

1 Samuel 16:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

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

The theological crux of this verse - an 'evil spirit from the LORD' - raises profound questions about divine sovereignty over spiritual forces. The Hebrew *ruach ra'ah* can indicate a harmful or distressing spirit. That it came 'from the LORD' affirms that even malevolent spiritual activity operates under divine permission (cf. Job 1-2; 1 Kings 22:19-23). Saul's torment was both judgment for disobedience and preparation for David's entry into royal service.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures recognized spiritual causation behind mental and emotional disturbance. Israel's distinctive theology attributed ultimate sovereignty to Yahweh alone, refusing to posit independent evil deities. Saul's condition may have manifested as depression, paranoia, or erratic behavior.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereignty over evil spirits shape your understanding of spiritual warfare?
2. What does Saul's torment teach about the consequences of persistent disobedience?

Interlinear Text

רוּחַ	יְהוָה:	סָרָה	מֵעָם	שָׁא וְלֹ	וּבָעִתָּ תוֹ
But the Spirit	from the LORD	departed	H5973	from Saul	troubled
H7307	H3068	H5493		H7586	H1204
רוּחַ	רָעָה	מֵאֵת	יְהוָה:		
But the Spirit	and an evil	H853	from the LORD		
H7307	H7451		H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 51:11 (Spirit): Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

1 Samuel 18:12 (References Lord): And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

1 Samuel 18:10 (Spirit): And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.

1 Samuel 28:15 (Parallel theme): And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.

Judges 9:23 (Spirit): Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

Judges 16:20 (References Lord): And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

Hosea 9:12 (Parallel theme): Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

1 Kings 22:22 (Spirit): And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.