DAVID AND SAUL

Adapted from a Jacob's Ladder Religion Lesson

Reading: I Samuel 16:1-5;11-23

Saul was the first king of Israel, anointed by Samuel, the Lord's priest. But after Saul disobeyed the Lord, the Lord told Samuel to look for a new king of Israel.

The Lord told Samuel exactly what to do. He was to go the house of Jesse in the town of Bethlehem. He would take a heifer with him and announce that he was coming to sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel was to invite Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. Then the Lord would show Samuel which son He had chosen to be king.

Jesse called seven of his sons to walk in front of Samuel. But none of them were chosen by the Lord. Finally, Samuel asked if he had he seen all the sons of Jesse, and he replied, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep" (1 Samuel 16:11).

Everybody waited while Jesse sent for David to come in from the fields. Jesse's youngest son was bright-eyed and good-looking. As he walked into the feast the Lord said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (1 Samuel 16:12). The youngest son had been chosen to be the next king of Israel. Samuel anointed David with oil from his horn.

Even though David had been anointed, he was still a boy and would not be king for many years. The Lord needed to prepare him to be a king. David spent much of this preparation time at King Saul's court, where he would have the chance to learn a great deal about the duties he would have when he became king.

How did this simple shepherd come to live at the king's court? The Word tells us that after David was anointed that "the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 16:14). Saul did not know that Samuel had anointed another king, but he started to feel sad and got upset easily. He was troubled by evil spirits.

Saul's servants thought that perhaps hearing lovely music on the harp would calm his troubled spirit. One of the servants knew someone who was skillful at playing the harp. He was a strong and courageous young man. So, Saul sent messengers to Jesse asking him to send his son David to his house. And so, David came to live at the royal court.

Whenever Saul was troubled, David played soothing music for him on the harp. Then Saul would feel better and his sad feelings would go away. Saul quickly came to love David, whose beautiful music could calm his troubled spirit. The songs he sang were often psalms. Many of them are in the book of the Word called Psalms.

A psalm is a song of praise or thanks. David wrote more than a hundred songs like this. He was "the sweet psalmist of Israel." The words for these psalms really came from the Lord to be included in the Word as Divine Revelation. David explained, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2).