



Spirit of God E6: The Spirit of the Messiah in Saul and David

Official Transcript

Speakers

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[Recap and Setup for Saul and David (0:00-12:13)]

[BibleProject theme]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. We're in a series on the Spirit of God. The word "spirit," or "*ruakh*" in Hebrew, can mean "wind," it can mean "breath," it can mean "mind." But most importantly, it refers to the personal life-giving energy of God that creates and sustains everything. The Spirit of God is a gift to us. It gives us life, and it gives us wisdom.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] The Spirit is the way the biblical authors want to talk about God becoming one with his human partners in the form of their breath. And all humans have it, but sometimes some humans in the Hebrew Bible have it in a more intense degree. And there's where the language of filling with the Spirit begins to enter the biblical story.

Jon: God's Spirit fills specific characters in the Bible so they can lead and organize Israel. They're priestly mediators of God's covenant, and they prophetically speak God's

words to others. And the purpose of this type of leader is to connect everyone to the Spirit of God.

Tim: [Audio clips from the episode below] We need a whole humanity that's restored in some way. And what we need is *someone* who's going to kickstart the whole new human thing. And this is the picture of the messianic rescuer.

Jon: Last week, we looked at Moses and Joshua. Today, we'll look at two more leaders who are filled with the Spirit of God to lead ancient Israel: King Saul and King David. Both are filled with God's Spirit, but only one is a man after God's own heart.

Tim: [Audio clips from the episode below] So this is very important then: The character of the person in that role has to be so attuned to and in union with the value set of Yahweh, or else this is going to be an absolute disaster.

Jon: Israel demands a king, and God first anoints Saul. He's tall, handsome. He's an obvious choice for an ancient king, and the Spirit rushes on Saul. But in the end, Saul can't handle that much spirit.

Tim: [Audio clips from the episode below] His way of being, his pattern of thinking and behavior—it's as if he, from the beginning, was against the grain of the kind of king Israel needed.

Jon: Saul becomes a cautionary tale.

Tim: [Audio clips from the episode below] Just divine power of spirit is not enough to transform a person. You actually need a different heart. You need a heart that's according to God.

Jon: God tells Samuel to appoint a shepherd boy named David to replace Saul, saying —

Tim: [Audio clips from the episode below] "Yahweh has sought for himself a man according to his own heart."

Jon: Today, Tim Mackie and I explore the two very different portraits of a Spirit-filled ruler. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical break (2:39-2:42)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey, Jon. Hi.

Jon: Hi. We're moving through the Bible, talking about the *ruakh* of God.

Tim: Mhm. The *ruakh* of God.

Jon: *Ruakh* Elohim.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So we're inhabiting this world of this ancient thinking of *ruakh*.

[BibleProject theme fades out]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And you know, quick summary: We've talked about how the *ruakh* is the invisible, life-giving energy all around us. And then the biblical authors are like, "*That's God's ruakh.*"

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] "*That's the creator God. That's his life-giving energy. So when you breathe it in, or you see it move in the trees, it isn't just some impersonal force. That is God.*"

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: But then also not fully God—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —and distinct from God.

Tim: Yeah. There's way more to God than what I'm inhaling.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: But it's not less than God that I'm inhaling.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yeah. So *ruakh* is the breath, [breathes in] it's the wind, it's also a way to think about that invisible ability to comprehend ideas and to hold ideas in our minds and then share ideas out to others—

Tim: With words that I exhale through breath.

Jon: With words. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's all connected.

Jon: So then, *ruakh* then gets really connected to things like our word.

Tim: Mhm. Yes. Yes.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] And we looked at that. And it gets connected to this idea of wisdom, of learning how to live in line with how the universe really works, and having the ability to, like with Joseph, just be a really good manager or, with these artists for the temple or the tabernacle, to just be really good craftsmen. Just kind of the ability to work in the grain of reality.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Yeah, and I've been trying to force us to meditate on biblical examples that [exhales] have challenged my categories of divine and human partnership or divine and human agency. So when God's Spirit works through Joseph or through Bezalel to, you know, make a wise economic policy proposal [laughs] on Joseph's part or to make really beautiful Eden-like materials for the tabernacle, it's both drawing on who these humans are through their life experience, but also, you know—we've struggled for language. That's a 2.0. There is something above and beyond, as it were, outside them—Joseph and Bezalel—breathing in just something surprising and new that comes from beyond and interpreting a dream or, you know, Bezalel creating a visual environment that's so like the garden that it becomes like the perfect home for the presence of God to come dwell, you know. So the Spirit is the way the biblical authors want to talk about God becoming one with his human partners in the form of their breath.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's good.

Tim: And all humans have it, but *sometimes some* humans in the Hebrew Bible have it in a more intense degree.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that's where the language of filling with the Spirit begins to enter the biblical story.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Mmm. Okay. So I think it's also then important to re-upload the conversation you had about how, in the ancient world, it's common for even all the other neighboring cultures to have prophets who were inhabited by another spirit to speak on behalf of the gods.

Tim: The divine, yeah. Exactly.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And they would call these prophets or seers or—

Tim: Yeah, all sorts of other terms that are hard to render in English.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: And so this wasn't just for Jewish people or Israelites following and fearing Yahweh. This was just kind of common.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And the common mode was that, to be this kind of prophet, you actually kind of lose your mind.

Tim: Yes, depictions of prophets overtaken by the presence of a god or the voice of a god outside the Hebrew Bible—and then there's portraits of this idea in the Hebrew Bible—of a diminishing of the human's mind or agency.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] And they become like a passive instrument for the god to speak. And so these conceptions of prophecy outside of Israel, portrayed sometimes in the Hebrew Bible, are built on that assumption of: Well, if it's going to be more of God, it's going to be less of me. And I think the biblical authors don't see it that way. The Spirit is the way that more of God in human beings means more of me, but more of the best version of me that ought to be.

Jon: Mhm. Plussed up even more.

Tim: Plussed up. And less of the version of me that needs to just stop being altogether. [laughs] You know? More of God's breath in a human means that human becomes more themselves, who they're truly made to be. Mhm.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yeah. So you can imagine a culture where the prophets of Baal are dancing, and they're cutting themselves, and they're going crazy, and they're trying to now connect with Baal. And we juxtapose that with a character like Ezekiel, who, you know, is [pause] quirky—

Tim: Yeah.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: Yeah. Totally. And also had very intense experiences of God's presence. And what people saw after Ezekiel had a powerful encounter with God's *ruakh* was a guy doing some odd things.

Jon: Yeah.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: He would do these public stunts, but he was in his mind.

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: And he was doing it in a very strategic way. And then he was writing this poetry that was able to communicate to others, like, what he experienced.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Yeah. And all of it is about pointing towards the hope of a supercharged humanity that's in the image of God. And Ezekiel becomes his true self, as it were. And actually, what's so great is we're going to look at another contrast like that. So this is the second of a little two-part step about the Spirit of the Messiah in the Hebrew Bible. So if God's purpose is to have a whole humanity of human images representing him and ruling responsibly and wisely, generously, over the world, that's the goal from pages one and two. It goes horribly wrong when humans make a stupid choice and are deceived. And so the biblical story is pointing towards: Well, we need a whole humanity that's restored in some way. And what we need is someone who's going to be like the mediator or the link or the leader.

Jon: Who could start this whole thing.

Tim: Yeah, kickstart the whole new human thing. And this is the picture of the messianic rescuer in the Prophets. But the language and poetry used about that messianic rescuer in Isaiah or Ezekiel is all built on ideas that were already explored in the narratives of the Torah and former Prophets. So we looked at the story of Moses and Joshua. That's what we did in the last episode: how the language of Moses's leadership, and how he *was* able to do it, but then also really compromised and unable to do it. And so the only way that Moses's amazing leadership and role as a mediator is going to get multiplied is if you have—

Jon: More *ruakh*.

Tim: —more of the *ruakh* on him, but, like, distributed. And he says, "I wish all these people had the unique kind of relationship to God that I do." And he's sad that they don't. In fact, he's frustrated that they don't.

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: And so Joshua becomes the protégé that carries that forward into the next generation. And so the prophets often pull on the Moses stories specifically and on language and imagery as they talk about the future messianic deliverer. The same is true for the figure of King David. Actually, you could argue that the story about David that we have in the former Prophets was just as, if not more significant in some ways, for the portrait of the future Spirit-filled messianic deliverer in Isaiah and Ezekiel, especially.

Jon: More than Moses?

Tim: Yeah, I mean, both are vital, but the name David appears all over Isaiah and Ezekiel as an image of the new rescuer.

Jon: Yeah. Mhm.

Tim: So what's going on in the David story that made him that prime candidate for becoming an image of that future rescuer? That's what I want to look at right now.

[Music fades in]

Tim: And to understand David, you really need to understand his arch nemesis—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —the king of Israel before him, a guy named Saul. So let's spend some time meditating on the stories of Saul and David and the role of the Spirit.

[Musical break (11:45-12:13)]

[The Spirit Rushing on Corrupt Saul (12:13-33:43)]

Tim: So we're jumping into the section of the former Prophets that we call First and Second Samuel.

Jon: Okay.

[Music fades out]

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So Samuel is a Moses-like prophet-leader for Israel, and in First Samuel chapter 7 and 8, a key pivot moment happens. The people of Israel approach Samuel, who is old now. So he's been leading Israel for a lot of years. And he just appointed his sons, like, as the twin leaders after him. People are not stoked. Like, they're bummed because these guys are actually shady figures. And they actually don't act like their dad. They don't have his integrity. They're taking bribes on the side—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —you know, making shifty deals, that kind of thing. So the people get together, and they say, “Look, Samuel, you're old, and your sons aren't at all like you. So how about this? Give us a king.”

Jon: “*We're ready for a king.*”

Tim: “We're ready to become a centralized monarchy just like all the other nations.”

Jon: Mmm. “*It's working over there.*”

Tim: Yep. So “this was evil in the eyes of Samuel.” “It was bad in his eyes.” That's a little Genesis 3 echo there. “It was bad in his eyes.” “And Yahweh says to Samuel, ‘You should listen to the voice of the people because they're not rejecting you. They are rejecting me from being king over them.’”

Jon: So— [laughs] I would expect Yahweh to say, “Don't listen”—

Tim: “Don't”—I know.

Jon: —“to the voice of the people, because they're rejecting me.”

Tim: I—Yeah. Yeah. It's a Romans 1 type of God giving people over to what they desire. In fact, in a couple chapters, the first king, Saul, is going to be called “the one Israel desires” in the exact language of what the woman saw in the tree in Genesis 3.

Jon: Hmm. He's going to be called that?

Tim: He's going to be called “the desire of Israel.”

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: “What Israel desired.”

Jon: Whoa.

Tim: So he’s depicted as the forbidden tree in these narratives.

Jon: Mmm. Hmm.

Tim: He’s the thing that they shouldn’t have taken, but they do.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And Yahweh allows it. But Yahweh says—this is First Samuel 8, verse 8: “This is just like all the things that they have been doing from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until today. They have been forsaking me and serving other gods.” So that’s interesting. Interesting comparison. [laughs]

Jon: Asking for a king is like serving another god?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Ohhh, yeah.

Tim: That’s what he just—God makes the comparison right there.

Jon: Wow.

Tim: “They are rejecting me as being king. They want a human king. You know what this is like? It’s like when they rejected me as their god and wanted to have a deity”—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —“that they could make for themselves.” *“I mean, God rescued us. But it was also really scary, and we almost died many times. No one’s seen him. All we ever see is a smoky cloud and a fire. And that’s cool, but he often leads us into death-defying situations”—*

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —*“terrifying, you know, walking through the sea. And he just gives us the sky-goo bread enough for each day.”*

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: *“You know, what we’d love is a feast and”—*

Jon: Okay.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] So he’s unpredictable. You can’t see him. But a human king? *“Well, that’s what the other nations have. So that’s what we want.”*

Jon: Okay.

Tim: I think that's the contrast here. So what God says to Samuel then is say: "Okay, give them what they want, but warn them. Tell them what kings are like." It's called "Tell them the custom of the king"—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —what God says in First Samuel 8, verse 9. So Samuel gives this long speech, and he's like, "You guys want a human king like all the other nations? Let me tell you what kings are like."

Jon: This is like having the kid smoke the whole pack of cigarettes?

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: Yes.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Yeah?

Tim: *"You like cigarettes, do you, son? Well, let me—let's go get you one and see how you feel."*

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: Yeah. Well, except that he doesn't have them smoke the whole pack. He just—

Jon: He just tells them.

Tim: —tells them—

Jon: He tells them what—

Tim: —what it will feel like—

Jon: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.

Tim: —if they smoke the whole pack.

Jon: Well, they're about to smoke the whole pack.

Tim: But—and then they're going to say, *"We want the whole pack."*

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] "Here's what kings do: They take. They take your children, and they appoint them as chariot runners. He's going to take the best of your sons and appoint them as his commanders. He's going to take at least a good

percentage of all your harvest and repurpose it for, you know, the palace and his staff and all that. He's going to take your daughters and make them perfume makers and cooks and bakers." He's just like, "You sure you want this?"

Jon: Yeah. Kings are a little bit greedy. It's hard to be a king and not become a narcissist.

Tim: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah. Yes. Well, it's very much the portrait of—

Jon: Ancient kings?

Tim: Of kingship in the Hebrew Bible, is that it's—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] Whew. And so this is very important then. The character of the person in that role has to be so attuned to and in union with the value set of Yahweh, or else this is going to be an absolute disaster. And he's saying: "You want a king like the other nations? This is what they're like." And at the end of Samuel's speech, they say, "No. There's going to be a king over us so that we can be like all the other nations. He can go out in front of us and fight our battles," which is exactly the language used of what Yahweh did for them—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: —when they came out of Egypt. He went before and behind them—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —and he fought battles on their behalf. So the next story, then, First Samuel 9, begins: "So there was this guy from the tribe of Benjamin whose name was Kish"—and it gives a short genealogy—"son of Aviel, son of Zeror, son of Bekorath, son of Aviah. And he had a son whose name was Shaul, the one who was asked for. You should know a few things about him: He was young and *tov*, and there was no man among the Israelites more good to look at than he was."

Jon: [chuckles] Hmm. He's good on the eyes.

Tim: "And from the shoulders up, he was more tall than all the other people."

Jon: Okay. Yeah.

Tim: Hmm. Tall.

Jon: This is a runway model.

Tim: There's— [laughs] yes. And these are little hints that are like—they're ambiguous, because you're like, "*What, he's young and tov and he looks good? I don't know, so did Joseph.*" This is very similar to the description of Joseph.

Jon: Oh, okay. Yeah, there's nothing wrong with being a tall drink of water. [laughs]

Tim: But tall—tall people, especially tall kings, do hold a place in the biblical imagination, and it's not good.

Jon: Ohhh, the giants.

Tim: It's not good. The giants. Yeah, the Nephilim, who are the valiant warriors connected to the king of Babylon, Nimrod. And then there were those two kings who lived on the East side of the Jordan, Og and Sihon. They were giants that opposed Moses trying to go into the land.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Mhm. And then Joshua had to fight a whole bunch of giants in the land.

Jon: Yeah. Okay.

Tim: And well, there's going to be another giant appear—

Jon: Goliath?

Tim: Yeah, Goliath, who's going to come later. So the point was: He fits the bill—

Jon: Mmm, for an ancient giant king.

Tim: An ancient giant king. So he goes on this whole thing. He's searching for lost donkeys. We kind of—we actually talked about his story earlier.

Jon: Yeah. [jokingly] Where he was filled with the *ruakh* of Elohim, and he went a little nutso.

Tim: Exactly. So I want to come back to that story.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So Saul runs into Samuel, and God had told Samuel: "You're going to meet this guy, and you should anoint him as the king. Pour oil over his head. And he's going to be the one that the people ask for." And what Samuel tells Saul is that: "Listen, when you leave from our connecting here, the *ruakh* of Yahweh is going to rush upon you."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So we talked about that word in an earlier episode.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It's the word for, like, a sudden, powerful, physical jolt of an experience.

Jon: Mmm. Okay.

Tim: "And you're going to prophesy." "Your mind will come under the influence of God's own words." And you're like, "*Cool, that sounds great.*" "And you will be"—this is First Samuel chapter 10, verse 6: "You will be turned over into a different human"—or "changed into a different man." And then you read the story, and that's exactly what happens. He leaves there, he has a rush of an experience with the Spirit, and God "turned over for him"—and what it says—this is First Samuel 9, verse 9: "God turned over for him a different *heart*"—is the phrase used here.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So when Samuel describes what's going to happen, he says, "You'll be turned over into a different *human*."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Then when it does happen in the story, the narrator says, "God turned over for him a different *heart*."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Two ways of—

Jon: Saying the same thing?

Tim: —trying to describe the same thing.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm. Such a powerful experience that everybody who was around when Saul had this experience started saying this phrase that became like a proverb attached to Saul, which is, "Wait, what happened to the son of Kish?" People say. "Is Saul among the prophets?"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So for this guy to become a king in line with God, he has to become a different person than who he is. So let's just keep reading and see how this works out. In chapters 9 and 10, then, that private conversation between Saul and Samuel turns into a public one, an enthronement ceremony, where he's marked out publicly as the king of Israel, and the people all acknowledge him as king. That happens in chapters 9 and 10. And then it's sort of like, just for the narrative to show you that

Saul's the man of the hour, right after the enthronement ceremony, chapter 11, verse 1 introduces us to a threat on the borders, but now that we've got a king. And the threat is a guy named Snake, Nakhash, who's of the clan or the people of the Ammonites, who actually are Israel's kind of relatives over there. And they came up, and they besieged an Israelite city named Jabesh-Gilead on the other side of the Jordan. And what Nakhash says is, "I'm going to come take you guys over, and I'll make a peace treaty with you. I won't kill you all. But if you do make a peace treaty with me, I'm going to mark you as my servants by gouging out all of your right eyes."

Jon: Whoa.

Tim: Yeah. He's going to blind the eyes. A guy named Snake who's trying to blind the eyes—

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: —of the people.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] There's all these Genesis 3 echoes happening. So the people send messengers across the Jordan River to Saul, because now they have a king, right? And what we're told is Saul hears of this report, and—First Samuel 11, verse 6: "The *ruakh* of Elohim rushed upon Saul. When he heard these words, he became very angry." He cuts an ox into pieces, and then he sends the pieces to all the tribal leaders of Israel, saying, "Whoever doesn't follow after me and go fight those guys, you're going to turn into one of these pieces of oxen." [laughs]

Jon: [laughs] Yeesh.

Tim: [laughs] "And the fear of Yahweh fell on the people, and they all came out as one man."

Jon: Mmm. Hmm.

Tim: And you're like, "*Well, that'll motivate*"—this makes me think of the old Godfather movies from, like, the seventies.

Jon: Yeah, with the horse and the head.

Tim: You wake up with a horse's bloody head in the bed with you as a warning.

Jon: It's the warning.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "*This could happen to you.*"

Tim: "*This could happen to you.*"

Jon: So why is it called “the fear of Yahweh” fell on them? It’s the fear of Saul that fell on them.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] Yeah, isn’t that interesting? That’s a good point. Yeah. Well, I guess because they see Saul as the king that God appointed. And this is the nature of kingship in Samuel and Kings, is that: God is generous, and he shares and lends his own authority to these kings. And they have this realm of freedom to do with that divine authority good or bad. And sometimes they do good, mostly they don’t.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] I mean, two things happen: The Spirit of God rushes on Saul, and so you’re like, *“Okay, well, that’s the Spirit of God, so what’s going to happen must be a God-empowered thing.”*

Tim: Yeah, right. Right.

Jon: And then all the people are like—

Tim: And then he pulls this move.

Jon: And then he pulls this move. And then the way this is rendered by the prophets is “the fear of Yahweh fell on them.”

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] So I mean, you just take this paragraph, and you’re like, *“Okay, Saul’s empowered by God’s Spirit. He does the thing, and that makes people fear Yahweh.”*

Tim: That’s right. And that is the 100% scandal of Spirit empowerment in the Hebrew Bible for most Christians reading the Old Testament—is: These Spirit-empowered people do really ambiguous things in the power of God’s Spirit. And in the New Testament, it’s different.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Empowerment is marked by behavior that matches the life and teaching and model of Jesus. [laughs]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Which is not like this. [laughs]

Jon: Yeah. So what’s the deal?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, it’s—yeah. It’s very—so the Hebrew Bible is trying to ponder how humans and especially human kings are given a divine-like authority. But also, because

it's a true partnership, humans can do with that divine empowerment good or bad. And here, it's ambiguous, but let's just keep going.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: You just got to keep—this is how the Hebrew Bible is, man. It doesn't just tie it all up in a bow. It—

Jon: Where do you see the ambiguity?

Tim: Oh, because the narrator doesn't say, "You know, he shouldn't have done this." What it just says is "The Spirit of God came on him." He pulled this, like, coercive kind of violent threat move, and the fear of God fell on everybody.

Jon: Yeah. Right. I just don't feel any ambiguity in it. The Spirit of God came—

Tim: Ah. Oh, okay.

Jon: Fear of God came.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Like, if that's the case—

Tim: Oh, okay. So you've just got to keep reading.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Because you got to read every moment in light of what's going to happen with this guy.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Okay. So he rescues the people. That's the summary of this.

Jon: Yeah. All right.

Tim: He rescues the people—

Jon: And it all works out.

Tim: —and it all works out.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And you're like, "*Sweet. Okay, I guess kings*"—

Jon: "*I guess*"—

Tim: —"*can pull that move, and that's how*"—

Jon: “*And I guess that’s how God wants to roll.*”

Tim: I guess so. [laughs] That’s right. Threatening people with severed pieces of cow. So what follows in the Saul story, chapters 12 to 15—and it’s worth a whole, long conversation, but—Saul has two major failures, like, *critical* failures, that disqualify him in God’s eyes from being the king anymore.

Jon: And this wasn’t one of them? [laughs]

Tim: [laughs] No. Well, no. So in chapter 12 and 13, he was supposed to wait for Samuel to show up to pull this move, but Saul’s soldiers were getting agitated and scared, and Saul couldn’t find Samuel anywhere. So instead of waiting and trusting that God would protect his soldiers until Samuel showed up, which is what Samuel said, he does a whole bunch of stuff that Samuel said: “Don’t do.” And in particular, offering a sacrifice, which is—it’s a rabbit hole.

Jon: Okay.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: What chapter is this?

Tim: This is in chapter 13.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: I just want to read—

Jon: Cryptic story where he loses credibility?

Tim: Yeah, totally.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] But it’s all set on analogy to Adam and Eve at the tree through the hyperlinks and repeated words. And this is the takeaway. This is what Samuel says when he shows up: “You have behaved foolishly, Saul. You have not kept the command of Yahweh which he commanded you. If you had, Yahweh would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom will not endure. Yahweh has sought for himself a man *according to his own heart*. And Yahweh has appointed him as a leader over the people because you haven’t kept what Yahweh commanded.” So this is kind of the—what do you say, the—

Jon: Tag him out.

Tim: Tag him out. And notice, one: “You didn’t do what God told you to do.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So “You’re not in line with, actually, God’s word.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “You were a vehicle for God’s word. You were empowered to be like a king-prophet.”

Jon: Yeah, but he crossed the line.

Tim: He crossed the line in this story that we didn’t read in detail. But the takeaway is that Saul is not a man according to God’s heart. That’s the phrase Samuel uses in First Samuel 13, verse 15.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And now our mind goes back to those phrases that Saul was somebody who had to be changed into a different human with a different heart to become the kind of king that Israel needed. And it turns out that it didn’t stick.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: It didn’t stick. And you’re like, *“Oh, yeah, I guess Saul’s heart never was aligned with God’s heart. In fact, it had to be rushed upon by the Spirit and turned into something that it wasn’t to be in line with God’s heart.”*

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: So remember, we’re back to those early conversations about when Joseph and Bezalel are filled with the Spirit. What’s happening there is God supercharging characteristics that were already in them, as it were.

Jon: Hmm. So Saul just didn’t have the stuff.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] It’s as if he, from the beginning, was against the grain. His way of being, his pattern of thinking and behavior, was against the grain of the kind of king Israel needed. And so he had to become a different kind of human. But when the Spirit rushes on somebody, it’s usually temporary, and it didn’t stick for Saul. And now, we’re like, *“Yahweh needs to find somebody whose heart is according to his heart.”*

Jon: I mean, this is tough for me in that, you know, I want to believe that God is powerful enough to change anyone’s heart and make it stick.

Tim: Totally. Yeah, me too.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] And so it’s not that God can only work with people who are already proving themselves to some degree. I know that was kind of a reflection on Joseph, a reflection on Daniel, but we’re not saying God can’t take someone who

maybe people would otherwise write off because they're just too hurt, too damaged, and be able to give them a new heart—like truly do it. That—right? That's not what we're saying.

Tim: Well, I'm just trying to draw attention to the language of the story—

Jon: Okay. [chuckles]

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] —and how the story is setting up a problem in the crisis of what Israel needs. And that, itself—the Hebrew Bible is telling us that story because it sees in that a portrait of the crisis of just what all humans need here outside of Eden.

Jon: Mmm. Okay. So in a king, in the leader, is—we're tracing the messianic kind of thread.

Tim: Exactly. Exactly.

Jon: And that kind of person. God needs someone who has got a different baseline. [laughs]

Tim: If someone's going to rescue us from the snake—

Jon: Ohhh, okay. Okay. Okay.

Tim: Like Saul—

Jon: Ah.

Tim: —right?—was raised up against the guy named Nakhsh, Snake.

Jon: Ohhh, okay.

Tim: And to defeat Snake, he kind of uses this snaky move to motivate the leaders with violent threats.

Jon: Mmm. We need a different guy than that.

Tim: And then you think, like, *“Oh, yeah, well, if that's the default of, like, how Saul thinks he needs to lead, then I—wow, I guess to be changed into a different kind of human—did that happen to him when the Spirit rushed on him?”* And then here we—a couple chapters later, we're like, *“Oh, I guess not.”* So I'm not saying this is the final word in biblical theology of the transformed human heart. It's *not*.

Jon: Okay. Right.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] Emphatically, it's *not*. But Saul is a portrait of the complex human condition, that's like—as Jeremiah will put it: The heart is actually desperately sick—

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: —and so morally compromised. Who really can know the human heart? That's how Jeremiah said it. [laughs]

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: And there's a truth there.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I've experienced this so many times in my life where I feel like I've finally made the step forward, finally got over this hang-up—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: —this pattern of thinking, pattern of behavior—

[Music fades in]

Tim: —and then it comes back to bite me—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —you know?—again. And maybe it truly is, you know, three steps forward and one step back. Like, real progress as the years go by. But there's always that possibility of that one step back, and sometimes it happens, and you're like, "*Dang it. When am I going to be over this?*"

Jon: Mhm. Right.

Tim: And Saul becomes an image of that.

Jon: Mmm. I'm appreciating, now, a new level—reminded—we're talking about the Spirit of the Messiah here.

Tim: [emphatically] Yes, yes.

Jon: And so we're looking for the leader who can truly rise above.

Tim: Mhm. That's right. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

[Musical break (33:19-33:43)]

[An Anointing Spirit for David and a Bad Spirit for Saul (33:43-49:18)]

Tim: Yeah. So by the end of chapter 15, God says again to Saul, through Samuel, “You have rejected the word of Yahweh.” This is First Samuel 15, verse 22: “You, Saul, have rejected the word of Yahweh. Just like the people rejected me by choosing a king” —

[Music fades out]

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: — “now you, their *king*, have rejected me” —

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: — “and so he rejects you from being their king.” And you’re like, “*Okay, well, that guy’s done for. So who’s that guy that Yahweh has sought out according to his heart?*” When God said to Saul, “You’re done being king. I’ve sought a guy according to my heart.” Who is that? And lo and behold, it’s a guy named “Beloved One,” or “Darling.” David in Hebrew.

Jon: [chuckles] Mhm.

Tim: And it’s the next chapter, First Samuel, chapter 16. And isn’t it interesting that his name, Dawid [or David], is spelled with the same Hebrew root as those two extra Spirit-filled guys from Numbers chapter 11, Eldad and Medad, that we talked about in the last episode.

Jon: Wait. Okay, hold on, what?

[Tim laughs]

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Okay, so that—yeah. Last episode, the *ruakh* on Moses is going to side off on the seventy men out in the wilderness. But back at camp, unexpectedly, two guys—

Tim: This overflow of the Spirit.

Jon: Overflow of the Spirit. They get some of that *ruakh*.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Joshua's like, "*Whoa, what's the deal? That's not supposed to happen.*" And the names of them are Eldad and—

Tim: Medad.

Jon: Medad.

Tim: And the *dad* in both names—

Jon: [laughs] The dad in both names.

Tim: Comes from the same root as the name Dawid [or David]. The two Ds in David's name are the same Hebrew root as the two Ds in Eldad and Medad.

Jon: Okay. So these names all kind of rhyme?

Tim: Yeah, they all mean "beloved one."

Jon: Oh, and they all mean that? Okay.

Tim: Eldad means "God loves this one." Medad means "the darling" or "beloved one." Dawid, David, means the beloved one.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So that's interesting. Just a little wink—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —from the narrator there.

Jon: Okay. A surprise extra blessing.

Tim: Yeah, extra blessing. Yeah, extra *ruakh*. Yeah.

Jon: The overflow of *ruakh*.

Tim: Just when you thought the *ruakh* didn't have anybody more to work with in Israel—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: "*Oh, there's one more, a beloved one.*"

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Hmm. A beloved one. And God tells Samuel, “Okay, we’re done with Saul.” This is First Samuel 16: “Go fill an animal horn with oil, just like you did with Saul, and go to this guy’s house, the house of Jesse. And I have seen for myself the next king there in that guy’s house.” Well-known story. We’ve explored it multiple times. Jesse comes out, and he sees Samuel and hears about what’s going to happen. And he’s like, “Oh, I know it’s my firstborn.”

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: “He’s really tall” —

[Jon laughs]

Tim: —“and good-looking.”

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah. [jokingly] *“I’ve been waiting for you to come for him.”*

[Tim laughs]

Jon: *“He’s the guy.”*

Tim: [chuckles] *“He’s the guy.”*

Jon: Yeah. *“The recruiters are here.”*

Tim: And yeah, God’s like, “Nope.” And he trots out seven of his sons in front of Samuel, and to every one of them, God says, “Nope. Nope.” Because they’re all Saul-like characters. And it’s the eighth that is the little one out with the sheep, Beloved —

Jon: Oh, that’s interesting. It’s eighth. It’s not seventh, it’s eighth.

Tim: Yeah, he trots seven sons of him, and then David’s the eighth out there.

Jon: Seventh is like the final, completed —

Tim: Yeah, I know. Yeah.

Jon: But the eighth is like: Nope, we’re going to start over in a whole new way.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Ooh, that’s good. That’s right. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It’s the first—yeah, the first of a new series.

Jon: Yeah. It’s Sunday morning.

Tim: Yeah. And when David comes in, what you learn is that he was red—his skin was red. I think that means, like, flush and young.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: “He was beautiful of eyes and good to look at.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mmm. That’s—

Jon: Also a handsome man.

Tim: Yeah. And Yahweh says, “That’s the guy. Anoint him.” “So Samuel took the horn of oil, anointed him in the middle of his brothers, and the *ruakh* of Yahweh rushed upon David from that day onward.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So there you go. But it rushed upon him.

Jon: Yeah. Just like—

Tim: So that leaves it—that leaves it open.

Jon: —it rushed upon Saul. Yeah. This is so interesting. Okay, so the Spirit rushing on someone in the Hebrew Bible is not like, “*And so they’re going to be awesome.*”

Tim: Nuh-uh.

Jon: It’s like, “*We’ll see what happens.*”

Tim: Yeah. Yes, that’s right. They have been given power and an opportunity to use that power—

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: —to do the need of the moment.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: I wonder if they’re going to be someone according to God’s heart.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So this is super interesting. [chuckles] Oh, man. [laughs] We’re just going to go for it. So the next sentence is, “Now the *ruakh* of Yahweh *departed* from Saul.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “And a *ruakh ra’ah*” —

Jon: Whoa.

Tim: — “from Yahweh began to torment him.”

Jon: A bad *ruakh*.

Tim: A bad *ruakh*.

Jon: Tormenting him.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Sent from God.

Tim: Yeah. [chuckles]

Jon: [exhaling] Okay.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: All right.

Tim: So notice there’s this conception that the royal kingly *ruakh* can only go on one person at a time here.

Jon: Oh, interesting.

Tim: And if David’s got it now, that means it leaves Saul.

Jon: Okay. Yeah, I have to get out of my mind of like the Pentecost *ruakh* from the New Testament.

Tim: Mmm. Mmm.

Jon: When we were at—

Tim: That’s related—

Jon: It’s related.

Tim: —but we’re early in the story.

Jon: We’re early in the story. And so it’s good to remember, when it happened to Moses —

Tim: Right, right.

Jon: Like, he was the guy.

Tim: Yeah. Mhm.

Jon: And the fact that seventy more people got it—that was such a crazy exception. Right?

Tim: Mmm. Right. And the narrator says, “And it didn’t last.”

Jon: It didn’t last.

Tim: It was for a short time.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] And the fact that even two more on top of the seventy is like the bonus crazy exception. And so the baseline is like: God’s going to anoint one person at a time with the Spirit, fill them. They have the opportunity then to work on God’s behalf, and we’ll see how they do.

Tim: Yep, that’s right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So not only that—so when the *ruakh* of Yahweh leaves Shaul, what we’re then told is the flip of that is the vacuum of *ruakh* in Shaul’s mind and heart is filled with another *ruakh*.

Jon: Yeah, that God sends.

Tim: Another kind of *ruakh* that’s from Yahweh called *ra’ah*. Now—

Jon: Oy.

Tim: —this is—well, I’ll just call it as I see it. In our modern English translations, this is incorrectly translated—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: —in most of our modern English translations.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And by that, I mean NIV, New American Standard, New King James, all going back, translate this as “an evil spirit from God.”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It’s both incorrect in terms of grammar, and wording it that way is putting a huge theological obstacle in front of your average reader of the English Bible that the author of this story wasn’t intending.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So one: The word *ra'ah* in Hebrew, our word “evil”—we’ve talked about this for many years—

Jon: Right.

Tim: The English word evil is loaded with so many layers of meaning that are not present—

Jon: In *ra*.

Tim: —in Hebrew, *ra'ah*. The simplest way to describe it is: “evil” for us, we think of essence or nature.

Jon: Intention.

Tim: Yes. Whereas, in Hebrew, *ra* refers to the result or the outcome of a thing.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So this is why the one English translation—I’m sure there’s some others, but this is the widely read one—that does get this right translate this “a harmful spirit.” A spirit that resulted in or that brings about a bad outcome.

Jon: Okay, a spirit that brings bad.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, that’s right. So a very helpful condensed discussion of this and why it’s also a bad translation in terms of Hebrew grammar comes from David Tsumura’s commentary on the first book of Samuel. Because this phrase “a *ruakh ra'ah*” is modeled on other phrases in the Hebrew Bible. For example, “men of *ra'ah*” in the book of Proverbs. “Men of *ra'ah*,” in Proverbs 24:1. And you could translate it “evil men.” But if you read in context, it’s not talking about their essence, like, they’re evil people. It’s talking about what they do.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: “People who do bad things.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: They bring about bad in the world. So they’re called men of *ra'ah*.

Jon: Hmm. Why is there an extra “*ah*,” *ra'ah*?

Tim: Oh, it’s the feminine—grammatical feminine ending, “*ah*.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm. So there's a phrase, *ruakh sheqer*, used actually in a hyperlinked story here: "a spirit of deception," "a deceiving spirit." But what it means is a spirit that does deceiving.

Jon: A deceptive being? The result is deception.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] So here it means a spirit that begins pushing Saul towards a bad end. And this is the moment where, in the story, Saul starts to go maniac crazy and violently maniac crazy. So from this point onward—

Jon: Hold on.

Tim: Okay, yep.

Jon: "God sent," or—what does it say?

Tim: It's from Yahweh. "A *ruakh* that brings about a bad end comes from Yahweh."

Jon: "A *ruakh* that brings about a bad end comes from Yahweh."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So—sorry, I just need to step back.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] Yahweh is *ruakh*, and *ruakh* is the air I breathe. It's the wind.

Tim: It's my mindset.

Jon: It's my mind.

Tim: My mind. Mhm.

Jon: [Tim backchanneling throughout] So there is a category of: While that all belongs to Yahweh and is Yahweh, in some way, Yahweh is distinct from that. So I could have a *ruakh* that isn't—

Tim: Mmm. Yeah, bad.

Jon: God himself.

Tim: Oh. Well—so this is tricky. This is tricky. And this, itself, is a little hyperlink. Because this phrase, a *ruakh ra'ah*, bad spirit or spirit that leads one to a bad end, has been used once before in the previous scroll of the Torah, in Judges. And it's a story about the son of Gideon. Gideon was somebody whom the *ruakh* rushed upon to rescue Israel. And then when he was about to die, the people came to him and said, "You should appoint a king for us." And Gideon says, "No, no, no, no, God is your king."

And so I'm not going to become your king, and none of my sons are going to become king." But then he has a son before he dies, and he names him "My Dad is the King."

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: Which is Abimelech, or Avimelech.

Jon: Ohhh.

Tim: Then Gideon dies, and Judges chapter 9 is a horrible, horrific, violent story of civil war in Israel. And who's leading the charge?

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: This guy named—

Jon: My Dad is King.

Tim: My Dad is King. [Jon agreeing throughout] And what this guy Abimelech does is he kills all of his brothers, the other sons of Gideon. He assassinates them all in an effort to make himself the king, the *melekh*, of Israel. And then he joins in an alliance with the people of this town named Shechem, and, like, they help him pull off the assassination coup. And you're like, "*Oh, this is bad. We just have this, like, violent guy named My Dad is the King.*" And something happens in the story, and the relationship between Abimelech and his hired assassin crew breaks down, and then they start fighting each other. And that moment, the breakdown in their relationship, is described this way, in Judges chapter 9, verse 23—

Jon: A *ruakh* that brings bad.

Tim: "Then God sent a *ruakh ra'ah* between Abimelech and the men of Shechem. And so the men of Shechem began to deal treacherously with Abimelech."

Jon: Okay, so am I supposed to think then that if *ruakh* is energy, and all that comes from God, it really is then: What's going to be the result of that?

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: You could come in contact with the power of God, but then experience it in such a way that it doesn't end up being a good thing.

Tim: Yep, that's right.

Jon: That's—is that the point here?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: In other words, we're back to the marriage of divine and human agency.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And Saul is a portrait of a human filled with divine power and potential. And his heart is so misaligned with God that even getting changed—it couldn't even be fully changed. Saul is a tragic character in the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Yeah. Sure.

Tim: Like, in the classic sense.

Jon: This is just so scary, though, because— [pause] it just—I don't know. We'll get to the New Testament, but it's just like, man, I want when the Spirit comes—

Tim: Okay—

Jon: —for everything to be good.

Tim: Mmm. Yeah, sure.

Jon: And you're—this category is like: Oh, someone can be filled with the Spirit, and then, like, it could go horribly bad.

Tim: Yes. Yes. 100%.

Jon: What?

Tim: [laughs] Yeah.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: Okay. So I'm— [laughs] this is good. It's good in the sense of: I have sat in your place of disorientation—

Jon: [jokingly] I've got a spirit of *ra* right now.

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: But in a classic sense, this is the moment where the Hebrew Bible is holding a mirror up—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: —and is just saying, “*Yes, we need to change. God can change us. He will. He's going to send the Messiah. But the reason why it had to be one on behalf of the many is because the many have a real problem.*”

Jon: I see.

Tim: Our problem's more bad than we realize.

Jon: It's deeper than—more Spirit is not going to solve it.

Tim: Saul is a portrait of the human condition—

Jon: Huh. Okay.

Tim: —that is in its most tragic form.

Jon: Mmm. We're talking about Spirit without the Messiah having come.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Extra God's Spirit without—

Tim: Ooh.

Jon: —the Messiah—

Tim: Ooh.

Jon: —a true Messiah—

Tim: [excited] Yes.

Jon: —it could go one of two ways.

Tim: Yes, that's right. And without a full transformation of the heart to go along with it.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Spirit and *heart*. [excited] Yes. Yes.

Jon: [Tim agreeing throughout] But in my mind, like—“*Oh, yeah, the Spirit is the one to change the heart.*” But the thing that we're saying is, “*Actually, no, we need that Messiah. We need that leader. That's a crucial ingredient. The Spirit alone isn't going to just make a permanent change in your heart.*”

Tim: Mmm. Mhm. Yes.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] What's so fascinating is just like that bad spirit that was sent from God—and essentially, I think this is Judges and Samuel's way of describing what in the Exodus is God hardening Pharaoh's heart. God gave ten chances to Pharaoh to humble himself. The first five, Pharaoh hardens his own heart. And at a certain moment, God turns Pharaoh's own heart against him, as it were.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And now, God hardens Pharaoh's heart, which means he then uses Pharaoh's own stubbornness now to God's purposes.

Jon: Mmm. Oh, okay.

Tim: And what we're watching—

Jon: You're saying that's happening with Saul too—is—

Tim: I'm saying this is the parallel moment.

[Music fades in]

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Saul's being set on analogy to Pharaoh, but instead of a hard heart, it's about a bad spirit.

Jon: Ohhh, okay. Yeah.

Tim: But remember, heart and spirit are kind of interchangeable.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

[Musical break (49:00-49:18)]

[The Power of the Spirit and a God-Aligned Heart (49:18-1:01:21)]

Tim: So isn't it interesting Saul needs to find somebody to calm his mind?

[Music fades out]

Tim: And so he sends out his servants out to be like, “Who can help?” And then one of his servants says, “Oh, yeah, you know, there’s this son of Jesse who’s a really gifted harp player. He’s so gifted on the ten-string.”

Jon: *“He’ll soothe your mind.”*

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] And—yes. And so David comes into Saul’s court, and whenever the bad *ruakh* is upon Saul, David comes with his *ruakh* of Yahweh [chuckles] and plays music, and Saul can have some rest—gives rest to Saul. And that works until it doesn’t. So David’s now like the court harp player whenever Saul’s having a migraine—

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: [laughs] —you know, that’s from God.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: Actually, [chuckles] I don’t think that. That’s a bad way to describe that, but—

Jon: Right, right, right, right.

Tim: —you get what I’m saying. I’m trying to be silly. So right after that, it’s First Samuel 17. Guess who defeats Goliath? Not Saul with his armor.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah. Yeah. It’s that little harp boy.

Tim: It’s that little harp-playing boy.

Jon: Who we know was anointed by God to be the new king.

Tim: That’s right, exactly.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So he defeats Goliath, like, rises in popularity. He starts becoming a battle commander. You know, Saul elevates him to—David to become battle commander.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: He starts winning all these battles, and people start saying a proverb about David, which is, “Saul has killed his thousands in battle, but David tens of thousands.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And right after that, in First Samuel 18, there’s this scene of Saul experiencing the bad *ruakh* one day. And David comes in to play on his harp. And Saul begins thinking, “David’s got to be trying to usurp my power.” And so he tries to murder him. He has a spear near him—

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: —and he throws the spear, tries to pin David to the wall. And David eludes him two times. So he's like chasing him around the royal courtroom. [chuckles]

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: And this begins the conflict between Saul and David. And Saul essentially goes insane—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —and dies a grisly death within ten chapters. David never lifts a hand against him. There's stories about that. So you get this portrait then that God allows Saul, essentially, to destroy himself.

Jon: [exhales] Yeah.

Tim: And David waits until God deals with Saul to become elevated as king. And so now, you have these two portraits of the Spirit-filled king. One leads to death, one leads to life. What's the difference between them? And the difference between them is one is according to God's heart—

Jon: David's going to be according to God's heart.

Tim: —and one is not.

Jon: [exhales] Hmm.

Tim: And this is the puzzle of the Saul and David story and the role of the Spirit and the state of the human heart.

Jon: Hmm. And where does the story where Saul strips down naked after the *ruakh* comes or whatever? Does that fit in?

Tim: It's right after he tries to pin David to the wall.

Jon: It's after that.

Tim: After that.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So David runs from Saul. Saul comes chasing him. And God's way of immobilizing Saul is to have the Spirit rush upon him. [laughs] And he prophesies but as a maniac-type prophet—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —and he ends up stripped naked lying on the ground for a day. And God does that to him so that David can escape.

Jon: Hmm. Oh.

Tim: And it makes you go back and reevaluate all these experiences of Spirit power that Saul had. And you're like, "*It was too much for him*". It's sort of like he—

Jon: Hmm. It's too much for him.

Tim: The Spirit was too much divine power.

Jon: Without a true—like, a heart that can really handle it—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —God's Spirit's too much.

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: That's the—whew—wisdom of this story.

Tim: What's the takeaway here? The wisdom of the Torah is that you have these two leaders who are both given an extra amount of divine breath.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And it goes bad for one. It goes well for another. What's the—

Jon: Until it doesn't.

Tim: Well, exactly. [chuckles]

Jon: It becomes too much for David, too. [chuckles]

Tim: It's too much for David. And that's part of the point in the bigger David story.

Jon: Yeah, but for here and before that.

Tim: But for the moment, for this contrast, the difference between Saul and David is Saul uses deception and violent coercion to lead. And all the period of David's rise to kingship, he doesn't. Not against Saul. And so it's this contrasting portrait of what people do with the divine breath that they've been given. And it has to do with their heart, which is about desire and will, and— [pause] [exhales] I liked how you said that earlier, though. Just divine power of Spirit is not enough to transform a person.

Jon: Yeah. Right.

Tim: You actually need a different heart. You need a heart that's according to God. That's how Samuel puts it in chapter 13.

Jon: And I guess I can imagine, “*Well, cool, the Spirit will give you that heart.*” But then we’re left with this—you used the word vacuum earlier—we’re left with this problem, which is: Well, the Spirit doesn’t seem to do that, *necessarily*.

Tim: For Saul.

Jon: For Saul. And I guess I’m just thinking: Okay, this may be personal for a second. Like, what—if I’m going to seek out encounters with God’s Spirit, is the hope that it’s because of Jesus now I can handle it?

Tim: Oh, okay, yeah, let’s get New Testament for a second.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I think in the end, it’s—what we’re saying is: Jesus isn’t just a model of somebody whose heart was in tune with God because of the Spirit.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It’s that he literally is a divine human. [laughs]

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: He is the marriage of divine and human, so he arrives on the scene with a heart fully according to God.

Jon: And I shouldn’t seek out the Spirit of God if I’m not in Jesus.

Tim: Right.

Jon: If I’m, like, united with Jesus, then the Spirit—it’s not this gamble, I suppose, that it feels like in the Hebrew Bible.

Tim: Oh, sure. Yeah, that’s right. I mean, this is all stuff that we’re going to talk about later—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —when we get to the New Testament. But I think I appreciate trying to tie it up now as we try and tie a bow on this long conversation—is that: The portrait of the New Testament isn’t just: “*Okay, now Jesus came, and we can all just have our own*”—

Jon: “*Let’s try this Spirit thing again.*”

Tim: —“*heart transformation by the Spirit.*” It’s that Jesus is actually the human whose heart is fully in union with God—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] —because he's God become human. And then the Spirit of love and life shared between the Father and the Son is the Spirit of Jesus that [Tim makes a whoosh sound] wraps me into Jesus's own person and being. "To be in Christ," to use Paul's language. Or in John's language, that he, Jesus, might be in us so that just as Jesus is in the Father we would be in him—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: —and they, he and his Father, would be in us. So it's inhabitation—inhabiting language. But if it were just me in the Spirit— [pause]

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: —I don't know how things would go for me.

Jon: [jokingly] You might find some bloody horse's heads. [laughs]

Tim: But if it's—yeah, totally, yes. It's too much for me.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: My heart's *that* crooked.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: [Jon backchanneling throughout] So it's a way of holding together the tragic portrait of Saul and the positive portrait of David in this section of Samuel and saying both of these are true—

Jon: And possible.

Tim: —and both point to, I guess, the honest, raw reality of human nature, but also of what God can do and will do with human nature in and through the Messiah.

Jon: Did you mean "raw," like English "raw" meat, or Hebrew *ra*.

Tim: I meant raw in terms of English.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It worked both ways.

Tim: Raw portrait. But it is a *ra* portrait, in terms of its—yeah, anyhow. So we're not tying theological bows right now on this.

Jon: No.

Tim: But this story, the more I stare at it over the years—

Jon: But hinting at it.

Tim: [Jon agreeing throughout] —is so important. And I actually—I feel like in our conversation, I have a new way even of talking about it because Saul is a portrait of somebody with divine spirit power, but his heart is not aligned with God. It doesn't go well for him. What you need is somebody empowered by the Spirit whose heart is fully aligned with God. And the early David narrative—

Jon: And who— [chuckles] who could ever actually be that kind of human?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Well, this guy “Beloved One,” David, is for a time.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And isn't it interesting that when Jesus is introduced in the Gospels, the words from the Father to the Son through the Spirit at Jesus's baptism are: “This is my Son, my beloved one, the one whom I love.”

Jon: Oh, “my David.”

Tim: “My David.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Yeah. “In him, I have delight.” So what we've been talking about is our need for the messianic deliverer who's fully aligned with God's heart and Spirit. But that was always to take place on behalf of the many. So let's now turn to portraits of the transformation of the heart and Spirit of all of God's people. That's what Moses wanted.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So we're finally going to turn—

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Tim: —to Isaiah and Ezekiel and see how the Moses and David themes kind of come together.

[Musical break (58:38-58:42)]

Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of BibleProject podcast. Next week, we continue to look at the Spirit of the Messiah in the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, who see a day when God will anoint a future messianic king who himself anoints a new Spirit-filled humanity.

Tim: [audio clips from Spirit of God E7: The Spirit Poured Out on a New Humanity]
These are people who have the Spirit poured out on them. They do what is right by God and others, and they have God's Torah in their heart.

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[Phone beep]

Kirsten: Hi, my name is Kirsten—

Adin: And my name is Adin.

Kirsten: —and we're from New Braunfels, Texas. We first heard about BibleProject at church.

Adin: We use BibleProject for personal study, public reading of Scripture in teaching events, and small group study using Classroom and videos.

Kirsten: My favorite thing about BibleProject is that they equip you to dig deeper into understanding Scripture, which can have life transformation.

Adin: My favorite thing about BibleProject is how they've transformed how I understand Scripture and Jesus's mission, and my part in following Jesus.

Kirsten: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

Adin: BibleProject is a nonprofit funded by people like us.

Kirsten: Find free videos, articles, podcasts, classes, and more on the BibleProject app and at BibleProject.com.

[Phone beep]

Lexi: Hi, my name is Lexi Popineau, and I work on our Audience Care team. We respond to our audience members and patrons that reach out with questions. It could be about their accounts; it could be about finding resources in our library. I am from Tustin, California, in Orange County, which is, you know, the best county in my opinion. You're so close to the beach, which is so lovely. But then if you're, like, done with the beach, there's a *whole* ecosystem there of birds and frogs and—so it's really fun to walk by there with my daughter. We just, like, look down and see [laughs] what's down there for the day. There's a whole team that make the podcast come to life every week. For a full list of everyone involved in this episode, check out the show notes wherever you stream the podcast and on our app. See ya!

[BibleProject theme fades out]

[BibleProject sonic logo]