

God's original plan for Israel didn't include an executive branch. For the first 450 years of their life as a nation, there were charismatic leaders who rose in times of military crisis, and priests and prophets who continually called the nation back to their theological roots, but no permanently installed government.

However, around the year 1000 BCE, Israel looked around them and saw that other nations had kings, and decided they wanted one too, no matter what.

The first king that God gave them looked like royalty. Saul was handsome, tall, and a wealthy landowner. He stepped into the role like a natural.

Saul led Israel in decisive military victories and was widely celebrated in every part of the country.

However, Saul's success and the admiring crowds clouded his vision and he lost sight of God.



By **1 Samuel 15:11** we hear these sad words:

“The word of the Lord came to Samuel: I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands.”

God withdraws his anointing Spirit from Saul, and sends the prophet Samuel out to search again, for a new king who will lead Israel toward God.

This time, God chooses to not major on appearances. He deliberately says to Samuel, “We are looking for something different this time!”

1 Samuel 16:7

“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature...for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:1,10

“Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”
..... Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel.”

Eugene Peterson has a really funny description of this process that he attributes to his storytelling mother.

Leap Over A Wall, pp. 15-17

“Eliab, was the eldest son. His mountainous size and rough-hewn good looks commanded attention.... He had a mop of black hair that he never bothered to brush. His nose wandered down his face looking, until it was almost too late, for a good place to stop. He dressed in bib overalls and wore hobnailed boots... Clearly, here was a man who could get things done...”



“Abinadab was the next... He was the only brother who had been to college. He used big words, showing off his prestigious learning every chance he got...”





“Shammah was third. He was a sophisticate in Calvin Klein jeans and alligator cowboy boots. He hated living in backwater Bethlehem. He could hardly get across the street without getting cow flop on his boots...”

After the third son, the Bible quits naming.

Peterson says, “It was years before I knew that, because my mother named them all... Ole was the fourth, then Gump, Klug and finally Chugger...”

“Each in turn was rejected as king... and Samuel was bewildered.”

What was God thinking as he voted son after son off the stage?? These brothers weren't so bad, at least the way Peterson describes them.

Why *not* the tall, handsome one??

Ohhhh, right! Israel had been there, done that with Saul and it didn't work out so well.

So, how about we go for education this time?

I was particularly fond of the geeky brother who had been to college--maybe the nerds *should* rule the world for a while.

Or what about Shammah, who dressed the part in designer jeans and upmarket boots?

Seven young men are presented to Samuel, and the word Samuel hears is, "The Lord has not chosen any of these."

1 Samuel 16:11

Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?'
And he said, 'There remains yet **the youngest**,
but he is keeping the sheep.'

Dad can't even remember his name! This boy
is just the youngest, insignificant, invisible.

The Hebrew word is "**haqqaton**," which
Eugene Peterson translates as "**the runt of the
litter.**"

1 Samuel 16:12-13

“And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.’ He sent and brought him in. Now David was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.

The Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.”

This story speaks to us in at least three situations:

When we are Samuel, on a quest to find something or someone or somewhere to land. The story says: *keep listening to God.*

Sometimes the solution will be quick and obvious, as it was when God sent Saul to Samuel in the story last week. But other times, careful discernment means waiting, asking questions, digging to find the better option instead of settling for good enough.

When we are the haqqaton, the runt of the litter, the story says: *keep listening for God.*

Even when you are the youngest, invisible and forgotten, *keep listening.*

When the goodness in your soul is unacknowledged, and your contribution is drowned out by people who are showier, louder, *keep listening.*

Because God sees you and knows your name and has a job for you in God's kingdom.

When we are the brothers, in a position of power, the story says: *keep looking for the haqqaton.*

Remember they are there, see them, hear them, believe them. Recognize the goodness in their souls and make room for their contribution.

They are royalty. Don't miss it.