



“An Evil Spirit from the Lord Troubled Him”: A Psychological Examination of the Life of King Saul

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ABSTRACT

This study critically explores the psychological context of “an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him” in the life of King Saul. A historical-critical approach was employed to study the character of King Saul from the narratives in 1 Samuel 16 and an additional secondary review of the literature. The authors argue that the “evil spirit from the Lord” which tormented Saul was attributed to traumatic experiences he suffered in the cause of his kingship in Israel. Although God is sovereign, the authors argue that he does not bring evil to humans. Rather, individuals appear to be immersed in their own actions and desires. In the current case study, Saul’s disobedience to God resulted in him being displaced as king. Ensuing envy towards David and the overwhelming demands of his kingship all made him come down with depression, aggression, and mental breakdown. With continued fear and negativity, Saul became excessively anxious and eventually committed suicide. An in-depth psychological examination of biblical contexts would be important in everyday theological interpretations and teachings.

Keywords: *Psychological, Post-Traumatic, Evil spirit, Depression, Mental Disorder*

Introduction

Several traditions, including Judaism and Christianity, have doctrinal beliefs about evil spirits afflicting humans and causing behavioural issues. Both the New and Old Testaments of the Bible contain classic descriptions of the characteristics of people suffering from psychiatric diseases and behavioural issues (Tathagatananda, 2005:148). The synonym of an evil spirit is a demon or unclean spirit. In 1 Samuel 16:14 and 15, the word translated “spirit” is specifically linked to ‘Ra ah,’ that can also mean evil, bad, or distressing spirit (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 949). According to the Hebrew writing, ruachElohimra’ah descended on Saul. The term “RuachElohim” is commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1: 2). Ra’ah is the Hebrew word for evil, which means bad, destructive, or distressing (Miller and Robberts, 1977:87). Kholer (94) asserts that the Jewish Bible, Jewish Rabbi literature, and Pseudepigrapha contain references to a spirit of violence or an evil spirit (ruah.tum’ah). In Jewish theology, it can be hard to differentiate between a demon and an impure or evil spirit; these seemed to be alien gods from the Jewish perspective. According to existing myth however, they were own beings created by Jehovah (Gunther, 2005:1405). (Zechariah 13: 2). Deliverance from demon possession is one of the types of signs and wonders that are linked to the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. There are twenty occurrences of “*pneumaakatharton*” in the synoptic gospels (Walter, 2003:114). Some problems are characterized by demonic possession, whereas evil spirits are divinely articulated verdicts delivered as judgments as consequences of human infractions (Walter, 2003).

The Jewish writings hold on to the belief that evil spirit lived in a popular mind or that the literary thinking is similar in some ways compared to what obtains in other places that is held (Kille, 2004:17-32). Demons live in the arid regions or ruins (Leviticus 16: 10, Isaiah 13: 21, 34: 14); they cause sicknesses on humans (Psalm 91: 5-6), they afflict men’s minds (Saul in 1Samuel 16: 15 and 23) and deceive them (1Kings 22: 22-23). Kille argues that the role of demons is not to make man to sin, but, but rather to cause diseases, incapacity, psychological disorder, and uncivil conducts; they corrupt and subject their human hosts to pain both spiritually and physically (Kille, 2004). (Matthew 4: 24, Mark 1: 32). In the earthly ministry of Jesus, exorcism was his first public miracle and was a prevalent act throughout his ministry (Bromley, 1994:798).

How evil spirit came into existence and found its way into the created order has been a major concern in scholarship. Lewis has posited that man's free will is the cause of evil. According to him, the creation of free will by God makes Him the ultimate source of evil spirit. He supports his position by a biblical passage in Isaiah 45:7 where Yahweh is quoted to have said, "I make peace and create evil." He continues by asking that if God is not the source of evil, what then does the Bible mean when it says that "an evil spirit from God" came upon king Saul in 1 Samuel 18:10 (Chafer, 1988:288). It is misleading to contemplate that evil is a thing. Evil is not a phenomenon which source could be traced. Evil, from the biblical teaching is an aspect of relationship. The option of affection between man and God emanates expressly out of man's freedom to make choice. Therefore, by exploring his freewill, man strained his communion with Yahweh (Isaiah 45:7). According to Chafer (1988), a panoramic view of Hebrew Bible makes it crystal clear that Israel's religion was targeted to fundamentally destroy all manifestations of interaction with evil spirit. Magic was not allowed in Israel right from the beginning (Exodus 22:17, Deuteronomy 18:10-12) hence, Saul drove out of Israel all sorcerers and all those engaged in similar activities (1 Samuel 28:3). Amos 3:6 corroborates the position that problems and sicknesses did not come from demons but from Yahweh.

The question of why a just God would permit evil in his creation has engaged the interest of several scholars over the centuries. However, God's word alone provides meaningful answer to this question. It is clear through evidences from the pages of the scriptures that God does not initiate sin and evil (Psalm 5:4, 1 Peter 1:15 and 16, 1 John 15 and 16). Chaffer, when writing on moral problems, argues that based on God's holy nature, he cannot turn to betray that nature by being advertently or inadvertently a mover of angelic sin (Chafer (1988). Could it be that Yahweh only sent an angel to Saul to affect his feelings by causing anxiety in him, which eventually caused depression? Or, could this 'evil' possibly mean the result the angel caused on Saul and not necessarily its moral nature? Angels are spirits sent out by Yahweh for specific assignments. Instances of these assignments are prominent in the scriptures: Angels of Garden of Eden, Sodom and Gomorrah, King Herod in (Acts 12: 23). So, God might have sent an angel to afflict Saul; he might also have sent a demon to fulfil His purposes (1 Kings 22: 19 – 22). 'Ruwaah', which is the real word for spirit, wind, breath, in 1 Kings 22: 19 -21 is the same word for spirit, used to refer to a good angel from the host of heaven, who volunteered to move Ahab to go up to Ramoth Gilead, having become a deceptive spirit in the mouth of all prophets in Israelites. In Israel's perception of Yahweh's all-inclusive will, all things beyond conscious intervention come from God, so Saul's distress is not to be interpreted as cruel (Chafer, 1988:289)

At the early state of Saul's reign, it appeared that he was the best option for the kingship position. He showed a huge amount of potential. Under his command, the army to many landslide victories (1 Sam 11; 13:1-4; 14:16-23) and demonstrated intellect and kindness (1 Samuel 11:12-13). However, two incidents during his rule marked the beginning and end of his rule. First, while Saul and the army waited for Samuel, he offered a burnt offering, which statutorily was not his responsibility (1 Samuel 13:5-14). Samuel continued by reproving Saul's disobedience to Yahweh's instruction, and claimed that Yahweh had rejected him and had prepared another monarch who had won the heart of God. In chapter 15, King Saul disobeyed the instruction of Yahweh to completely destroy the people of Amalek. Prophet Samuel condemned Saul for misinterpreting Yahweh's instruction, for being obstinate and disobedient, and for refusing to follow divine instruction (Chafer, 1988: 289-90). In response to this act, Yahweh took the Kingdom from Saul (1 Samuel 13:14; 15:23), withdrew his spirit from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14) and in return, sent an evil spirit upon him (1 Samuel 16:14). It could be argued that God was not tempting Saul with the evil spirit; he only allowed it as punishment for to Saul's act of disobedience. The Bible clearly reveals that Yahweh makes use of the entire spiritual world to achieve his own purposes (Judges 9:23; 2 Samuel 24:1). It could be attested to that God did send evil spirit to punish Saul's incessant insubordination. However, via David's music, Saul found mercy and love from God's punishment (1 Samuel 16:23). God's compassion to Saul was meant to make him feel sorry for his sins and then repent (Romans 2:4).

it is against the backdrop of the salient question of what 'the evil spirit from Yahweh' that troubled Saul was that this research will through a historical-critical method and secondary data conduct a psychological study on 1 Samuel 16:14. This is with a view to examining the life of Saul, the first king of Israel, and the traumatic experiences that prompted certain behaviour he exhibited. Although 1 Samuel 16:14 has over the years received scholarly attentions, its psychological examination has received less interest. Hence, this paper will view this text from a psychological angle.

Psychological Analysis of Saul's Attitudinal Behaviours

Saul's behavior has made him an attractive subject for current psychiatrists to speculate about. The section portraying Saul's ecstatic experiences, according to George Stein, suggests that he probably may have come down with psychiatric problem (Stein, 2011:212). Martin Huisman describes Saul's narrative as one explaining the role stress plays as a factor in depression (Huisman, 2007:890). Liubov Ben-Noun opined that verses describing Saul's abnormal behaviour show the possibility of Saul being under mental attack (Ben-Noun, 2003:282). However, Christopher (2012: 225-29) warns in regard to giving analysis concerning people who had lived a thousand years before now.

In conducting a thorough psychological examination of Saul's behaviour, it may be reasonable to conclude that his own sad reflections, the awareness that he had failed to live up to the expected requirements of an Israelite ruler, the forfeiture of his crown, and the termination of his ruling dynasty induced jealousy, unhappy, revengeful, and susceptible to fits of frightening depression. He appears to have ruminated on Samuel's

deposition, and rather than repenting, he had given himself over to melancholy, till his mind was overloaded, and he had extreme mood swings that made him become fearful and anguished. Matthew (2003: 112) is right and should be applauded by his submission that those who push the good spirit away become prey to the evil spirit. When a person moves away from the Lord, a spiritual vacuum is created, making him exposed to evil's power (Matthew, 2003). Saul began to experience depressive episodes from the time Yahweh's judgment was pronounced on him. Many people today believe that Saul's attendants and the author of 1Samuel were incorrect. To them, Saul had been possessed by an evil spirit, but it was really just a psychological issue, which is explainable in medical terms today (Woodhouse, 1966: 96).

Reading through a theological lens, neither God nor anyone else can be enticed by evil. Rather, each one is tempted when he is dragged away and seduced by his own bad inclination. Then, once desire has been conceived, sin is born, and sin, when fully developed, gives birth to death (James 1: 13 -15). According to John Woodhouse (1996), Saul's misery was caused by a spirit whose aim was to afflict him, rather than a "bad spirit" or demon. He argues further that the word evil should not be regarded in moral terms in this context, but rather as a pointer of the agony, pain, and harm this spirit will inflict on Saul. From scriptural evidences, Yahweh employs the entire spiritual realm for his purposes (Judges 9:23; 2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Luke 22:31). As a result, we can certainly assert that God sent the evil spirit to punish Saul for his continued disobedience. Through David's song, however, Saul gained grace and mercy from God's anger (1 Sam. 16:23). For a musical therapy to have been suggested for Saul, it is probable that the Jews may have believed music to be a method of therapy for a person suffering from a psychological disorder. God's benevolence to Saul was therefore meant to make him repent (Romans 2:4). The question will be asked; how was Saul responsible for attempting to kill David if God actually allowed or sent the wicked spirit and having the knowledge that no one is capable of resisting God?

Text Analysis of 1Samuel 16:14

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

וַיִּרְחַק יְהוָה מִסָּאֻל וַיִּבְעַתְמוּ רֵיחַ רָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה:

We-ru-ah Yahweh sa-rah me-im Sa-ul u-bi-a-tat-turu-ah ra-ah me-et Yahweh.

"But the Spirit of Yahweh departed from Saul and troubled him a spirit depressing from the Lord."

When considering a tough verse like this, it is important to evaluate the context of the chapter as well as what other translations have to say about the matter. Issues are usually understood better when they are repeated again in a different way likewise, verses of the scriptures are better understood when they are read in the light of other translations. There are numerous translations available.

New International Version

"Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him."

Holman Christian Standard Bible

"Now the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, and an evil spirit sent from the Lord began to torment him."

New American Standard Bible

"Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him."

The New Living Translation

"Now the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, and the Lord sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear."

King James Version

"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."

When the ru-ah that left Saul is compared to the ru-ah that came upon him, it is noticeable that the first one starts with an upper case and the second with a lower case. This suggests that the ru-ah do not come from the same place. According to these interpretations, the (evil, tormenting, or depressing) spirit that terrorized, troubled, and tormented Saul could not have been from God. Again, the term "evil" is used in a broad sense here, and it could also allude to bodily injury (Haley, 1977: 142). What then was the nature of Saul's problem? Was it spiritual or psychological?

Contextual Examination

Words are meaningful when they are used as sentences, and sentences possess meaning when they are used in paragraphs. Paragraphs then tell a story or convey a message; therefore, it is critical that the entire story or discourse is examined rather than just a single word or sentence. When Saul became king, God sent His Spirit to him, but after several acts of rebellion, God rejected Saul and chose a new king, David, to whom God sent His Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing or evil spirit descend upon him, Samuel 16:14.

The context suggests that God's action is not arbitrary or random, but rather a punishment for his disobedience. The 'r-a-r-h' (tormenting Spirit) was sent to a man who had repeatedly rejected God's Word, not to an innocent man. Furthermore, rather than a random person, this happened to someone who was to play a vital role for God as king. Furthermore, God brought some respite to Saul through David's music, as David took the lyre in his hand and played it whenever the harmful spirit of God was upon Saul. The evil spirit departed from Saul, and he was revived and restored (1 Samuel 16:23). As a result, God's grace is seen extending to a man who had rejected his instruction time and time again (Klein, 1983:188).

Examined in the Context of the Entire Bible

Does God's sending of this spirit imply that he is the source of "bad" things? It is important to remember that, according to James 1:13, God does not entice anybody with evil; hence God is not the source of evil. Another fascinating passage to consider is the book of Job, where Satan was the one who caused Job's suffering. Even at that, Job still claimed that the Lord was the one who gave and took away (Job 1:21). This may help us understand 1 Samuel 16:14, as it may be describing a devilish deed, but rather than focusing on the secondary cause, which is the devil's job, it reminds us that everything happens under Divine sovereignty (Haley, 1997:143). It is also worth mentioning that the New Testament depicts humans who have been tormented by demons, also known as 'bad spirits,' but that these demons could be cast out by Jesus and that Jesus could tell them to go if desired (Mark 5:1-20).

As a result, we might read this chapter in 1 Samuel as showing how God removed his Spirit from Saul, allowing the forces of evil that Saul had exposed himself to via his disobedience to God's word to reign over him and harm him, while he was still under His sovereign authority. The only way the author of the passage could present the scenario, according to the writers, was in the context that since God anointed Saul with His Spirit as king, it follows that this same God, after withdrawing His Spirit from Saul, allowed an evil spirit from the Devil to afflict him with attendant psychological depression. A careful reading of the Bible reveals that God is never the author of evil, but rather permits effects of to occur while providing love to those who are tormented by it.

It must be noted that on two earlier occasions, Saul had flagrantly disobeyed God's orders (1 Samuel 13:13-14; 15:11, 19). His lifelong habit of disobedience demanded a direct punitive action from God. Keil and Delitzsch opine that this demon is referred to as an evil spirit coming from Jehovah since it was Yahweh who sent it as a punishment (Klein & Delitzsch, 1976:172). Haley corroborates this by saying that this spirit serves a punitive purpose in granting this permission. According to him, Yahweh uses evil to chastise evil (Haley, 1997:142). Of course, the reader should be aware that "evil" is a wide phrase that does not have to relate to spiritual wickedness. In actuality, it frequently refers to physical harm or a problematic condition (Genesis 19:19).

A second point to address in relation to the sending of an evil spirit upon Saul is if the spirit was indeed from the Lord. The biblical interpretation must be willing to allow the particular linguistic qualities of ancient languages to be defined and understood in accordance with how those languages functioned in order to be honest and fair. Ancient Hebrew, like most other languages, was literally brimming with figurative language such as figures of speech, Semitisms, colloquialisms, and idioms, both then and still. According to Bullinger, "it frequently was the case that active verbs were frequently used by the Hebrews to express, not the act that was done, but the permission of the act which the agent is said to do" (Bullinger, 1968:823). In the same vein,

the figure of speech known as "metonymy of the subject" occurs "where the action is put for the declaration concerning it, or where what is said to be done is put for what is declared, or permitted, or foretold as to be done; or where an action, said to be done, is put for the giving occasion for such action (Bullinger, 1968:570).

As a result, when the Bible says that the "disturbing spirit" that tormented Saul was from the Lord, the writer was employing an idiom to signify that the Lord permitted or allowed the tormenting spirit to cause distressing effects on Saul. George Williams succinctly puts that Whatever Yahweh allows, He is stated in the Bible to make come to pass (Williams, 1960:127).

In the second scenario, God did not send an evil spirit directly to Saul; rather, He allowed it to happen because of Saul's own obstinate disobedience. Gleason Archer argues that Saul exposed himself to attacks from Satan due to serial acts of disobedience to the command of Yahweh just as Judas Iscariot did when he had agreed to betray Jesus (Knight, 1982:179). One needs not necessarily presume that this satanic influence took over Saul's free will. Satan can have power over man only insofar as man encourages or invites him to do so; what Yahweh does not feel is always accepted by Satan (Clarke, nd:259). In the case of Saul, his character gave the Devil a foothold. The fact that the term "spirit" (ru-ah) has a broad range of connotations, including air (air, breath, or wind); the essential essence of life or animating energy, is a third factor about the "evil spirit" that came upon Saul. It could also refer to the logical mind, which is where reasoning and decision-making takes place; or the Holy Spirit of God (Gesenius, 1979:760-61) and even disposition of mind or attitude (Harris, et al, 1980:856). Likewise, the word translated "evil" in King James Version, "tormenting" in New Living Translation, or "injurious" in New International Version is a word (ra'a) that can be translated "bad," "unhappy," or "sad" (Gesenius, 1979:722). It can refer to different kinds of bad attitudes characterising wicked people, and can be extended to include the consequences of that kind of lifestyle (Harris, et al, 1980:856).

There is no agreement as to whether Saul's case was that of a demonic possession, or a plain psychological ailment, but he seems to have partaken of both. There is no doubt that Saul had fallen into a deep melancholy; and there can be little argument that an evil spirit might act more effectually on such a condition of mind (Ibid). His illness appears to be a mix of natural and satanic in character. However, there is too much of an apparent natural nature in it to allow us to believe it was all spiritual; and there is too much of an apparently supernatural influence in it to allow us to believe it was all natural (Knight, 162). Given these language clues, the "evil spirit" that afflicted Saul could very well have been his own terrible attitude; his nasty mental state, which he displayed repeatedly. This is a frequent issue with which many people struggle; the need to correct their attitude toward God's will for their lives, as well as the need to have an unselfish attitude toward life and the people around them. That was absolutely the case with Saul, and he was solely responsible for his acts. He could not point the finger at God or an "evil spirit" from the outside. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown present the case thus,

His own gloomy reflections; the consciousness that he had not acted up to the character

of an Israelite king; the loss of his throne, and the extinction of his royal house, made him jealous, irritable, vindictive, and subject to fits of morbid melancholy (Ibid).

By succumbing to their own sinful impulses, desires, and decisions, all individuals ultimately choose to allow Satan to control them (Genesis 4:7). As a result of these factors, God and the Bible are absolved of any fault in the case of Saul receiving an evil spirit. When enough evidence is gathered, the facts might be interpreted in such a way that God is shown to be just and not to have treated Saul unfairly. In God's eyes, everyone is free to make choices and be accountable for those decisions. Saul made his decision, and the repercussions of his decision were unmistakable.

King Saul and Psychological Depression

The occurrence at Gilgal in 1 Samuel chapter 13 and the affair concerning the Amalekites in 1 Samuel chapter 15 are two notable examples of Saul's disobedience. The sins of rebellion, arrogance, and unimaginable pride characterized King Saul's behaviour. That was the height of stupidity. As a result, he was in excruciating emotional anguish and sorrow. We see the elements and conditions that contribute to his sorrow and despair, as well as his feelings of self-pity and terror. At the first instance, Prophet Samuel had passed an instructed Saul to wait seven days in Gilgal for him to offer a peace offering to Yahweh on their behalf as the Israelites' army prepared to battle the Philistines (1 Samuel 10:8). When prophet Samuel failed to show up after seven days, Saul presumptuously assumed the role of priest and performed the sacrifices. When Samuel finally came, he chastised Saul by pronouncing Yahweh's judgement, telling him that the kingdom had been taken away from him (1 Samuel 13:13-14). This event was the genesis of Saul's life of disobedience and attendant consequences.

In the second occurrence, Samuel, acting on God's command, commanded King Saul to attack and entirely kill the Amalekites, fulfilling a duty given in Deuteronomy 25:19. Saul went to war and wiped out everyone but the king and the best livestock. In defiance of God's instruction, Saul himself captured the Amalekite king, Agag, and triumphantly brought him back alive. When Samuel approached Saul, he claimed that he had kept all of God's commands. While Saul claimed to have obeyed God, he did so by bringing the best animals before God to sacrifice. Samuel answered him: 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice' (1 Samuel 15:22). Saul confessed he had violated Yahweh's instruction and disobeyed the Samuel by placing the people's voice above God's. Hence Saul pleaded for Samuel's forgiveness and begged him to return with him for the sacrifice.

Saul was apparently disappointed when Samuel refused to return with him, with the reply that Yahweh had rejected him from being king over his people, Israel (1 Samuel 15: 24-26). Saul eventually accepted that he had offered a sinful sacrifice, contrary to Yahweh's instruction. It was the result of a need for people's acceptance. Saul grasped the hem of Samuel's robe and tore it in half as Samuel turned to return. As the oracle of Yahweh, Samuel spoke unequivocally that God had torn the nation of Israel and had given it to a neighbour better than Saul was (1 Samuel 15:28). Saul's spiritual and moral failure was shown not only by his excessive hope and impatience, but also by his contumacy and rebellion (Depression and the Bible, 2017:295).

Scholars have differing opinions on what the tormenting spirit that afflicted Saul was. According to theological lenses, God's Spirit left Saul as a result of his disobedience, and an evil spirit from the Devil (whom God knew about) came to torment him. Two points of view will be addressed from a medical standpoint.

Saul and Epileptic Attacks

Epilepsy is a neurological malfunctioning which manifest in frequent but transitory loss of alertness which may or may not be accompanied by convulsions, muscular contractions or uncontrollable motion (Coulson et al, 1980:282). When the victim suffers an attack, he often falls down (Ibid, 385), screams or yells uncontrollably (1 Samuel 19:23), becomes unconscious and falls to the floor, while his body undergoes intense and sudden muscular contractions. When the attacked individual falls to the floor, he might be in this state for quite some time and even sleep off (1 Samuel 19:24). Anderson (1968:385) argues that the cause of epilepsy is not known, but that it could be traced to atypical electrical current discharge in the brain. In Berkow and Talbot's argument however, epilepsy could be traced to some form of birth trauma or a metabolic abnormality, and that brain tumour, whether benign or malignant, can induce epileptic-type seizures in all humans (1977:1404).

Rosner (1978:299) opines that it was not impossible to think that Saul had had recurring epileptic attacks, also referred to as convulsive disorders (Berkow and Talbot, 1977:1404). He substantiates his position referring to a biblical passage where Saul was said to accompany his servants to Naioth: "And he also stripped off his clothes and he also prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night ..." (1 Samuel 19:24). Carson et al. conceive of 'prophesy' as a strange trance-like state (Carson et al, 1995:315), which corroborate the position of Rosner (Rosner 1978:299). If Saul experienced epilepsy as recorded in the Bible, there is the likelihood that it was caused by a brain tumour or a tumour on or inside his cranium. The report of his behaviour established in 1 Samuel 19:24 is strangely akin to an epileptic attack. This submission is however odd owing to the fact that Saul ruled for 34 years and only had one such occurrence as portrayed in the Bible. Based on this calculation, it would appear logical to surmise that if Saul had a brain tumour, he would have had several cases of attack as the disease degenerated and not just one case of this sickness.

Saul's Depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental disorder which causes a patient to have psychological imbalance due to some traumatic experiences he has suffered. Young (1988:201) argues that victims of PTSD will usually present symptoms like images and nightmares of the trauma as the original event is 're-played', insomnia, which usually leads to waking up at night, screaming, depression and anxiety.

Young (1988:204) explains that severe trauma is majorly caused by negative or sad experiences which are inimical to generally acceptable morals. In war time, all soldiers are there to protect their lives and kill the enemy in a sort of 'autopilot mode,' failing to internalize the gravity of

their actions, allowing a sense of moral numbness to develop (Ibid). This scenario is evident in the termination of the lives of innocent women and children in an assignment that Yahweh instructed Saul to carry out (1 Samuel 11:6-11). Coupled with this sad experience, Saul also practically witnessed King Agag of the Amalekites being butchered like animal by Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 15:33). Although Young, in his analysis did not make mention of Saul, applying Young's concept of PTSD to Saul's experiences as they appear in 1 Samuel seems to vividly represent Saul's situation.

Examining the anti-Saul version, 1 Samuel 16:14 reveals clearly that Saul at some point was possessed by a distressing spirit sent by Yahweh to trouble him. It could also be argued that mental images of the real trauma were re-occurring in his mind occasionally. Sanford (1985:61-62), argues that Saul suffered from depression, and this prompted a suggestion from his servants that someone gifted in music therapy in person of David be brought to attend him (1 Samuel 16:16). This treatment seemed helpful to Saul (1 Samuel 16:23). The 'evil spirit' from Yahweh that troubled Saul in line with the anti-Saul narrative and his effort to get David off the way by throwing a spear at him, also indicate that the king was already frustrated and susceptible to aggressive display (1 Samuel 18:10-12). His paranoia indicates that he suffered from delusional thoughts, which is a symptom that is evident in most psychiatric patients Noun, 2003:274). Ben-Noun (Ibid) opines that David most likely administered music therapy to Saul at night probably to deal with his insomnia (1 Samuel 16:23). He is also of the opinion that the Saul's apparent depression with its attendant symptoms like insomnia, feelings of worthlessness (1 Samuel 18:28-29), indecisive behaviour and paranoid delusion (1 Samuel 18:9), are indicative of the fact that his condition eventually degenerated into a psychosis as a result of his strained relationship with David (Ibid, 275). The other vivid signs of PTSD like fearful dreams, insomnia, screaming are not mentioned in the Old Testament. It is however stated that Saul became aggressively jealous and ranted (1 Samuel 18:10). Although the narrative never states the exact time of day or the frequency of its occurrence, this might be seen as part of Saul's post-traumatic stress disorder.

While subscribing to the position above, Alcalay (1990:826) argues that Saul's post-traumatic stress disorder was most probably exacerbated by the ancient Israelite's adherence to the principle of "herem". This principle is translated as 'forfeited property' (Ibid), where people or things that were forbidden were offered as sacrifice to Yahweh. Greenberg submits that the type of "herem" relevant in this instance is Israelites who served strange gods. This would include bands or persons, their idols and images of worship. As it seen in Judges 5:23, the complete annihilation of the enemy was seen as an act of respect to Yahweh, while the Israeli army was only seen as Yahweh's subordinate (Greenberg, 2007:10). Because this instruction more often than not regularly took the form of a flame, destroying the entirety of inhabitants: people, livestock, crops, and buildings, Dunn and Rogerson concur that this mass destruction was regarded as a type of sacrificial burnt offering to Yahweh (Dun & Rogerson, 2003:224). Greenberg, however, is convinced that there are too few evidences to agree that herem was a prevalent rule of ancient Israelite military operations (Greenberg, 2007:11).

Monarchs in ancient times were saddled with herculean task of judging the people and to ensure that their people live in accordance with morally acceptable norms. In addition, they were expected to formulate laws, ensure those laws were obeyed; declare war and give war pardon. The larger section of 1 Samuel reveals a stepwise mental decline of Saul, including his later signs of re-active depression, mood swings, psychotic disorder, excessive panic, and violence (Young, 1988:208). Because Saul had witnessed, and possibly participated in, atrocities in war, he was likely to have suffered from PTSD. One such traumatic event is Saul's attack on the Amalekites in the city of Amalek, where God directed him to slaughter a whole people, their riches, and cattle (1 Samuel 15:3). It is worthy of note that King Saul was hesitant to enter leadership position (1 Samuel 10:22), and while he fought and won many of his military operations, he always treated his war captives with greater greatest benevolent than many of the kings in the surrounding nations. Saul was so humane; a man who found it difficult to watch Samuel gruesomely killing King Agag. Saul did not appear to think or act in the manner that rulers of his time were expected to. Logically, it could be concluded that Saul's mysterious mental disorder was most likely depression, which was initially brought on by post-traumatic stress disorder (Stein, 2011:2120) and was exasperated by Samuel's gruesome murder of Agag, the king captured after the war against the Amalek.

Conclusions

This study has been able to document how individual, group, and national dedication to God's will results in His blessings; and what happens to individuals and nations when they trust and obey God's word or fail to do so, which is the fundamental identity of purpose. Misery is caused by personal, societal, physical, mental, emotional, relational, material, and financial flaws. Wickedness is the source of suffering. Because moral truth and will exist, evil exists. Suffering is, at its core, an expression of evil. Evil arises from erroneous decisions based on moral deception. Moral truths are revealed in God's revelations, declarations, commands, principles, assessments, and plans. Our free will allows us to think whatever we want, whenever we want, within some limits. It includes the ability to make decisions within boundaries and perform things that we believe will benefit our self-interest. Many of our afflictions are due to Adam and Eve's original sin; yet, the negative consequences of recent mistakes done by us and others also add to our current suffering. Because moral falsity will always be present, and human nature will always be imperfect, suffering will be a regular component of existence for as long as we live on this planet. The Judeo-Christian concept of confession of sins in exchange for God's pardon could provide comfort to a troubled mind like Saul's.

The story of Saul demonstrates both his humanity and his faults of judgment. Saul's worry about David's kingly ambitions may have seemed silly at first, but there must have been an intuitive side to him, for his suspicions were well-founded. Saul's terrible experience as Israel's first king, his

disobedience to Yahweh's command, his displacement as a king and subsequent replacement; and his jealousy toward David, who was chosen by God, all led to Saul's traumatic experience, which devolved into Post-Traumatic Disorder. Desperation drove the encounter with the spirit medium on Endor. It's as if Saul was hoping for confirmation that the Gibeon battle would be lost. From the narrative, it is crystal clear that as Saul lived in great apprehension and pessimism, his apprehension became his reality, and it is therefore unsurprising that he committed suicide. Under the circumstances, Saul's suicide might be a justifiable one to some extent.

This study suggests that biblical interpretation should not only follow common methods, but that psychological interpretation of biblical text is also an important perspective in understanding the Scripture and its characters, and that biblical scholars should encourage it. As this paper has argued that God is not the author of evil, it is recommended that each individual be mindful of his way of life so as not to allow pride, disobedience, and jealousy to affect their mental state, which can lead to depression. This paper also recommends that adequate care be given to people passing through traumatic experiences to avoid their degenerating into full-blown mental disorders. Rather than keeping to oneself like Saul, pretending nothing is wrong, seeking specialist attention is the best option for those passing through one form of depression or another.

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