

# REAL PEOPLE, REAL GOD:

## Samuel, Hannah, Eli

This will be our last *regularly-scheduled* audio study. So today, we'll highlight the rest of the OT story by discussing the highs and lows of various characters and periods in Israel's history.

### Oh, That King Saul

Saul, if you remember from our last episode, was handsome and a head taller than any man in Israel.

#### High point:

- Saul showed admirable humility when Samuel first met Saul to anoint him as king.

“Saul answered, ‘But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?’”

**1 Samuel 9:21**

#### Low points:

- Inauguration day, Saul hid among the baggage. 1 Sam. 10:22
- Saul begins a pattern of disobedience until God calls him out for his lost humility in 1 Sam. 15 and vows to strip away the kingdom from him and his household.
- In the next chapter Samuel anoints David as king, and though David is a young boy and won't sit on Israel's throne for nearly fifteen years, Saul's jealousy of David begins.
- David becomes one of Saul's soldiers, his harp player, his son-in-law, and his son's best friend. Still, Saul pursues David to kill him through the rest of 1 Samuel—now a pompous, maniacal king who at his worst consults a witch that predicts his inglorious death that occurs during a Philistine battle.

### Enter, King David!

David *and* Solomon are the highest peaks in Israel's high points, but they, too, have some lows.

#### High points:

- David defeats Goliath with a single stone and begins Israel's defeat of the Philistines (while Saul is still king).
- After Saul dies, David becomes king, and his military conquests increase Israel's territory to the borders of the Promised Land that Joshua could never quite conquer.

- He captures Jerusalem from the Jebusites and makes it Israel's capital—which still stands today.
- But it's not just David's military exploits that make him the high point of the era of the kings—it's David's spiritual being. He was described BY GOD as “a man after God's heart.” A.W.E.S.O.M.E! What do you think that really means? That he recognized God had emotion? Finally recognized love for the people He had called to be His very own.
- Because of David's intimate relationship with Yahweh, he authored some of the most beautiful, most raw and penetrating psalms in Scripture.

### **Low points:**

- A temper. David nearly murdered a man for refusing to offer hospitality, but the man's wife—Abigail—stepped in to save her whole household. The man later died, and David married Abigail, making her wife #3—directly disobeying God's command in Deuteronomy 17 (“A king must not take many wives or his heart will be led astray.”)
- David's heart was definitely led astray into adultery with Bathsheba. Then into murder when he killed her husband to marry her.
- He was a lousy father. One son raped his sister. Another son tried to steal the throne. Most of David's children were a mess, and why wouldn't they be? The Bible names 19 sons and 1 daughter from eight different wives. Talk about a blended family! Yikes!

## **Wise King Solomon**

One of David's sons, Solomon, gains the throne through an odd set of circumstances. He's not David's eldest son, but he's the eldest of David's favorite wife, Bathsheba...

### **High points:**

- God appears to Solomon at night and offers to give anything Solomon asks for. Incredibly, Solomon asks for only one thing: wisdom to rule God's people well. God is *impressed!*

“God said to Solomon, ‘Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people...therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have.’” **2 Chronicles 1:11-12**

- Understandably, Solomon wrote the Wisdom Books of Scripture: Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes
- Solomon also used his wisdom and wealth to build the magnificent Temple in which Yahweh dwelt among His people, Israel, for centuries.

**\*\*THIS IS A TURNING POINT IN ALL OF SCRIPTURE\*\*** God moves from the temporary dwelling of the Tabernacle that Moses built to the permanent dwelling of the Temple in Jerusalem. He claims Jerusalem as His holy city and dwells among His chosen nation to become their God in that place. Unfortunately, His REAL PEOPLE don't realize how significant this action is, and Solomon stoops to his lowest point.

### **Low points:**

- Like his father David, Solomon marries multiple wives, but in keeping with all the other extravagance in Solomon's reign—the number of wives exceeds our wildest imaginations.

“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh...from the nations concerning which the Lord had said...‘You shall not enter into marriage with them...for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives...and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart...after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites...Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites...And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.” **1 Kings 11:1-8**

## **Israel After Solomon**

After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam inherits the throne, and honestly...there are no high points in his reign

- Israel splits in 931 BC into two kingdoms:
- 10 northern tribes become a separate nation retaining the name “Israel.”
- The 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin become the southern kingdom called “Judah.”
- Thus begins the chaotic time of kings—a few good, most were bad.
- Israel's northern kingdom survived from 931-721 BC when it was finally conquered and exiled by Assyria. Israel (northern kingdom) didn't have a single king faithful to Yahweh—not one in 210 years.
- Judah survived from 931-586 BC and had a little better record. Eight out of their twenty kings were considered “good” kings who at least tried to implement Yahweh worship in the Temple Solomon built in Jerusalem.
- By 586 BC, Judah/Israel had reached such a state of idolatry and rebellion that Yahweh's promised curses in Deuteronomy came to pass. Do you remember those?

“The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your ancestors. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing

of horror, a byword and an object of ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you.” **Deuteronomy 28:36-37**

## The Prophets’ Warnings

It’s not like the Israelites weren’t ever reminded or warned about Yahweh’s standards of holiness. It’s during the time of the kings that we see the *prophets* and their ministries. Through the prophets we really get to see some of our REAL GOD’s emotions—His emotional highs and lows as He relates to His people. God’s anger and wrath at the sin of the people are mixed with His undying faithfulness and love, with His vow to bring them back.

Lyndsey once read a description of the prophets of Israel as God’s “covenant enforcement mediators.” In essence, the book asserted that all their poetic language, metaphors, and stories were meant to describe how God feels, not really saying anything new. They are merely restating the original terms of the covenant.

## Terms and Conditions

If we look at Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 4, and Deuteronomy 28, we see lists of blessings that will come to Israel for its faithfulness to God and destruction that comes for unfaithfulness. These are terms of the covenant. So when Israel hits a major low point during the time of kings, God sends in some “covenant enforcement mediators”—prophets—to remind them of what the covenant says. They describe in various details the upcoming destruction and vividly depict God’s emotional highs and lows in the process. Here’s an example of Amos describing God’s wrath—a particularly low low.

“The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. In that day,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘the songs in the temple will turn to wailing.” **Amos 8:2-3**

But Hosea shows us Yahweh’s compassion—the high point of God’s heart.

“How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?...My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger...for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.” **Hosea 11:8-9**

These sections of Scripture are full of our REAL GOD who wants to *relate* to us, and bring us back into relationship with Him. The time of the kings is a low point for Israel, and so the word of God through the prophets expresses this low point of God’s emotion but also promises a time of restoration when God will snatch victory from the jaws of defeat!

Unfortunately for the REAL PEOPLE of Israel and Judah, their defeat had to come first, and it came in the form of exile to foreign lands.

## **All of Israel in Exile**

Remember, there were actually two exiles—the northern kingdom of Israel was exiled to Assyria in 721 BC, and then the southern kingdom of Judah was conquered in 586 BC when Babylon rose to world domination.

Biblical heroes like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and Queen Esther lived during this second—and complete—exile to Babylon.

- Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah are the historical books of Scripture pertaining to the Babylonian exile. Daniel also gives some good history and a prophetic timeline of future world kingdoms.
- The prophets who wrote during this exile were:
  - Jeremiah
  - Daniel
  - Ezekiel
  - Haggai
  - Zechariah
  - Malachi
- In Daniel 2:27-47, Daniel explains the meaning of a dream that plagued King Nebuchadnezzar. In that dream, an enormous statue was described, and God—through Daniel—tells the Babylonian king the future of the world. Here's the progression:
  - head of pure gold – represents BABYLON
  - chest and arms of silver – represents MEDO-PERSIA (Esther)
  - belly and thighs of bronze – represents GREECE
  - legs of iron – represents ROMAN EMPIRE
  - feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay – represents DIVIDED EUROPEAN NATIONS (present day)
  - a Rock was cut out...struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and...all broken to pieces...the Wind swept them away...but the rock...became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth – the Rock is Jesus!

## **God's Word Fulfilled**

The Rock in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the Savior of the world—Jesus—who will strike the iron and clay feet of earthly kingdoms. The Wind of His Spirit will scatter the pieces, and He will fill the whole earth, where we will finally dwell with our God again in perfect, transparent relationship as it once was in the Garden.

Just as all God's promises from Deuteronomy came true for the Israelites, so will every word from his prophets' lips come to pass for us all. This is the story of the Bible, the story we're living today and the reality that's drawing nearer every day.

May the anticipation of the fulfillment of His promises spur us on!

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” **Hebrews 10:23-25**

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