

[The Wilderness E6 Transcript]

[Recap of the Theme and Setup for David (0:00—17:00)]

Jon: We are tracing the theme of the wilderness through the story of the Bible. The wilderness, as a biblical setting, tells us something fundamental about life.

Tim: Existence itself is fragile, and dependent, and contingent. It doesn't sustain itself, and it only exists because of the will and generosity of the one who is, that is, *Yahweh*.

Jon: God plants a garden in the wilderness, and he invites humanity to enjoy it. But this requires that they learn to live by God's life.

Tim: If they are refusing to fear God and live by his wisdom, it will actually be the worst possible thing for the humans to be in the garden and live forever in this state.

Jon: And so God in his mercy sends them out of the garden into the wilderness. And God follows them there to create life in the wilderness as an opportunity to teach them how to live by his wisdom. Today, we're going to look at the life of David as a story of someone who shows us how to succeed in the wilderness.

Tim: David's name is spelled with the same letters as the word "beloved one." And where he leads sheep regularly is out in the wilderness.

Jon: Now, at this point of the story, Israel wants a king to lead them. They get a king named Saul who doesn't fear God and live by his wisdom. And so God chooses this young shepherd boy named David. And Saul's not happy about this. And so before David can become king, he has to flee from Saul out into the wilderness.

Tim: The wilderness has kind of shaped David to form David's faith and trust that God can rescue and provide.

Jon: Today, we'll look at First Samuel, and we'll find three tests. In two of them, David succeeds. He has an opportunity to kill Saul, his enemy, but he doesn't give in.

Tim: He trusts that God is going to bring down Saul in God's way, in God's time, and that he's not going to shed blood to do it.

Jon: The third test is different. So David and his men are out in the wilderness, and so are these shepherds who are out there with a wealthy landowner's flock. And David and

his men protect these shepherds. And in return, David asks to join in on the sheep shearing feast that's about to happen. And the wealthy man refuses, and David is enraged.

Tim: David's response is: "I'm going to kill this guy." There's something about being shamed that just gets under his skin.

Jon: David's about to shed blood. But before he can, a woman named Abigail meets David with a feast and convinces David to have mercy.

Tim: This is another portrait of exploring: What is it that could make somebody not ready for the garden? David is able to trust God, but there is still one piece of his character that is still pretty attached to his honor. Abigail becomes like David's conscience here, and she's going to save the day.

Jon: Today on the podcast: how young David and how Abigail are models for us for how to find life in the wilderness. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical Break (3:18—3:22)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hello, Jonathan. Going for the full name today.

[Laughter]

Jon: I love how now when I say: "Hey, Tim," you never just say: "Hey, Jon." It's always: "Hey, Jon Collins."

[Laughter]

Jon: "Hey, Jonathan."

Tim: You k—just trying to—

Jon: You got to find little twists.

Tim: Mix things up a little bit.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's right. Like the Hebrew Bible—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Always with a twist.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Always with a twist.

Tim: Uh-huh.

Jon: Well, today—

[Laughter]

Jon: We will continue in our theme study of the wilderness, and we are halfway through.

Tim: Yeah. Though you never know—

Jon: You never—

[Laughter]

Jon: You never quite know.

Tim: Where the conversation—

[Laughter]

Tim: Is going to go.

Jon: We just came out of the wilderness wanderings, um, which is—when you think of the wilderness in the Bible, it's probably the first place your mind goes to—

Tim: Mmm. Mhm.

Jon: Israel in the wilderness—

Tim: Yeah, yep.

Jon: Getting miraculous bread from the sky, manna, and water from the rock, and—

Tim: But it's hard. It's hard out there. Hard to trust God—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You know, when you're thirsty and hungry.

Jon: Yeah. Totally. So the theme doesn't begin there, though.

Tim: Mmm. Mhm.

Jon: The theme actually begins in Genesis one and two, in particular Genesis two, where it becomes really clear. There was a wilderness. There's no life. God created a spring that watered it, and out of that, then humans, and the garden, and everything came into being. And so the theme of the wilderness begins with God showing up where there is nothing and creating life. He wants to create life in the wilderness. That's kind of the first thing we learned about the wilderness.

Tim: First step, that's right.

Jon: Second thing we learned about the wilderness is, you know, even though the garden is amazing, the garden is surrounded by the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Jon: It's a little oasis of life that's sustained by God.

Tim: That physical picture is the biblical author's way of pondering a great metaphysical truth about reality, which is that existence itself is fragile, and dependent, and contingent. It doesn't sustain itself, and it only exists because of the will and generosity of the one who is, that is, Yahweh—

[Laughter]

Tim: The one who is.

Jon: Yeah. And when you live in the hillsides of Judea and then you can take a day's trip —

Tim: Mmm—

Jon: Out—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Towards the Jordan River and suddenly be at the Dead Sea—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then the stretch of wilderness that just goes on for miles and miles and miles to where the—where you wouldn't be able to go through it—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: You get that sense.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. That metaphysical truth is built into your physical environment.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: Now the purpose of being humans in a garden was not to just be able to just enjoy goodness, um, although that is—

Tim: That's one part of it.

Jon: One—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Part of it.

Tim: "Eat from all of the trees."

Jon: "Enjoy."

Tim: "Enjoy," God says—

Jon: Um—

Tim: To his partners.

Jon: But the purpose behind that is to be God's image.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: And so God, with his word, created good, and order, and beauty, and opportunity. And so we are meant to do the same. In order to learn to do that, we need to learn to live by God's wisdom—

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: To partner with God, to be his image, to reflect all that back out. And we can learn that in the garden.

Tim: Mmm. Yeah.

Jon: That's kind of where we talked about last time. Because in the garden, there's abundance. "Eat of everything." And then God can make this simple little test: "I want you to trust my wisdom, learn to live by my word, so I'm just going to give you this one simple thing. This tree right here, don't eat of that tree. You're not ready for it." That's the simple test. And humans even fail that really simple—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Test.

Tim: And even though it makes us focus on the tree, like it made Adam and Eve focus on the tree and the snake, it's less about the tree and more about what God wants to teach me by going without one good thing—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: For an undefined period. W—I don't know how long the command will be.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Right?

Jon: Right. And—

Tim: In action?

Jon: And clearly, I think I want that thing.

Tim: And it seems like something that is good—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That God would want me to have. But the question is: Is that deprivation of a good thing—

Jon: That forced fasting—

Tim: A forced fasting, of a—

Jon: Which might even feel like oppression.

Tim: Yeah, totally. Yeah.

Jon: “You’re keeping this from me.”

Tim: You’re oppressing a desire you have or suppressing it—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: For the—a time. Is there something in that process that is very, very formative and educational for our desires?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And if we can’t learn that, the garden becomes a problem.

Tim: Yeah. Too much goodness.

Jon: Too much.

Tim: Too much *tov*.

Jon: I’m going to go—

[Laughter]

Jon: Around and I’m going to start thinking, this is all because of me, and my wisdom, and my strength.

Tim: Yeah. “I deserve this.”

Jon: “I deserve this.”

[Laughter]

Jon: “I did this.”

[Laughter]

Jon: And how are we going to be ready to actually be able to enjoy the goodness that God wants to give humanity?

Tim: Mmm. What God did fundamentally in creation is to share God's own infinite, abundant goodness with something other than God's own self. And so if imaging God is about sharing the goodness, it's going to be really hard for me to share if I think that it's mine, as opposed—

[Laughter]

Tim: To if I think that it's h—

Jon: If I think that it's mine, it's hard to share. If I think that it's up to me, then it's hard to relax and to enjoy sharing.

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: That's true. Yeah, also that.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Jon: And if I think that I can find and define what's good and bad on my own terms, I'm ultimately going to just create misery and violence. So out of the garden the humans go.

Tim: Yeah. God says if they are refusing to fear God and live by his wisdom, it will actually be the worst possible thing for the humans to be in the garden and live forever in this state. So they're, a severe mercy, exiled—

Jon: They're banished.

Tim: From the garden, back into the wilderness.

Jon: So now they're in the wilderness because they can't be in the garden. But in the wilderness, you can still learn what God wanted to teach—

Tim: Yes.



Jon: Which is to learn good from bad in his timing.

Tim: Yeah. And so the stories of Israel in the wilderness become the inverse opposite test of what Adam and Eve were tested with in the garden. They had too many trees of abundance, and it was just one thing that they were deprived of, whereas the Israelites have no—

Jon: No things.

Tim: Fruit trees—

[Laughter]

Tim: And they are just provided one small thing. And—

Jon: Can they enjoy that one gift? And can they trust God that God will keep giving them what they need in the—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Wilderness?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: God was going to teach us in the garden, but we just can't learn it in the garden.

Tim: Or didn't.

Jon: Or didn't.

Tim: We didn't, and still seems like—

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah, well.

[Laughter]

Jon: And so we're going to need to learn it in the wilderness. And a whole generation of people in the wilderness are given the opportunity to learn that, ultimately don't learn

that, and the next generation, the generation that grew up in the wilderness, gets to then inherit the land. And what we saw was Moses actually telling that generation—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like, being really plain about it: “Look, you’re going to go into a land. It’s going to have so much good. And just be careful because your heart might not be ready. And God was trying to prepare your hearts in the wilderness. That was the point, that it’s not just about eating bread. That’s not true life. You g—c—there’s going to be so much bread, and honey—”

[Laughter]

Jon: “And wonderful things. And it’s going to be easy to start to think: ‘Oh yes, this is life. And I did this by my own strength.’” And he’s like: “You got to remember this all comes from God—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “And that’s what you were meant to learn in the wilderness so that you can enjoy this good thing.”

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And then they go in, and you s—ended last conversation saying that generation did a pretty good job.

Tim: Yeah, Joshua was the new Moses. And they, for the most part, followed God’s wisdom and word across the Jordan into the land. And God fought their battles for them, sometimes employing their agency. So Jericho: Just, they didn’t do much.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: They marched around with trumpets—

[Laughter]

Tim: You know, around a city—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Seven times. Other times when they got attacked, God gave Joshua wisdom for how to respond. And they end up by the end of Joshua settled in the land into tribes. And it's good stuff. What could go wrong?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And, uh, the moment Joshua dies and all that generation who saw what God did in the land of Egypt—that generation died, and a new generation arose, were told, that did not know Yahweh or what he had done for Israel. So that ushers us into the chaos of the book of Judges. So the Judges represents the next generation after the Joshua generation.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And they basically, you know, they, they pl—

Jon: Do what's good in their own eyes?

Tim: They—yeah. They play out exactly what Moses was afraid would happen.

Jon: Hmm. They don't remember.

Tim: Yeah. And so after enough generations of the Judges—waiting for God to raise up, by his Spirit, a leader for each generation. And it's all reactions to crisis. I mean, that's no way to run a people—

[Laughter]

Tim: Just, like, waiting for God to provide daily bread—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Right—or to bring quail by his Spirit—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: On the wind—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's not a long-term strategy for survival. "We need a king."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So that's—the origins of kingship is fraught with the distorted desires of the people for security, the way they see it. So God raises up, and then the people choose, a guy named "The One Who Was Asked For—"

[Laughter]

Tim: Which is, uh, pronounced Saul—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Or—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: *S—Shaul* in Hebrew—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "The guy that was asked for."

Jon: That's—

Tim: What if that—

Jon: What his name means?

Tim: Yeah, that's what *Shaul* means.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Yeah. That's what Saul means. So that doesn't go well. Then what happens is that, once it's clear that Saul refuses to live by the fear of the Lord and the word and the wisdom of God—there's a whole set of stories about that, God says: "I'm going to raise up one of your companions who is better than you, who has a heart after me." And that's when the shepherd boy David is introduced into the story of the Bible. We're now in the territory of First Samuel chapter 16 and onward.

Jon: Okay. The origins of David.

Tim: Yeah. David's name is spelled with the same letters as the word "beloved one," beloved.

Jon: Beloved.

Tim: Yeah. The one who is loved.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So Samuel, who was instrumental in the, you know—

Jon: He's a prophet.

Tim: The prophet, yes. He's kind of the Moses figure—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Of that time in Israel, and even the king is answerable to him, King Saul. And so God tells Samuel to go anoint a new king, but secretly, because Saul is still king. And so he goes to a guy named Jesse's house. He's got all his sons. The youngest one is out shepherding the flock, and that's the one. That's the beloved one.

Jon: The youngest—

Tim: Yep. *David* out with the sheep. Mmm. And where he leads the sheep regularly is out in the wilderness.

Jon: Mmm. That's where they graze.

Tim: That's right. So during that time, Israel is fighting the Philistines as a consistent, like, aggressor out on the, the western border of the hill country. And so the famous David and Goliath story is the next chapter, First Samuel 17. And David was out leading a whole bunch of goats and sheep that belonged to his dad out in the wilderness. And he goes to bring some food to his brothers in battle, commissioned by his dad. Actually, that's where—

[Laughter]

Tim: That's where David looks at Goliath, you know, taunting the armies of Israel, and he's thinking to himself: "Well, I've killed a bear."

[Laughter]

Tim: "I've killed a lion—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "In the wilderness. And like, I bet I could take down that guy—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “By the power of God that helped me defeat a bear and a lion in the wilderness to save my sheep.” So that’s the David and Goliath story.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So he comes out of the wilderness. The wilderness has kind of shaped David. He’s been out in the wilderness.

Jon: Huh.

Tim: That’s the, the setting from which he enters as a shepherd. And it’s mentioned many times.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It’s really interesting.

Jon: We talked about this, where the boundary of the wilderness—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Seasonally will get rain. And w—you can’t settle there, but there can be times where you should go and let your herds graze—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: On those wild—

Tim: That’s right.

Jon: Grasses—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That have sprung up for—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: A moment.

Tim: Yeah. And so you’re supposed to view him as coming in from that context.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He just trusts God. He trusts that God can rescue and provide, and he's been shaped by the wilderness.

Jon: Huh.

[Musical Break (16:37—17:00)]

[David's Successes and Tests in the Wilderness (17:00—32:00)]

Tim: So after the David and Goliath story, David is adopted into Saul's court as a musician and a battle commander.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And this is where we're going to pick up. So in First Samuel 18, what we hear is that David starts coming back after just winning all these victories against the Philistines. And one day—

[Laughter]

Tim: He comes back into Saul's territory, and Saul hears this report that every town that David goes through, the ladies come out with their harps and they sing a song about David when David passes through town after winning a battle. And the song goes like this. "Saul has struck down his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." How was that?

Jon: That's a simple song. Maybe they had a—more verses.

[Laughter]

Tim: Pr—probably.

Jon: But that's the part that really irritated Saul.

Tim: "Saul struck down thousands." And Saul must have just heard that line, and he's like: "Yeah, that's right."

Jon: "That's right."

[Laughter]

Jon: "Sing that one again."

Tim: Yeah, sure.

[Laughter]

Jon: "I like that line."

Tim: "But David, tens of thousands."

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: "And Saul became angry. And this saying was bad in his eyes." Notice that little Eden echo.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is his test. This is Saul's test.

Jon: This is kind of a Cain and Abel moment, too.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He became angry.

Tim: Yeah, good. Excellent. That's exactly right. Rival brothers.

Jon: Rival brothers.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. And Saul thought: "Ah, they have attributed to David ten thousands, but to me, they only attribute thousands."

Jon: Yeah. "I'm the king around here."



Tim: Yeah. And then he just says: “What more can he get but the whole kingdom?”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So you can see where his mind is going.

Jon: Right. “I am not being praised enough. People aren’t—”

Tim: Mmm. “Recognizing—”

Jon: “Recog”—there it is.

Tim: “Me for who I am.”

Jon: “People aren’t recognizing me for who I really am. I am the king of this whole kingdom.”

Tim: Yeah. That’s right.

Jon: “Why is David out there getting his tens of thousands? Because he works for me.”

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. “He works for me.”

[Laughter]

Jon: “He works for me.”

Tim: Yeah. “I’ve been beating the Philistines before David—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Was ever on the scene.” So—this is all from First Samuel 18. So verse nine: “From that day onward, Saul was watching David with crookedness, with *avon*, with—”

Jon: Oh.

Tim: “With deviance.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: The last sentences of chapter 18—it says: “Saul was threatened by David even more, and Saul became a perpetual enemy of David.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm. This is like what God says to the snake: “I will set hostility, enmity, between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed.” So Saul’s like lining up on the snake side of the line.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Team Snake.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: “And so the commanders of the Philistines went out for battle, and as often as they went out, David succeeded more than any of the other servants of Saul. And David’s name became very honored. So Saul spoke to Jonathan,” which is his son, like, the royal heir, Jonathan. It’s your name.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: “And all of his servants—he started talking to them about how he’s going to kill David. But Saul’s son, Jonathan, he loved David very much. And he informed David, saying: ‘My father Saul, he’s trying to kill you. Watch out.’” And so this goes into First Samuel 19, which is—Jonathan helps David escape. And the last time that Saul sees David, he just throws a spear at him, trying literally to pin him to the wall with a spear through his body. And David, like, jumps to the side and flees into the night. And there you go. That’s the scene. And where does David go?

[Laughter]

Tim: So—

Jon: To the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah. So if you look in First Samuel, um, now in chapters 22 through 26, just do a concordance search for all the words for wilderness. Uh, *midbar*, the *yeshimon*, the empty land, the *sadeh*, the field, they’re just all of a sudden just glowing with density, these words in these sections. So this i—becomes David’s wilderness wandering. So we should be primed now from Genesis and from the Exodus stories about the Israelites to begin to expect that we’re going to find tests of David’s character in this section of the book.

Jon: And the story behind all this, too, you alluded to it, but we didn’t focus on it, is David has been anointed king—

Tim: Mhm. That's right.

Jon: In private.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: And—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Da—so David knows he's actually king—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: This whole time.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: He's getting praise.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He works for Saul. But—and he's keeping to himself, but he's like: "Actually, I'm the one that's supposed to be king."

Tim: Yeah. But he doesn't flaunt it.

Jon: He doesn't flaunt it. He just—

Tim: Nope.

Jon: Keeps working for Saul.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then Saul becomes threatened, not even knowing that David actually is the rightful king.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He's still threatened.

Tim: I mean, this is the irony between David and Saul—is that David is the true king, but just unrecognized, and Saul thinks that David is trying to become king. So—

Jon: When he already is.

Tim: When—

[Laughter]

Tim: And he already is, but David's not going to push the issue.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He's going to let things play out. He's going to let God provide in his own time. So these are the chapters where David is presented as a very positive character. And he trusts God a lot. So he flees. Here are some of the places that he flees to that are named. First Samuel 22:1: "He escaped to the cave of *Adulam*. *Adulam* means "the closed-in place." So he goes out to a cave.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And there are a whole bunch of people hear that he's there, like his family, and they come down to him. Actually, and this is where he forms his first crew. So—this is this great line. This is one of my favorite lines: First Samuel 22:2: "And every man who was in distress, every man who had a creditor," that is, they had a, a loan they—

Jon: A loan due?

Tim: Defaulted—

[Laughter]

Tim: On or loan due, "every man who was bitter of spirit, these gathered to him—"

Jon: Oh.

Tim: "And he became their commander, about 400 men."

Jon: Oh, interesting. He's got a scrappy crew here.

Tim: Yeah. The—these—

Jon: These are the outsiders.

Tim: Yeah. These are the poor in spirit.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Right?

Jon: Bitter in spirit.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. The bitter of spirit. So David's first crew is a bunch of people who have been—

Jon: Discarded or just not—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Making it.

Tim: That's right. Yeah. Not making it. And—

Jon: This is kind of a Robin Hood kind of—

Tim: It's totally—

Jon: Character.

Tim: I—it totally is.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. That's great. So then, from here on, chapter 23, David remained in the wilderness, in the strongholds, the *metzadot*. These are naturally formed fortress-like structures with lots of caves and protective ravine walls.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. I mean, they're all over the hill country. Famously, um, the Qumran scrolls, the Dead—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: Sea scrolls—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Were found in these ravines, kind of to the northeast of the Dead Sea.

Jon: Are these, like, the wadi's, like, the ravines?

Tim: Yes. Yeah. So seasonal water way up in the hills of Judea—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That make them fertile. The water goes downhill east. Um, anything that escaped irrigation starts to hit really dry ground that can't absorb the water. And so it just cuts like a knife, erodes these channels, and over thousands of years, it forms these really clear channels that are seasonal streams. And then they have all these wild natural formations out there—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That are cool.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I mean, you're just like: "Whoa, that's like a natural fortress with a network of caves and tunnels with a surrounded outer ravine wall, and—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's cool out there.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So—

Jon: The strongholds.

Tim: They're called the *metzadot* or the strongholds—"In the hill country, in the wilderness of Ziph." So he's just, he's cruising around there with these guys. I—

Jon: Do we know where this is, Ziph?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. These are in the hills that are just due east of where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Mhm. And also further south.

Jon: On the west side of the Jordan, though?

Tim: On the west side of the Jordan.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. Mhm. So what happens, though, is that Saul has spies and allies, you know, in the little towns and—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Communities out there. And so the people of Ziph, when they see David's crew rolling through, they send some spies to Saul. And they say: "David's hiding in the strongholds." And so Saul will get an army and he'll come, go hunt through, and David will have to—fwoo—like—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Stealthily sneak out of their stronghold and go cruise around. So this is the scene —is that in First Samuel 23, David will flee to another part of the wilderness. Saul will, like, be chasing him and so on. So there's three stories that happen right here in First Samuel 24, 25, 26. This is such a rad little triad. It's a wonderful example of symmetrical Hebrew Bible storytelling where the two outer stories match and surround a story in the middle that's different than the outer two.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: But all three are meant to illuminate each other.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And they take place in the wilderness. So what I want to actually read is the one in the center.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: But to do that, I want to set up the two stories on the outer frame. It's like a sandwich.

[Laughter]

Jon: I'm getting used to these sandwiches.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. Totally. Yeah. So o—the outer parts of the sandwich are First Samuel 24 and 26. They're parallel moments when David has a chance to take out Saul—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Who's his number one rival. I mean, just—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Take out Saul and—

Jon: Problem's over.

Tim: Problem's over. "I can go back to see my family. I can—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You know, "do what God called me to do, which is run the kingdom."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: I mean, this guy's—Saul's insane. He's gone crazy. So that's—

Jon: Someone's got to take him out.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. So what we see in these chapters is the wilderness has become like this incubator to form David's faith and trust. The last scene at the end of chapter 23 is David doesn't know what to do at a fork in the road, which way to go, when Saul's chasing him. And so he starts praying. And we get this scene where there's a priest from the shrine in the tent, and we're told that priest had the *ephod*, which is the word for the high priestly garment that had the stones in them—

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah—

Tim: That w—

Jon: The ten stones or w—

Tim: The urim and the thumim.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And what David starts doing is he starts praying to Yahweh, saying: "Yahweh, what should I do? Should I go there, down this road to that town? Should I go down this road?" And Yahweh starts answering him, saying: "Go this way. Go that way. No, those people are going to betray you. Go this way." It's really cool. So all of a sudden, the wilderness is forcing David to learn to depend on the word of Yahweh. And he just, he does what God tells him to do. So that by the time he comes to these two tests, which is the Saul sandwich—

Jon: 24 and 26.

Tim: 24 and 26, you are primed to expect: He's going to do the right thing. Okay. So real quick: First Samuel 24—Saul's crew is coming down a ravine. David and his crew see



them coming, and the only thing he can do is, like, flee into a cave. And Saul's crew, his troops, stop outside the cave, and Saul has to take a dump.

Jon: Relieve himself.

Tim: He's going—

[Laughter]

Tim: He's got to go to the bathroom.

Jon: Yep.

Tim: So famously, he goes into the cave.

Jon: Yep.

Tim: He's—

Jon: Doesn't know David's there.

Tim: Squatting.

Jon: David could just take him out.

Tim: He's making enough noise that David can have a whispered conversation with his battle commander. Like crouch—right b—I mean, it's a classic scene.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so David's, you know, captains are like: "Dude, this is it."

Jon: "This is it. This is the moment."

Tim: "Slit his throat." You know? And David says: "No." He says: "That's the king that God has chosen for his people for this time. I'm not going to touch him." But he does slice off a little piece of his robe.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And, uh—he must have had some serious stomach issues that day—

[Laughter]

Jon: To not notice?

Tim: To not notice this.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, totally.

Jon: It was a very dark cave.

[Laughter]

Tim: So when Saul goes outside the cave, David, you know, runs out to the front and is like: "Saul." And he gives this speech. He was just like: "Why are you chasing me? I don't want to kill you. I could—"

Jon: Right.

Tim: "Have just now. Look."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And Saul says: "Oh, I'm so sorry." You know: "I'll stop chasing you."

[Laughter]

Tim: And then, you know, a little time goes by, and he's out chasing him again.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: The other side of the Saul sandwich, and this is first Samuel 26, Saul's chasing him again, not long in the future. And it's nighttime, and David and one of his guys comes over a hillside, and they see Saul's camp, and everyone's sleeping. And so David and one of his guys sneak down, and David's commander is like: "Let me just cut off his head right here." And David's like: "No. No. No." So David instead grabs some of Saul's

stuff, runs to the top of the hill, and is—wakes everybody up. And it's—he gives the same speech—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And Saul says the same thing.

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So these are two moments where David's clearly—he trusts that God is going to bring down Saul in God's way, in God's time, and that he's not going to shed blood to do it. So that's the outer sandwich.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Inside of the Saul sandwich is this story. This is one of my favorite stories in the entire Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: This is fantastic.

[Musical Break (31:32—32:00)]

[David's Test With Nabal and Abigail (32:00—43:58)]

Tim: So it begins with a little note that says: "Samuel, the guy who anointed David, he died. And all Israel gathered together and grieved for him and buried him." And David didn't get a chance to go because he's out in the wilderness. "So he arose and he went down to the wilderness of Paran." This is where the Israelites were wandering in the days of their final rebellions in, uh, the book of Numbers.

Jon: So he's kind of far out there.

Tim: Mhm. "Now there was a guy down there in Maon—"which means dwelling place—"and he had business, however, up in Garden."

[Laughter]

Jon: Carmel?

Tim: Yeah. The word "Carmel," which means, like, "fruit orchard." "So there's a guy there who, you know, just had a great farming setup in Garden. And the man was very rich: 3,000 sheep, 1,000 goats." That's—yeah. He's got a little Eden situation going on in a region called Garden. "And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel—" so that's a springtime thing. Sheep, apparently—

[Laughter]

Tim: I'm told, not that I've done this, you know, they grow their thick coats in the winter. And in the spring, you shave them off and you go sell it. So there was a sheep shearing festival going on. That's a hyperlink to a whole bunch of things in the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. But we don't have time—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: To chase those down.

Jon: All right.

Tim: "But you should know the guy's name. The guy's name was 'Malicious Idiot.'"

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay. In—

Tim: Or—

Jon: Hebrew—

Tim: In Hebrew, it's *Naval*.

Jon: *Naval*. Malicious Idiot. That's unfortunate. But he's rich.

Tim: Yeah. He's rich and his name is Malicious Idiot.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It both means idiot or fool, but like bad, mean fool.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So "Malicious Idiot." That's—

Jon: All right.

Tim: My—

Jon: All right.

Tim: Shorthand. "And his wife's name was 'My Dad is a Redeemer,' '*Abigail*.'"

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "And you should know, this woman was good of wisdom and beautiful of appearance."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm. These are the words used to describe the tree—

Jon: Mmm. The tree of knowing good and bad.

Tim: In the garden of Eden.

Jon: The tree wasn't intelligent. It was just beautiful in appearance.

Tim: Mmm. It was "desirable for gaining wisdom."

Jon: Oh, for gaining wisdom. Yeah.

Tim: It's the word used here, *sekel*.

Jon: Okay. Okay.

Tim: Mhm. So: "She was good of wisdom—"

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "And beautiful of appearance."

Jon: So we got a Malicious Idiot who's got a wife who's a—the tree of knowing good and bad.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “And this man, oh, he was harsh and he was bad, *ra*, in all of his dealings. Oh, you should also know, he was from the line of Caleb,” who's from the line of Judah. So he's a Judahite.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. “Now David heard in the wilderness that Naval was shearing a sheep. So David sent 10 young men, and David said to them: ‘Okay, go up to Garden,’” that is Carmel, “and go greet Naval in my name and say to him: ‘Ah, may long days be yours and may you have peace. Peace be upon your house and upon everything that you have. Now I've heard that you have a sheep shearing going on. You should know something, Naval. Your shepherds have been with us.’” So we're learning something here.

Jon: David knows his shepherds?

Tim: David's been hanging out with Naval's shepherds.

Jon: Okay. This is all coming together, then.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: How does David know about this guy?

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, yeah. He says: “We have not treated them with insult. They haven't had anything go missing all the days that they were in Carmel. Ask your young men. They'll tell you.” What he's telling him is: “Listen, you have shepherds taking all your sheep out in the hills.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “And th—you know, it's dangerous out there.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “There's bears, lions, thieves.”

Jon: “We've been good to them.”

Tim: “So I’ve got this crew, a couple hundred guys. We have been watching over your shepherds, making sure your flocks are protected.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “I’ve been doing you a favor for, like, a while now, and—”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “But you don’t know it. I’m telling you right now today. So therefore, my young men that I’ve sent to you, may they find favor in your eyes because, well, we know we’ve come to you on a party day.”

[Laughter]

Tim: Oh, yeah. So sheep shearing, it’s like—

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: You’re cashing in.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It’s like a harvest day—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But for your sheep. “And could you give whatever you have at hand to your servant and to your son, David?”

Jon: Okay. “We want in on the party.”

Tim: Yeah. “I mean, we do live out here in the hills.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “And you didn’t ask for us to be like bodyguards—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “For your flocks and your shepherds, but we kind of just did it anyway.” You can see the rhetoric here.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: “Hey, I’ve been, like, doing good by you, even though you never asked me to.”

[Laughter]

Tim: “So we’re kind of hungry. Is there anything you could provide for us?”

Jon: Yeah. You’re showing up to a party—

[Laughter]

Jon: And you’re like: “Hey, we haven’t met.”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “I’m like your neighbor. I’m actually a rad dude.”

[Laughter]

Tim: That’s right.

Jon: You know?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: “You don’t know this, but like I’m a really great—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “Dude.”

Tim: Yeah. “I’ve been weeding your garden.”

Jon: Yeah. “That’s me. Uh, can we party?”

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

[Laughter]



Tim: "Can we come in?"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Can we come in? I s—you've got a lot of food here."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's that kind of scene.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "So David's young men came and they spoke to Naval all these words in David's name and then they waited."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Which is an odd little detail. Like, so what are they just waiting?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Why isn't Naval saying something? And then, when Naval finally does speak up, what he says is: "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? You know, there are lots of servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. So am I supposed to take my bread, and my water, and my meat that I slaughtered for my shearers and give it to some guys who come from I don't know where?"

Jon: Yeah. "You're asking me to be generous with all this stuff that I've amassed for myself. I don't know you. I don't really know who you are."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "And you want my stuff."

Tim: Yeah. "And you know, it's kind of wild out here in the field on the edge of the wilderness."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "And there's lots of servants who have run away from their masters and are trying to break out. So how do I know you're reliable?" Think about back to the last conversation we had about Moses' speech. "When you go into the land—"

Jon: Yeah. Oh: "And there's so much good—"

Tim: "And there's so much good. You have—"

Jon: Oh.

Tim: “All those flocks.” Right? “Be careful that you don’t say: “My—”

Jon: Yeah, that’s interesting.

Tim: “Wisdom and the strength of my hand have produced this wealth for—”

Jon: I see.

Tim: “Me.”

Jon: I see.

Tim: And—because notice—

Jon: So when the—

Tim: What he said was: “Should I take my bread—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “My water—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “My meat that I slaughtered for my sheep shearers—”

Jon: Yeah. So you’re saying this portrait of this man is someone who—

Tim: He has a lot. He has a lot—too much—he has a—

Jon: He—

Tim: Lot of *to*.

Jon: He has a lot of *to*—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And it’s gotten to his head.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yep. “So David’s young men came back to David. They told him all these words.” Now look at David’s response. Okay. Now, also, remember, remember the Saul sandwich on the outside.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: And the Saul sandwich, two times over, says: We know that David is trusting God with his life and the future destiny that God has spoken about him—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That he's going to become the king.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We just watched him put his sword—keep it in his sheath.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Okay. So contrast that—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: With what David says right here. "David said to his men: 'Everyone, gird your swords.' So each man girded his sword." Like, basically: "Prepare for battle."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "So David also girded his sword and about 400 went up with David while 200 stayed with the baggage."

Jon: What's the baggage?

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. Totally. So what's great—that's a little hyperlink backwards. In the scene where the people requested a king—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: The first time, and Saul was the one chosen by the people, but he was kind of bashful about it. And so he hid among the baggage—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: And the people were looking for him and couldn't find him to inaugurate the kingship. And that itself is a hyperlink back to the story of a guy named Achan—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Who stole some Babylonian cloaks and a bunch of nice gold from the plunder of Jericho.

Jon: Mmm, and hid it in the baggage.

Tim: Yeah. So having things among the baggage is often a little sign that comes up with, like—when someone's trying—being shady, a little shifty.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's just a little notice here. So basically, David's response is: "I'm going to kill this guy."

Jon: Ee.

Tim: "Put on your swords."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "I have been looking out for you—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "And you treat me this way? I'm going to chop your head off." And you're just like: "What?"

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah, that's pretty violent.

Tim: Like, really intense.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So what's the difference? Like, why doesn't—

Jon: Why didn't he do that to Saul?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: David's not the kind of guy—he's not a hot-headed guy.

Tim: It doesn't seem like it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But there's something about the—Malicious Idiot not recognizing him that just gets under his skin. He can't take it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He's just like: "Everybody, we're going to go kill this guy."

Jon: Jeesh.

Tim: “So one of the oth—young men, however, told Abigail, who was the wife of Malicious Idiot, and the messenger said: ‘Um, whew, you should know that David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and, yeah, he publicly shamed them. And listen, you should know, David’s men were really good to us. They never insulted us. Nothing went missing as long as we were with them in the fields. In fact, they were a wall to us by day and by night all the time we were tending the sheep.’” So they were a protective fortress for us in the wilderness. “So Abigail, you should—” I love this—”have knowledge and”—actually: “See what you should do.” It’s all the language of the garden scene. “Have knowledge—”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And “see.” “Look at what you are about to do because badness, *ra*, has been plotted against our master and against all his household. And he is such a worthless man, nobody can talk to Neval.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So this is like an inverse of the garden of Eden, where you had a snake deceive the woman, and you have the husband who’s right there.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Now it’s like the husband is like the snake, and Abigail is like this opposite of Eve. She actually is the one who has the true inside line about what is right and good now.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: This is like an inversion of—it’s the guy who’s the deceived, stupid one, and it’s the wise woman who’s going to save the day.

Jon: Hmm.

[Musical Break (43:35—43:58)]

[Abigail Saves the Day (43:58—1:05:12)]

Tim: “So Abigail, she went quick, and she prepared 200 loaves of bread, two huge jugs of wine, five sheep already, like, prepared—we’re going to have lamb roast tonight—five measures of roasted grain, 100 clusters of raisins, 200 cakes of figs—

[Laughter]

Tim: It’s like a, a feast—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: A garden feast—“And loaded them onto the donkeys. And she said to her young men: ‘Okay, you all go on in front of me and look, I’m going to come behind you.’ But she didn’t tell her husband, Neval.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “So it came about as she’s riding her donkey, coming down the hidden part of the mountain, that—b—look, David and his men were coming down towards her.” So here’s the scene. It’s like a ravine—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: One of these isolated ravines, in the hills—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And—

Jon: They run into each other.

Tim: Yeah. And just, here’s David, like, coming down, marching with swords. You know, you can just see his head—

[Laughter]

Tim: Steaming—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Right? “Now David was talking to himself.” This is so wonderful. “And he was saying: ‘Ah, in vain, I have guarded everything this guy has in the wilderness. Nothing was missing from all that belonged to him. He has returned me evil in place of good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and even more, if by morning I leave even one —’”and New American Standard here has “any male of who belongs to him—”oh, dude, you’re going to love this. I don’t think we’ve ever talked about this. The King James actually does the best job of all—

Jon: Oh, for this verse?

Tim: Yeah. So the word for “males,” you’re going to love this, King James reads: “May God do so to me—may God do to the enemies of David if I leave anything pertaining to him by the morning that pisseth against the wall.”

[Laughter]

Jon: Anything that can urinate upright?

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. It’s a Hebrew turn of phrase for a male warrior.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Specifically, you can stand and piss against a wall.

[Laughter]

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: *Mashtin bakir* in—

Jon: All right.

Tim: Hebrew. “The wall pisser.”

Jon: “The wall pisser.”

Tim: So it's kind of a derogatory way to refer to men.

[Laughter]

Tim: Like, you know, like, rough—

Jon: What does that mean about me that you really think I'm going to like that?

[Laughter]

Tim: I don't know, I just th—

[Laughter]

Jon: I do. I really do, actually.

[Laughter]

Jon: Thank you for showing me that.

Tim: Yeah: "P—"

Jon: The wall pissers.

Tim: "The one who pisseth against the wall." That's the King James, for you.

Jon: Okay. All right.

Tim: So this is a little speech—David, he's just like so insulted—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And he's just like: "I'm going to kill every man, here."

Jon: What are we supposed to be thinking about David at this moment?



Tim: I know. Well, it's like a *Jekyll and Hyde* type of moment here.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's kind of like Moses. One moment, he's providing food for the people in the wilderness, and the next moment, he's getting angry, and—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Striking the rock, and not doing what God said. So the Hebrew Bible has these portraits of human nature—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That to us feel very jolting. Like: “What, they did good one day, and then they do the wrong thing the next day?”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But I—it's a part of how the Hebrew Bible captures the realistic ambivalence of human nature.

Jon: Yeah. Because all these stories in the wilderness, you're saying, have been showing how rad David is.

Tim: Yes, exactly. Yes.

Jon: And so this one just sticks out—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: So much more.

Tim: Yeah. There's something really important that David's supposed to learn here that he has not yet learned in the wilderness.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's it.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He can—sometimes, he does it right. There's something about this scene that exposed some fear, s—

Jon: “I'm going to kill all those wall pissers.”

Tim: “I'm going to kill all—”

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. He's in a bad spot.

Tim: Yeah. Something about being shamed by someone who's his inferior—he really believes Saul's his superior.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: He's the anointed of God. But this—

Jon: But this guy—

Tim: Guy, Naval—

Jon: This rich idiot—

Tim: Malicious idiot—

Jon: Who he's been watching over—

Tim: “He's going to shame me? All the wall pissers die today.” Yeah. So he's still got some—David still has some lessons to learn, too. Who's going to be his teacher?

“When Abigail saw David, she hurried, got down from her donkey, fell before David, bowed on the ground, and she said: ‘On me alone, my lord, be all the blame.’” Wow.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: She—

Jon: She's just taking one for the team.

Tim: Seriously. “Please let your maidservant speak, and please listen to the words of your maidservant. Don't let my lord pay attention to that worthless man, Naval. As is his name—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “So is he. His name is Malicious Idiot, and malicious idiocy is with him.”

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: “But I, your maidservant, I didn’t see these young men of my lord whom you sent. I didn’t know.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So—

Jon: “Next time just come to me.”

Tim: “Just come to me.” Yeah.

Jon: This is like the manager of the store is like: “Hey—” comes in and is like: “Hey—”

[Laughter]

Tim: That’s right.

Jon: “I heard there’s a problem here—”

Tim: That’s right.

[Laughter]

Jon: “Let’s just—we can work this out.”

Tim: Yeah. “We can work it out.” “Now, as Yahweh lives, and as you live, see that the Lord has restrained you from shedding blood and from avenging yourself by your own hand. Now, let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, may they all become like Naval.”

Jon: Meaning?

[Laughter]

Tim: Oh, that’s a weird thing to—

Jon: “Let them all be idiots.”

Tim: “Let them become idiots.” I don’t—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yep. “And let this gift that your maidservant has brought be for the young men that accompany my lord. Please, forgive the transgression of your maidservant.” And you’re like: “What? She didn’t do anything wrong.”

Jon: Right.

Tim: Well, I guess she did say—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Take the blame.”

Jon: “Blame me. Blame me.”

Tim: Yeah. Who does she sound like right now, like, looking back in Israel’s story?

Jon: Uh, Moses?

Tim: She sounds like Moses.

Jon: Yeah. Hmm.

Tim: “Blot my name out of your book, on account of the people.” This is an amazing woman.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: She goes on. “The Lord will certainly make for my lord—”this is talking about David—“An enduring house, dynasty, because my lord, David, you are fighting the battles of Yahweh, and evil should not be found in you all of your days. If anyone will rise up to chase you—let’s just say, there’s someone chasing—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “You around and—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Seeking your life—”this is such a rad line—“Then the life of my lord, David, will be bound up in the bundle of the living with Yahweh your God. But the lives of your enemies, God will sling out as from the hollow of a sling.” It’s a little—

Jon: “The hollow of a sling.”

Tim: It's a little riddle.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What's, what's the hollow of a sling?

Tim: A sling, you know, like a slingshot.

Jon: Like the pouch? Like the pouch—

Tim: Like a little pouch of a slingshot.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So: "Your life is bundled up in—"

Tim: "In a little bundle pouch." So there's Yahweh. He's the God of life. And so for those who are close to Yahweh, God—you're like in Yahweh's little bundle pouch tha—

[Laughter]

Tim: That he carries around his chest.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's the bundle of the living.

Jon: What's in a bundle pouch?

Tim: Um, hmm, maybe some smooth stones.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: You know?

Jon: I see. So—

[Laughter]

Jon: "You're in the stones that are hanging out—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Together."

Tim: She's drawing on the imagery from the David—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And Goliath story. He picks the stones, puts them in a pouch—

Jon: Okay. Okay, okay.

Tim: That's the bundle of the living—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Close to the chest of God. But then, there's the lives of your enemies that are like the little hollow of a sling. They just—fchew—you get flung out of the bundle.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So it's such a rad little image echoing back to the David and Goliath story.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So she just said, whoever's chasing you, God's going to take care of them—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And launch them out of the sling.

Jon: Hmm. Suddenly, she knows more than you—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Realize.

Tim: She becomes like David's conscience, here. She's—becomes his wise counselor and—

Jon: She's like a—

Tim: Teacher.

Jon: Prophetess here in a way.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Totally. Yeah. And so she's actually reminding David of what he actually believes, because he's lived out exactly this conviction in the Saul sandwich, in the two stories on

the outside. So she says: “When the Lord does for my lord according to all the good he’s spoken of you and makes you the ruler over Israel, what’s happening here today should not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord because you shed blood without cause or avenged yourself. No, no, when the Lord deals well with you, please remember me, your maidservant.”

Jon: Hmm. It’s interesting in the story. It’s like her men are like: “Hey, let me tell you about this guy, David. He’s actually a good dude. They’ve been keeping up—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “Watching out.”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Suddenly, but now she knows way more than that.

Tim: Yeah, totally.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah. She just—she’s—

Jon: She knows the whole story.

Tim: Yeah. Remember, she has wisdom. She’s good of wisdom—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And beautiful of appearance.

Jon: And so—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Then, she’s telling David: “Look, it’s a low moment for you.”

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "But you know where this is all heading."

Tim: Yes, yes.

Jon: Right?

Tim: "Yahweh has good in store for you."

Jon: "You're going to be king. This is where this is all heading."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "So don't make this this day of regret."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "And, um, actually, since we know where all this is heading, when you get there, let me in on the party."

Tim: Yeah—

Jon: "R—"

Tim: "Remember me—"

Jon: "Remember me."

Tim: So: "What you were hoping Naval—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "Would do to you—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "To remember the goodness you did to him, do that to me." So David, first of all, just says: "*Barukh hashem*, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today. You prevented me from avenging myself and spilling blood." That's what he says. And he—

[Laughter]

Tim: He goes on to say: "I was about to kill every wall pisser—"

[Laughter]



Tim: “If you had not come to meet me today.”

Jon: Yeah. She’s like: “I know. I—”

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: “Know.”

Tim: So—

[Laughter]

Tim: So David took everything. He said: “I’ve listened to you. I grant your request.” Oh, and then—so Abigail comes back, and Naval is just drunk out of his mind. And then, he just passes out.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And—

Jon: He’s partying hard.

Tim: Yep. And we’re told that in the middle of the night, his heart died inside of him, and he became like a stone.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And then he went into a coma. And ten days later, Yahweh struck Naval, and he died.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yahweh shot him out of the hollow of the sling.

[Laughter]

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Yeah. So then David sends and asks Abigail if he can marry her.

[Laughter]

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And then they get married.

Jon: They get married.

Tim: They get married. Yeah. So we're all back to our question of: It seemed like David really had learned his lesson in the wilderness.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: He's learned how to listen to God's voice.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: God's guiding him, like: "What road should I go down?" It's very unique, these types of stories. There's no other character quite like—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This in the Hebrew—

Jon: He's—

Tim: Bible.

Jon: Being patient. He's trusting God.

Tim: And then when he has a chance, two times, to take out Saul, he doesn't, but he's still got this weak point of: When somebody shames me, dishonors me, tries to degrade my dignity—he just cannot handle it. And the one who meets him in the wilderness to teach him what God wants to teach him is this wise woman named My Father is the Redeemer. So this is another portrait of exploring: What is it that could make somebody not ready for the garden, in this case, for David to rule as king in the new Eden land? Apparently, he's pretty attached to his public reputation—

[Laughter]

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Right—being treated as honor.

Jon: Is that why?

Tim: Well, I—let's—we're invited—

Jon: It doesn't really say, does it?

Tim: Doe—we're invited to meditate—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: On this, here.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Right.

Tim: He is okay if Saul doesn't recognize him as king and treat him with honor. That doesn't seem to bother him to his core. He can wait that one out.

Jon: Yeah. It is very realistic that humans are complex, and David could be the kind of guy, he gets it so much that his enemy, who wants him dead, he could have patience and generosity and do the right thing in these really high-stake moments. But that same person—

[Laughter]

Jon: Can get this violent grudge in his heart when someone didn't let him in on their party.

Tim: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Totally. Yeah.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What a small thing.

Tim: Yes. Yeah. That's good.

Jon: Now, I'm sure he's very hungry and he's, he's been working hard to befriend these guys.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So he's—has a story in his head of, like, being invited in—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And it's not coming true. But it's such a small thing at the end of the day, and he lets it drive him nuts, and he's going to go be violent. And so there's—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Something he hasn't learned is what you're saying.

Tim: There's something he hasn't learned yet.

Jon: In, in spite of how great he's being, there's still a deep immaturity in him that he needs to be confronted with.

Tim: Maybe—it's sort of—in comparison to the garden, God has provided so much for Adam and Eve, but there's one area where they are clearly weak—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which is trusting God about the one thing that God has withheld. That's what the snake highlights. And that is their undoing. Here, David is the one who's able to trust God in these remarkable ways, as you call them, high-stakes moments. But there is still one small piece of his character that is still pretty attached to his honor.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that's when a malicious idiot—

[Laughter]

Tim: Doesn't recognize you for who you are. Yeah. And he just can't, he just can't handle it.

Jon: Hmm. Interesting. So Abigail brings him a feast. She saves him from himself—

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: While giving him a feast.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: Um, and David suddenly realizes what's going on—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And he's very thankful to her.

Tim: Yeah. So it's this interesting intermixing of themes from the Adam and Eve story and the Cain and Abel story. He's kind of like Cain.

Jon: He's going to go kill his brother.

Tim: Yeah. He's about to go spill the blood of his Israelite brother. Oh, literally, Naval is from the line of Caleb, who belongs to the lineage of Judah. That—so does David. So he's an i—

Jon: Hmm. They're brothers.

Tim: Yeah, he's about to kill a brother. And it's actually the wise woman who saves him from himself. So this is all about: God wants to do good to David. That's what she reminds him of. But in order to do that, you have to pass this test. This becomes a test. B—

Jon: Well, he kind of fails the test—

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah. True.

Jon: He's failing.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He's like—

Tim: As he marches a ravine.

Jon: He's in mode. He's—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Ready to fail the test.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: And he gets saved from himself by Abigail.

Tim: Mhm. And he believes that Abigail is the instruction of God to him. He says: “God sent me—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “God sent you to me.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm. I—it’s just such a unique story—

Jon: It is, yeah.

Tim: About a test in the wilderness that—you’re right, David actually doesn’t pass it. But because of this redeemed Eve figure, Abigail—

Jon: Mmm. She rescues him.

Tim: She brings wisdom that saves him.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So there are ways that God’s people need to be prepared before they inherit the good land. There were ways that David had yet to be prepared.

Jon: So David’s this picture of someone who, who comes from the wilderness. He has been shaped by the wilderness, and he gets it. He’s not afraid of the beasts of the field. The snakey Goliath, he’s like: “Yeah, not a problem.” Like, he is the wilderness man who’s the thing that you kind of hope the wilderness would do for you.

Tim: Yeah. That’s right. Yeah.

Jon: And then, when he’s driven into the wilderness later by Saul, he’s doing great—

Tim: Yep.

Jon: Because he’s a—he’s the wilderness man.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But there’s still something lacking. And actually, it’s not something he’s going to be able to do for himself. It’s just, this woman has to come and help him.

Tim: Yeah. He needs the wisdom of his community. In this case, it’s: He needs the wisdom of the “delivering ally—”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of the wise woman who can see something that is not clear to him. And it’s just such a unique story of a wilderness test, and then the way God instructs David is

through Abigail's wisdom. So this is part of this larger portrait of: in God's severe mercy, teaching his people what they need so that when he gets that enduring house and dynasty, that it doesn't become his undoing. And that's true for a while, until it does become his undoing with Bathsheba. But he has about as good and long of a run as any—

[Laughter]

Tim: Israelite king or main character in the Bible has.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So there's so much to meditate here on that, even what looks like progress in my human maturity, there's always still something that could become a moment of a wilderness test for me. And that when those moments come, they are—ah, wow, may God have mercy on me to save me for myself. And sometimes, he might have mercy on me by sending the wisdom of others—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: To point out my shortcomings.

Jon: Mhm.

[Musical Break (1:02:37—1:02:41)]

Jon: That's it for today's episode. Next week, we're going to look at the theme of the wilderness in the latter Prophets, and we'll see that they viewed the wilderness as a consequence for foolishness but also as an opportunity to become intimately connected to God.

Tim: So the wilderness first was like a prison to prevent you from destroying yourself. But now that wilderness becomes a place to fall in love again with Yahweh.

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Julie: Hi, my name is Julie, and I'm from Portland, Oregon. I first heard about the BibleProject ten years ago from my son Alex.

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