance. They wanted to celebrate the victory and to praise the person who made it possible. It was clear to the people that David, not Saul, had led the armies to victory. The praise further divided David and Saul.

## **18:7–9**

Even though the prophet Samuel had told Saul that the Lord had rejected him and that he would lose his kingdom, his pride remained, and he blamed David. Instead of praising the Lord for the victory, as David had done, Saul’s jealousy blinded him to the Lord’s choice, and he focused on David as the object of his hatred.

## **18:10–12**

Saul had so thoroughly rejected the Lord that his jealousy and rage took over, and he began to actively try to kill David. Of course, the evil spirit in Saul didn't come from God. The phrase was a cultural and linguistic reference used to describe the madness that Saul exhibited in his hate and rage for David.

The description of Saul prophesying was another cultural and linguistic explanation for Saul's disquieting actions. In other passages in the Old Testament, the Lord makes it clear that these "prophecies" are lies.<sup>1</sup>

At some level, Saul knew that the Lord had rejected him and had called David to replace him as king. Saul feared (or "was in awe of") David's connection with the Lord.

## **18:14**

This description of David is the crux of the narrative. To behave wisely and to have the Spirit of the Lord should be the goal of all the Lord's covenant people. This passage evokes the description of another warrior—Captain Moroni from the Book of Mormon:

And this was the faith of Moroni, and his heart did glory in it; not in the shedding of blood but in doing good, in preserving his people, yea, in keeping the commandments of God, yea, and resisting iniquity. Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men. (Alma 48:16–17)

Unfortunately, as the narrative continued, even David was tempted away from the service of the Lord by lust and greed, and he lost his place.

## **18:15–16**

Part of David's wisdom lay in his ability to relate to the people because at his roots, he was a shepherd. Where Saul became proud and had set up a monument to himself, David was a man of the people. Saul became afraid of David in part because David had the backing and confidence of the people.

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<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings 9:11–12; Jeremiah 29:9. Compare the account of the damsel and Paul in Acts 16:16–18: "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

### **18:17–24**

Saul contrived a way to control David or, failing that, to have him destroyed. In a seemingly magnanimous gesture, Saul offered David his daughters, first Merab then Michal. David, for his part, understood that he had no means and no dowry to support a daughter of the king. When Saul saw that Michal loved David, he set a “snare” for him. He demanded that David kill one hundred Philistines as a dowry in the hope that “the Philistines may be against him” (verse 21). Saul meant for the Philistines to kill David, which would allow Saul to appear blameless to the people of Israel.

Note that later in David’s life when he had become a powerful king, he in turn would send Uriah to his death in battle to hide his sin and his rejection of the Lord’s commandments.

### **18:25–26**

As proof of David’s ability, Saul demanded the foreskins of those David would kill. This would prove the numbers of slain enemies as well as determine that they were uncircumcised.

### **18:27–29**

To prove himself, David killed twice as many Philistines as Saul had demanded and returned alive. Saul had promised that Michal and David would be married, so he kept his promise. Saul’s plan turned against him, and he “became David’s enemy continually” (verse 29).

Despite Saul’s best efforts, the Lord brought good from Saul’s evil designs against David. The text notes that Michal loved David, so David’s marriage was not a mere political marriage. David became Saul’s son-in-law and so had a legitimate claim to the throne, especially when so many of Saul’s sons would be killed, including David’s beloved friend Jonathan (see 1 Samuel 31:2). David’s battle with the Philistines also confirmed his place of favor with the Lord’s people.

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