

# There Was No Frequent Vision

An inductive study of I Samuel – Chapters 16 - 31

By

*O. William Cooper*

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Fort Collins, Colorado 805626

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## DEDICATION

In May of 1989, a group of Christian friends gathered in my home to initiate a ministry that would become known as Logos Ministries, Inc. These friends, from across America, have faithfully served as the Board of Directors of Logos ministries for more than 14 years. Each Fall and Spring, we meet to formulate plans for the coming year.

There are now 17 books that bear the name of this non-profit corporation. Several of these books have been translated into other languages and are being used as text books in at least five third-world countries. During the early days of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, one of these books, **Behold The Brightness**, was translated into Russian and published one chapter each month in a Christian magazine. At that time, no pastor could afford to buy a book, but they could scrape together enough to buy a magazine.

One of the primary emphases of Logos Ministries is the use of Inductive Bible Study. The text which teaches a student how to use this biblical tool is being used as a text book in six different countries.

Dr. T. G. Cooper  
Mr. Jerry Metters  
Rev. Mary Neil  
Dr. Peter Stone

The loyal support and encouragement of this group has been a great blessing for me. It is with heartfelt gratitude that I dedicate this volume to each of them.

Gratefully,

*O. William Cooper*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

No matter how carefully a writer works, there will be some errors that will escape his/her notice. The solution to that problem is called proof reading. Even then, the well trained eye will often spot things in a text that were never intended. The painstaking work of Rev. Mary Neil has kept many of these things from showing up in the text.

It has been a joy to share with my son, Kiel, talking over difficult issues that are a part of the text. These lengthy conversations have been both informative as well as great enjoyment for me.

When the entire text of this book disappeared on my computer, Peter Stone once more came to the rescue and helped me find the pieces to put back together. You cannot imagine the great relief I experienced as these files reappeared on the screen.

As I have reported many times, these friends have made it possible for me to finish these books and continue research when otherwise it would be nearly impossible to do so. I have no sufficient words to express my gratitude. I pray God's richest blessing on each one.

Gratefully,

*O. William Cooper*

## THE PREFACE

One of the great needs of the modern church is the discipling of new converts. These people know little about God and Christians who have not grown in their faith since their spiritual birth are not in a position to be of any help to these new-born believers. Discipling does not progress without a corresponding growth in the knowledge of the Scriptures. Studying books about the Bible is not the best way to meet this great need. People need to study the Scriptures themselves. We have come through a time when people within the body of Christ have depended upon the pastor or other hired teacher to interpret the scriptures for them. Our problem is that our need to understand the message of Scripture seldom happens when we are in the presence of that professional. People within the body of Christ need to be enabled to interpret the Scriptures for themselves. In turn, this will enable them to become intimately aware of the character and will of God. As people really discover who God is, they also begin to discover what God wants them to be and become. This was the message of Isaiah's life. When he saw God, in the temple, he also heard God call him to be a prophet.

Studies, such as this one, are based upon a central principle –All Scripture was given with a dual purpose in mind:

1. To convey the basic teachings of the individual books through which God reveals himself.
2. To reveal the person and nature of God in order to know His will for our lives.

Scripture must be seen with these ideas in mind. We must, therefore, continually ask ourselves not only what has this portion of Scripture taught us concerning the subject of the text, but we must also ask ourselves, what has this passage taught us concerning the person and nature of God?

This volume is an inductive study. Inductive Bible Study is a study tool which enables the student to allow the Scriptures to present the message it was written to convey rather than a message one brings to the text. Inductive Bible Study seeks to discover the message of a particular passage, phrase or word in view of the overall teaching of the particular book of the Bible in which it is found. It should be clearly understood that Inductive Bible Study is a tool. Like all other tools of Bible study, it is limited, but also very helpful. This study is not intended to be a seminar in teaching the study method of Inductive Bible Study. Such seminars will be taught on request, in local churches. In this volume, we will attempt to enable the student to discover what God is teaching through this portion of the inspired Scriptures.

The guide questions in this volume have been placed in the three-ring binder so that the students or readers can do their own study and add it to the text as prepared by the author. It is the intent of the author of this study to have students dig into the text and answer the questions presented, and then supplementing their work with the insights which the author has discovered and shares in the commentary following the questions.

Logos Ministries, Inc., exists to be an arm of the local church. It was created to strengthen members within the church fellowship rather than to take the place of the local church. It is our desire to be a supporting servant to each pastor and the members of the congregation. Logos Ministries is committed to complement and increase spiritual productivity of the local congregation and the individual. These materials are being used in a number of seminaries in different countries. Intellectual support for the body of Christ in third and fourth world countries is a joyful part of our ministry.

Because the Scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit speaking through the hearts and minds of chosen writers, it is our conviction that the most important part of Bible study is the preparation through prayer. We urge you, before each time you study, to prepare yourself by spending time in prayer and meditation. We trust that this study will be as inspiring and enjoyable as it was in our preparation.

*O. William Cooper*

May 24, 2003  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80526





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## INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each of the 16 chapters involved in this study.

16	
17	
18	
19	
20	
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30	
31	

2. What, if any, division do you find in this part of the study?



## INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to volume one of this study, it was pointed out that in the original Hebrew text there were not two books named I Samuel and II Samuel. There was only the book of Samuel. How and when this book was divided into two volumes is a subject on which major scholars seriously disagree. The fact that the death of Samuel is recorded in I Samuel chapter 25 adds greatly to the confusion concerning this book and its authorship.

As you have observed, we have divided this study of I Samuel into two volumes. This has nothing to do with the makeup of the book. We divided it in this fashion in order to get the contents into two three-ring binders. We will continue to deal with the content as a one single volume studied in two parts.

16	David Anointed as King
17	David Killed Goliath
18	Saul Attempted to Kill David
19	Saul Again Attempted to Kill David
20	David Covenanted with Jonathan
21	David Pretends Madness Before King of Gath

22	Saul Slew Ahimelech and the People of Nob
----	---

23	David Defeated Philistines at Kailah
24	David Spared Saul in Engedi
25	Nabal Died: David Married Two More Wives
26	David Shared Saul's Life at Ziph.
27	David Hid 16 Months in Gath?

28	Saul Sought a Familiar Spirit
----	-------------------------------

29	Philistines Refused David as an Ally
30	Amalekites Took Families; David Destroyed Amalekites

31	Saul Killed Himself: Philistines Honored Ashteroth
----	--

As you study these chapter titles, observe that with three exceptions, chapters 22, 28 and 31, this portion of I Samuel deals specifically with the life of David. Even these three chapters deal with David in one way or another.

Our task in this portion of the book is to find out how the author used this emphasis on David.



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 16

### DAVID ANOINTED TO BE KING – I SAMUEL 16:1 – 23

1. There are only three paragraphs in I Samuel 16. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

16:1-5	
16:6-13	
16:14-23	

2. Study the titles you have recorded on the above table. Now, write a summary title of eight words or less for the entire chapter.
3. In I Samuel 16:1-5, Jehovah commanded Samuel to anoint David as King.
- A. In 16:1, the Lord spoke to Samuel concerning Saul
    - 1. In this verse, the Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul since I have rejected him from being King of Israel." How would you describe the emotions of this statement?
    - 2. Read this verse again very carefully. How would you explain the message God gave when He said, "I have selected a king for Myself"?
  - B. In 16:2, Samuel responded to the Lord's commission.
    - 1. Compare this with Samuel's other responses to God. What did you find?
    - 2. Study the LORD'S answer to Samuel. What problem, if any, do you sense here?
  - C. In 16:3, the LORD continued His instruction to Samuel. God said, "You shall anoint for Me..." What are the implications of the way the LORD said this?
  - D. In 16:4, Samuel was met by a very nervous welcoming committee. How can we account for this?
  - E. In 16:5, Samuel attempted to calm the people.
    - 1. How did he do that?
    - 2. Almost as an after thought, Samuel invited Jesse and his sons to join them. How completely can we describe Samuel's integrity in this report?
4. In I Samuel 16:6-13, Samuel anointed David to be King of Israel.
- A. In 16:6, Samuel seems to have mistaken Eliab's appearance for God's call. How would he make such a mistake?
  - B. In 16:7, the LORD explained His rejection of Eliab. What explanation did the LORD give?
  - C. In 16:8, 9, The Lord rejected Abinadab and Shammah. What explanation did the LORD give for this?
  - D. In 16:10, the author gives a summary statement concerning the seven sons. In some instances, it says that the LORD rejected them. In other instances, it says that the LORD did not choose them. Is there any significance to this difference?
  - E. In 16:11, Samuel discovered that Jesse had one more son.
    - 1. What reason can we give, if any, to explain why the eighth son was not previously included?
    - 2. Samuel said, "send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here." How can we account for his apparently strong words?
  - F. In 16:12, the author described the eighth son, David.
    - 1. How would you describe him?
    - 2. In some instances, the LORD offered explanation for his rejection of some of Jesse's sons. What reason did the LORD give for choosing the eighth son?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- G. In 16:13, the author described the anointing of David to be king. The author said, “And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.”
1. What do you think he meant by this statement?
  2. Put yourself in the place of the seven brothers. How would you feel about this?
  3. Put yourself in the place of David. Knowing that Saul was still king and you were his servant, how would you feel about this event?
5. In I Samuel 16:14-23, David became Saul’s armor bearer.
- A. In 16:14, the author described the departure of the Spirit of the LORD from Saul. Study this verse carefully. What, problem, if any, do you sense in the content of this verse?
  - B. In 16:15, Saul’s servant diagnosed the problem that seemed to be troubling the king. Reflect on this statement. Is this diagnosis accurate?
  - C. In 16:16, this servant prescribed a solution for the problem that caused Saul to despair.
    1. What problem might one anticipate with this prescription?
    2. Three times in as many verses, the author spoke of “an evil spirit from God.” What does he mean by this?
  - D. In 16:17, 18, Saul agreed with the servant’s prescription.
    1. The servant who recommended David described David’s qualities.
      - a. How would this servant know that David was “a mighty man of valor, a warrior”?
      - b. How would the servant know that “the LORD was with David”?
  - E. In 16:19, Saul instructed David to be called. The servant said nothing about David being with the flock. How would Saul know this?
  - F. In 16:20, Jesse did not answer Saul’s request, but he did send a gift along with his son. How would you describe this action?
  - G. In 6:21, Saul wanted David to play his harp, but he became Saul’s armor bearer. How can one understand this change of responsibility?
  - H. In 16:22, Saul sent a request to Jesse asking him to let David serve him permanently.
    1. What does this say about Saul’s previous request?
    2. If you were Jesse and received this message, how would you feel?
  - I. In 16:23, the author described David’s job description in more detail.
    1. What additional information did the author provide?
    2. How did the author evaluate David’s effectiveness?
6. Reflect on your study of this chapter.
- A. What does this chapter tell us about God?
  - B. In what way will this impact your walk with God?



## LESSON 16

### DAVID ANOINTED AS KING – I SAMUEL 16:1 – 23

There are only three paragraphs in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of I Samuel. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

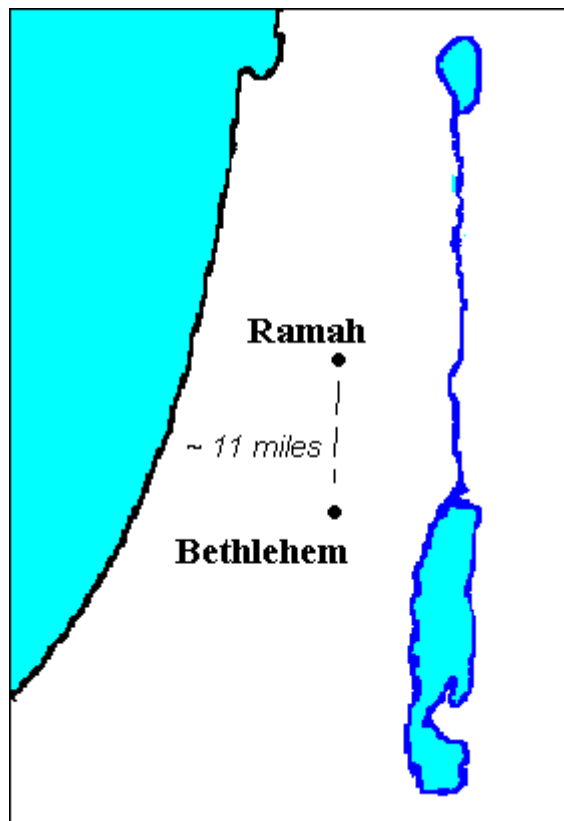
16:1-5	Jehovah Commanded Samuel To Anoint David as King
16:6-13	Samuel Anointed David as King
16:14-23	David Became Saul's Armor-Bearer

#### 1 Samuel 16:1- 5 – Jehovah Commanded Samuel To Anoint David As King

*Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons." I Samuel 16:1*

The tone of this verse sounds as if Samuel grieved over Saul's failure for a long time. We do not know how long it was. It is like saying, "nothing is going to change my mind or restore Saul." Obviously, Samuel was hurt deeply by Saul's failure. This is surprising since Samuel did not want to anoint a king in the first place. There was no hesitation on the part of the LORD. From the time Judah's father gave him his parting blessing, it was known that the kingship of Israel would be in this family. This, however, is the first mention of anointing a king from the tribe of Judah.

(A sidelight: From the time of Judah, the people of that tribe would have known that Israel would one day have a king and that king would come from their tribe. They must have wondered if he would come from their family. One wonders how they must have felt when Saul was anointed King. Under normal conditions the king's son would follow him and that would become the royal family. Could they have been distressed about this?)



## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The Lord gave Samuel a special mission. First, he is to stop grieving. He was directed to fill his horn with oil. They used the horn of a bull to carry liquids and powders. He was to go to Bethlehem and find a man named Jesse. At this point, Samuel is in Ramah. As you can see on this map, this is a trip of about 11 miles. One of Jesse's sons was to be anointed Israel's second king. We must keep in mind that Saul was still very much the king of Israel and would be for some time. This means that there would need to be a great deal of secrecy within the family about this event. Observe, that the LORD did not tell Samuel, at this point, which of the eight sons it would be.

Notice the way the LORD spoke to Samuel, "I have selected a king for myself..." In the mind of God, this was an accomplished fact. David is already anointed King. This is not something that is going to be done in the future.

*But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' I Samuel 16:2*

Somehow, we have two standards for evaluating conduct. We often expect total perfection from great biblical personalities. We can be a bit more understanding when evaluating our own conduct. This response is not characteristic of the way Samuel responds to God. It is, however, quite understandable. Certainly, we would respond in the same manner, if not more strongly. On most occasions, when God spoke, Samuel saw this as already being done. In this instance, Samuel wanted to reason with God. It appears to Samuel that this is a prescription for suicide. It may appear at first, that Samuel is looking out for himself. That certainly is a possibility. It could also be that Samuel is saying, "I will never be able to accomplish this because if Saul finds out, he will kill me before I can carry out my task." It also could be that Samuel is feeling some strong concern for David after he performs the task that God calls upon him to do.

A question arises concerning the LORD's reply to Samuel. At first glance, it appears that the LORD is suggesting that Samuel engage in deception of half-truths. In fact, the LORD is telling Samuel to make a sacrifice. The question then arises as to whether God's response is His first choice or an accommodation for occupying the mind of Samuel. We cannot tell. We only know that this is not Samuel at his best, but we can easily understand his dilemma.

*"And you shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you." I Samuel 16:3*

Samuel, apparently, did not know Jesse. He probably had never seen him before. This would not be a problem at all. Anyone in Bethlehem would be able to point him out for Samuel. The LORD gave Samuel explicit instructions. This appears to be the first time that someone was invited to a sacrifice. Note that the LORD gave Samuel instructions, but He also left room where Samuel must trust Him to show him the way to go.

Observe that the LORD said, "You shall anoint for me..." God's servants are always acting on His behalf. Samuel does not have to select this person any more than he had to select Saul earlier. God will designate for Samuel the one he is to anoint.

*So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?" I Samuel 16:4*

It is characteristic for Samuel to do immediately what the LORD instructed him to do. There was little chance that Saul would see Samuel going to Bethlehem. There was a serious possibility that someone would see Samuel and report it to Saul. When Samuel came to Bethlehem, some important pieces of information became available to us. They did not have modern communications, but the news of the broken relationship between Samuel and Saul reached Bethlehem before Samuel did. The leaders came to Samuel trembling with fear. They were not afraid of Samuel. He had been the prophet on behalf of God in their midst for a long time. These people feared that the struggle between Samuel and Saul would erupt in their territory and they wanted to avoid this if at all possible. Everyone in the kingdom knew what was going on. The question

## DAVID ANOINTED AS KING

burning in the hearts of every person was simply this, “Do you come in peace?” They were wondering if they were going to become involved in what could become a very dirty civil war.

*And he said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.*  
*I Samuel 16:5*

Samuel immediately put their minds at ease. He told them that he had come in peace. This was an honest report. He did not say that his arrival would not signal great changes in Israel. He simply said that he came to make a sacrifice. To give them further evidence of his peaceful intent, Samuel invited them to join him in the sacrifice.

The word translated “consecrated” might be translated “sanctified.” The act of sanctifying a sacrifice and those who take part was well known. There is a cleansing process involving washing of the sacrifice as well as the people. There is the necessary determination that the participant has not been with a woman in several days.

The closing statement, in this verse, appears almost as an afterthought. It is, of course, the primary reason that Samuel is in the city. It is presented secondarily, but if Jesse and his sons had not been present, Samuel’s purpose for the trip would have failed. Incidentally, having been consecrated for the sacrifice, David would have been totally prepared for the anointing.

### **I Samuel 16:6-13 – Samuel Anointed David As King**

*Then it came about when they entered, that he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." I Samuel 16:6*

It sounds as though the events of these verses followed immediately upon the sacrifice. That probably is not the case. The sacrifice would take a great deal of time. At best, one might think of this as taking place later in the evening if not the following day.

The text mention, “When they entered.” The text, however, never tells us where they entered. One might assume it was the home of Jesse, and I believe it was. This, however, cannot be confirmed.

Upon entering, Samuel saw Eliab and immediately thought that he was the one the LORD had already chosen. Two facts would help convince Samuel of this idea. First, Eliab was the eldest son of Jesse. This means that he was the family leader and was ready practiced in administrative know-how. Second, Eliab was a big young man. Though some of the great leaders of the world, both good and bad, have been small of stature - Napoleon and Churchill are two significant examples of this fact. Still, people tend to think of a leader as a tall, brawny man. Eliab was one of these. Samuel saw Eliab and jumped to that conclusion. The LORD, however, did not share Samuel’s impression.

*But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." I Samuel 16:7*

This sentence begins with the word, “but.” This establishes a strong contrast between what Samuel thought and what the LORD had chosen. The LORD was aware of what had appealed to Samuel – Eliab’s height and strong appearance. There is no doubt that looks and height had and have some bearing on the choices people make when thinking of a king. That is not what the LORD considered when He chose a new king for Israel. The LORD clearly announced that He had rejected Eliab.

The LORD identified the basis of His choice. God does not see as we see. The LORD looks at the heart while people tend to look on the outward appearance. Inevitably, therefore, the human and divine choice would be vastly different.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

*Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." I Samuel 16:8*

Jesse was a conventional Jewish man. He thought in terms of the eldest son being the heir or the one chosen. If the eldest were passed over, then the next oldest son would surely be chosen.

Samuel was very clear about whom the LORD had and had not chosen. Samuel was forthright about the ones whom the LORD had chosen. He quickly announced that the LORD had not chosen Abinadab either.

*Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." I Samuel 16:9*

The procession was repeated, but this time it was Shammah. To keep matters brief, Samuel announced that the LORD had not chosen this son.

*Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these." I Samuel 16:10*

The author shortens the story by saying that this happened with each of Jesse's seven older sons. Samuel gave Jesse the same message with each of his seven older sons. Some may wonder if Samuel told Jesse what he was looking for. The text is silent, but it is reasonable to assume that Samuel would give Jesse at least some idea of what he was doing, if not tell him exactly what this was all about.

Put yourself in Jesse's position. If you learn what Samuel is looking for it had to be exciting to think that one of his sons would be the king of Israel. At the same time, when all seven of his older sons were rejected, there had to be severe disappointment if not outright confusion. After all, no one would consider the youngest son in the family to be good for anything but caring for the animals and that not very well, to be sure.

*And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." I Samuel 16:11*

There is a hint of confusion in the words of Samuel as he asked Jesse if he had any other sons. Jesse had brought out his seven older sons when Samuel asked him to bring his sons. Jesse had not deceived Samuel. In that culture, no one would consider the youngest son very seriously. This is one of the reasons both Joseph and Benjamin were not taken seriously by their ten brothers.

Everyone in the room would be shocked to hear that Samuel wanted to see David. In the family and the community, the youngest son was considered a nobody. To gain an insight into this, David was tending the sheep. In that culture, the job of tending sheep was usually given to the women or to hired servants. The youngest son also was given this task.

Samuel made a surprising announcement. Nothing was going to happen; they were not even going to sit down until David comes. "Sitting down" was a reference to the way agreements were made; the way covenants were agreed upon. Jesse and his seven sons would consider this to be ludicrous. Nevertheless, Samuel insisted. Because he was a guest in the house, his wishes had to be honored.

*So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." I Samuel 16:12*

Think carefully about this verse. One by one, Samuel rejected each of Jesse's seven older sons. They have had to "cool their heels" just waiting for their insignificant little brother to arrive. This was not a 15 minute wait. Think in terms of several hours while a servant went out to the fields and found David and then stayed with the animals while David hurried home.

There was probably no time for David to clean up and make himself presentable before Samuel. David had been in the fields with the animals. This was anything but a sanitary job. Nevertheless, it was easy to see that like Eliab, David was ruddy of complexion and appearance. He was the picture of health and strength.

## DAVID ANOINTED AS KING

The text indicates that David had beautiful eyes. There are several places in the Old Testament where a person's eyes were the focus of their beauty. David was a handsome young man. Outwardly, he had the qualities of appearance that are helpful to a leader.

Immediately, the LORD told Samuel to anoint the lad. Think about Jesse and his seven older sons. People tended to treat the youngest son in most any family as a necessary evil. They have been folding their hands for hour waiting for their little brother to arrive. Suddenly "Mr. Nobody," David, walks in and Samuel immediately says this is the one to anoint. There were no negotiations, no explanation; simply, this is God's choice. These brothers had to be a furious as Jesse was confused. Nevertheless, this is what Samuel announced. Again, we wonder if Jesse and his sons understood what was happening. The text is silent. The family gives no sign of understanding or not understanding. From a human point of view, it is essential for them to know something, if not everything about Samuel's mission. This entire scenario would be ludicrous if they knew nothing about what Samuel was doing.

*Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.*  
*I Samuel 16:13*

The text speaks of a "horn of oil." They took one of the horns of a bull and used it as a container to carry liquids, grains or powders. The text does not say, but it would be reasonable to assume that this was the special oil used by the priests in the temple. Anointing was a ceremonial way to sanctify; to set someone apart for a divinely ordained task. The skilled workers who crafted the gold work and utensils for the tabernacle were anointed, set apart for this divine task. David was set apart for God's task of serving as king of Israel. He was available for no other duty. We will see as we study, that the family did not observe this, but kept him working with the sheep. Again, put yourself in the place of the seven brothers. Whether they are privy to the meaning of this anointing as king, is incidental. It would be a great shock if their little brother were chosen ahead of them for anything good. If they knew that this was an anointing as king of Israel, they would have been totally incredulous.

Observe, that the text says that, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon David." This was not a singular event. The Spirit of the LORD was upon David from that point forward. Samuel had accomplished the purpose for which he came to Bethlehem. This done, he returned the 15 mile journey back to his home in Ramah.

### **I Samuel 16:14-23 – David Became Saul's Armor Bearer**

*Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.*  
*I Samuel 16:14*

This is a portion of the story in which the actions of the Spirit of the LORD are obvious. In the previous verse, the author wrote that the Spirit of the LORD was upon David's life and ministry. Immediately, this verse tells us that the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul. That being the case, we should not anticipate seeing great, wise and victorious things happen in the life of Saul again. It was the Spirit's ministry to guide and direct the king. Though Israel had a king, still it was God who chose the king and the Spirit who gave direction to his life. To this extent, it was a theocracy, but not all God intended it to be.

There is some confusion about the statement, "an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him (Saul)." This seems out of character for God. One could understand if the LORD allowed an evil spirit to have access to the life and thinking of Saul. It appears that it is inappropriate to think of the LORD sending an evil spirit to do His work. There are Biblical incidents where the LORD allowed evil, but He does not do evil. By whatever means, it was accomplished, the result was that Saul was terrorized in the process. This has to be the most frightening experience that could come to the life of Saul.

*Saul's servants then said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you."*  
*I Samuel 16:15*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

Saul's servants were quite open with their master. They told him, to his face, that an evil spirit was terrorizing him. One wonders how a servant would know this. Observe also that the servant also told Saul that this evil spirit was from God. Again, how would he know this?

It is quite unusual that a servant would be this forward with the king. Such a statement could easily be rewarded by execution.

*Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well." I Samuel 16:16*

Not only did the servant voluntarily identify the problem for the king, he also provided a prescription for the solution. The servant spoke out of concern for Saul and it appears that it was evident to Saul.

The servant asked permission to seek a man who was skillful in playing the harp. It was understood in those days that music was useful in curing many diseases. This was considered especially true when such a distress was disturbing the victim.

The servants made a very dangerous prediction. They said that when the evil spirit caused Saul to be depressed the harpist would play and Saul would be well. This would be great right up to the point where this prediction did not prove to be the case. At this point, it became a liability to the person who made the suggestion. Their life would then be in jeopardy.

*So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me." Then one of the young men answered and said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him." I Samuel 16:17, 18*

At this point, Saul's tension with this situation made him open to most anything that offered some level of relief. Saul gave them permission to find such a person.

We do not know how, but one of Saul's servants knew about David. He not only told Saul about David's musical skills, but everything else he knew about Jesse's son. Study verse 18 very carefully. This servant knew that David was a warrior. He might have determined that because David defended his sheep against wild animals. He may have talked with David and discovered that he was prudent of speech. If he had seen David, he would know that he was a handsome young man. This servant also knew that, "the LORD was with David." This is not as obvious as the fact that David was handsome and prudent of speech. Had the LORD always been with David? Had the servant been in the home of Jesse when the Spirit of the LORD came upon David? We do not know. It is interesting that the Spirit of the LORD came upon David and almost immediately, he finds himself in a lofty position where God can use him. As it was with Joseph, so it is with David. We can only say that as you read what this servant said, it sounds as though he had known David and the family personally.

*So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David who is with the flock." I Samuel 16:19*

From this verse, we discover that Saul knew that David was, "with the flock." We are not certain what else he knew about this shepherd boy. He may have gathered this and more from what the servant told him.

It was not unusual for a king to tell a parent that he wanted that person's son to be his servant. Such a request was a formality. It was always honored. It was considered a privilege to have a member of one's family in the court of the king.

*And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son. I Samuel 16:20*

Saul made Jesse an offer he could not refuse. There is no record that Jesse sent a reply to the king. His reply was, apparently, in the personal presence of his son. Jesse not only sent his son, but also sent a present

## DAVID ANOINTED AS KING

to the king – bread, wine and a sacrificial goat. These were gifts commonly given to a king. This was a common courtesy.

*Then David came to Saul and attended him, and Saul loved him greatly; and he became his armor bearer. I Samuel 16:21*

David came to serve Saul and served him very well. David won a place in the heart of Saul. It appears that David pleased Saul with his music. It also appears that David won the confidence of the king.

We do not know how Saul discovered David's skill in protection. Somehow, Saul discovered that he could trust his life to David on the battlefield and not have to worry about whether he would be a man of courage in this experience.

*And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David now stand before me; for he has found favor in my sight." I Samuel 16:22*

The honest intent of this statement is not clear. David had been serving in the court. It is possible that David only came when Saul was having trouble with the evil spirit. This is not too reasonable. If Saul were having a difficulty, he would not want to wait two days or more for David to be brought to him.

Whatever the case, Saul requested that Jesse allow David to stand before Saul all the time. Saul told Jesse that his son found favor before Saul. This is about the highest honor that could be paid to a father. Saul was asking permission, but there was little doubt that David would be standing before Saul even if Jesse were not that excited about the prospect. This was a request that Jesse could not afford to refuse.

*So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him. I Samuel 16:23*

David's job, though he was Saul's armor-bearer, was to play the harp for Saul whenever the evil spirit tormented the king. Apparently, the music was helpful for the king. As David played, the king would be refreshed and the spirit would depart. The text never explains how David's music was able to cause the evil spirit to depart. Nevertheless, the need of Saul was met as David served in his presence. Here, again, one can see that the Spirit of the LORD was active in David's life. He was suddenly thrust into the very presence of the king and observed all that the king did both good and bad.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the author described some specific ways in which God impacts the lives of people.

1. God sought out a specific person, David, for a specific task – King.
2. God worked with Samuel to enable him to fulfill the task to which He had called him.
3. The LORD sent His Spirit upon David mightily to enable him to be where the LORD could use him.
4. When David was faithful in a minor role, the LORD placed him in a position of greater responsibility.
5. When Saul rebelled against the LORD, Saul's repentance was accepted, but the consequences God allowed were very severe.

These pictures carefully describe the way God deals with those who serve Him. If we obey, His blessing and enabling are beyond description. If we rebel, there is no place to hide.





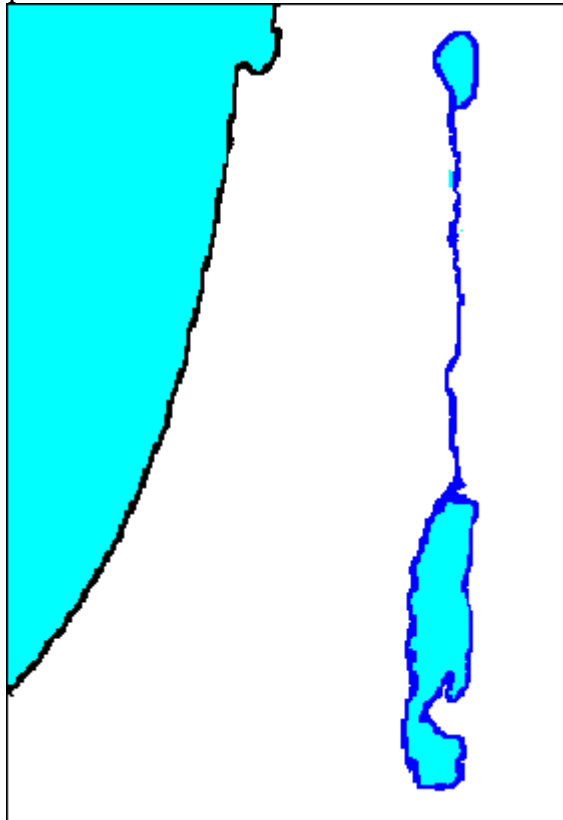
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17

### DAVID KILLED GOLIATH – I SAMUEL 17:1 – 58

1. There are eight paragraphs in chapter seventeen of I Samuel. Please write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph on the following table.

17:1-11	
17:12-16	
17:17-27	
17:28-30	
17:31-40	
17:41-49	
17:50-54	
17:55-58	

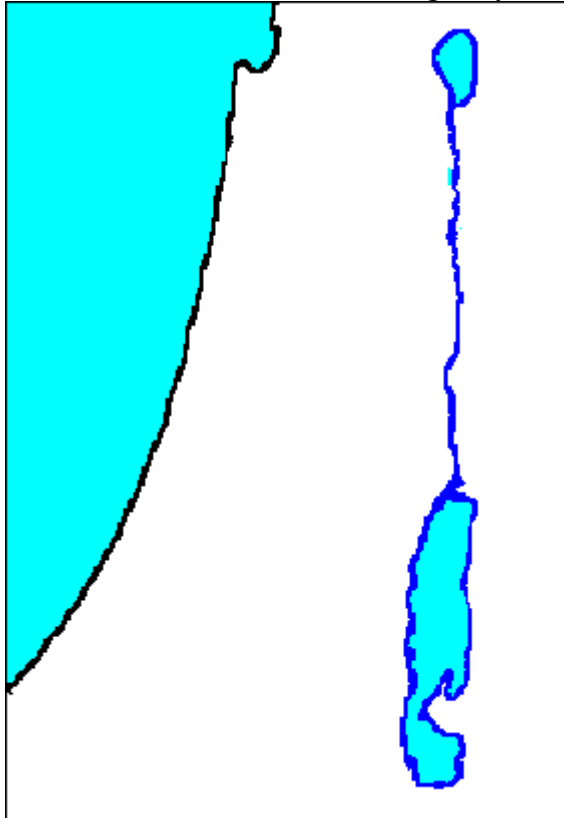
2. In I Samuel 17:1-11, the author tells of Goliath's challenge to Saul's army.
- A. In 17:1, 2, the author identified the location of both the Philistine and Israelite armies.
1. On this map, locate the position of each army.
  2. Identify the topography of this land – Flat? Hilly?
- Approximately how far apart are these two armies?



- B. In 17:3, the author mentioned that both armies stood on a mountain or high hill.
1. In the morning, which of these armies would have the advantage?
  2. In the afternoon, which of these armies would have the advantage?
- C. In 17:4-7, the author gave us a description of Goliath.
1. Measured in feet, how tall was Goliath?
  2. What message is the author giving us in this lengthy description?

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- D. In 17:8-10, Goliath presented a challenge to the Israelite soldiers.
1. What is the challenge?
  2. What is Goliath trying to accomplish? Did he do so?
- E. In 17:11, the author reported the reaction of Saul and all Israel. Remember, Saul is the Israelite closest to the size of Goliath. What was the reaction?
3. In I Samuel 17:12-16, the author tells the story of David's brothers in the army.
- A. In 17:12, the author reports the age of Jesse. Can you find a reason why this would be important?
  - B. In 17:13-15, there is a contrast between David and his three brothers. What does this contrast add to our information about what is happening in this family?
  - C. In 17:16, the author mentions that "the Philistine came forward morning and evening for 40 days." What is the significance of this information?
4. In I Samuel 17:17-27, David visited his brothers and was enraged by Goliath's blasphemy.



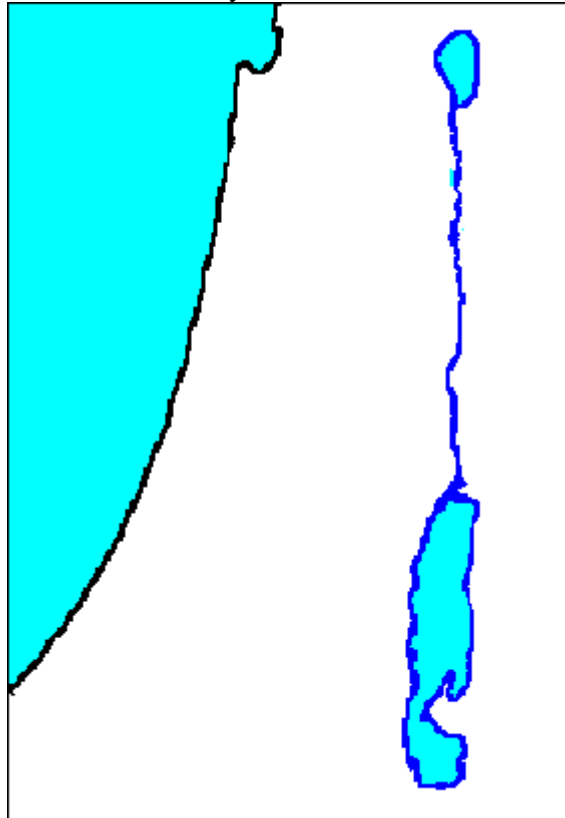
- A. In 17:17-19, Jesse instructed David to visit his brothers and carry gifts to them and to national leaders.
  1. On this map, identify Jesse's hometown and the place where the army was located.
  2. Approximately, how far did David have to travel?
- B. In 17:20, observe what David did with the flock.
  1. With whom did David leave the flock?
  2. What does this tell us?
  3. This verse tells us, in the second sentence, something the soldiers were doing. What is the significance of this?
- C. In 17:21, the author described the daily routine at the front. What danger(s) can you see in this practice?
- D. In 17:22, 23, David got his first glimpse of Goliath.
  1. In verse 22, David made a dangerous move. What was it?

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17

2. In verse 23, David heard the tirade of Goliath. What would be the normal reaction for anyone his age?
- E. In 17:24, the author reported the reaction in the camp of Israel when Goliath came out. What, specifically, was that reaction?
- F. In 17:25, 26, there is an APPARENT confusion in the dialogue.
  1. What is this APPARENT confusion?
  2. What does this accomplish in the story?
  3. In 17:26, David asks two questions, but in them his wording expresses his emotional level. What is the basis of David's emotional outbursts?
5. In I Samuel 17:28 – 30, David's brother, Eliab, rebuked him.
  - A. In 17:28, Eliab made two accusations against David.
    1. What are the accusations?
    2. In this attack, Eliab exposed his own weakness. What was that?
  - B. In 17:29, David's response tells us something about the relationship between these two brothers. What is it?
  - C. In 17:30, David asked his question again. Compare/contrast the content of David's questions spelled out in 17:26 and repeated here. Which of the two possible, suggested motives is really on David's mind?
6. In I Samuel 17:31-40, Saul sent David to face Goliath.
  - A. In 17:31, 32, David's interest was conveyed to Saul.
    1. What is there about David's question that would cause a soldier to take the risk of telling Saul about it?
    2. In 17:32, David made a promise to Saul. How would you describe that promise?
  - B. In 17:33-37, Saul and David held a discussion about Goliath.
    1. What is Saul's argument?
    2. What is David's argument?
    3. How does David see his victory over the lion and bear as pertinent to this argument?
    4. If you were Saul, what is there in David's argument that would convince you to entrust the future of the entire nation to his skills?
  - C. In 17:38, 39, there is a comical picture of young David being overwhelmed with Saul's huge armor pieces.
    1. If you were Saul, what would you feel and think as you placed your huge protective pieces on this small boy?
    2. What convinced David that he could not use Saul's armor?
  - D. In 17:40, David prepared for his encounter with Goliath. Put yourself in David's position. How would you feel as you approached the giant?
7. In I Samuel 17:41-49, David killed Goliath.
  - A. In 17:41, the author interjects a piece of information into the story that might give David pause. What is it?
  - B. In 17:42, there is a contrast between David and Goliath.
    1. What does it tell us about Goliath?
    2. What does it tell us about David?
  - C. In 17:43, Goliath accosted David. What two things did Goliath do?
  - D. In 17:44, Goliath threatened David. What was the threat?
  - E. In 17:45, David responded to Goliath's threat. In his response, David drew a contrast between his tactic and that of Goliath.

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1. What does this say about each one?
2. David spoke of God in two ways:
  - a. What were they?
  - b. What did David suggest by this?
- F. In 17:46, 47, David continued his response. There is a theme that David repeated in these verses.
  1. What is that theme?
  2. What purpose does David announce for this battle?
  3. Observe the names for God David uses on four occasions in these verses.
    - a. What are they?
    - b. How did David use them?
- G. In 17:48, 49, the author described the battle,
  1. Study these verses several times, what do they tell you about David?
  2. Observe that the stone struck Goliath in the forehead, but he fell face down. What does this tell us?
8. In I Samuel 17:50-54 – Israel pursued the Philistines and killed them.
  - A. In 17:50, the purpose of this sentence is emphasis. It, however, also stresses another fact besides the killing of Goliath. What is this fact?
  - B. In 17:51, there is a surprise fact about Goliath.
    1. What is this piece of information?
    2. What does this tell us about Goliath?
    3. There is also a breach of agreement in this verse. What is it?
  - C. In 17:52, the author described the route by which the Philistine soldiers fled.



1. Trace that route on this map.
2. What do we learn from this exercise?
- D. In 17:53, the author reported that when the Israelite soldiers finished chasing down the Philistine soldiers, they plundered the Philistine camps. How much plunder did David take?

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 17

- E. In 17:54, the author reported that David brought Goliath's head to Jerusalem, but Goliath's weapons David placed in his own tent. The text does not explain this. What suggestions can you make concerning these unusual actions?
- 8. In I Samuel 17:55-58, David brought Goliath's head to Saul
  - A. In 17:55, 56, Saul admits that he does not know the family from which David comes. This seems unusual. What purpose can be served by discovering this information at this point?
  - B. In 17:57, the series of events leaves a question in one's mind. What would that question be?
  - C. In 17:58, it is astonishing that at least two things are missing:
    - 1. What are these two things?
    - 2. Why would they be missing?
- 9. Reflect upon the content of chapter 17. What new insights have you gained? What impact will these things have on your walk with God?



## LESSON 17

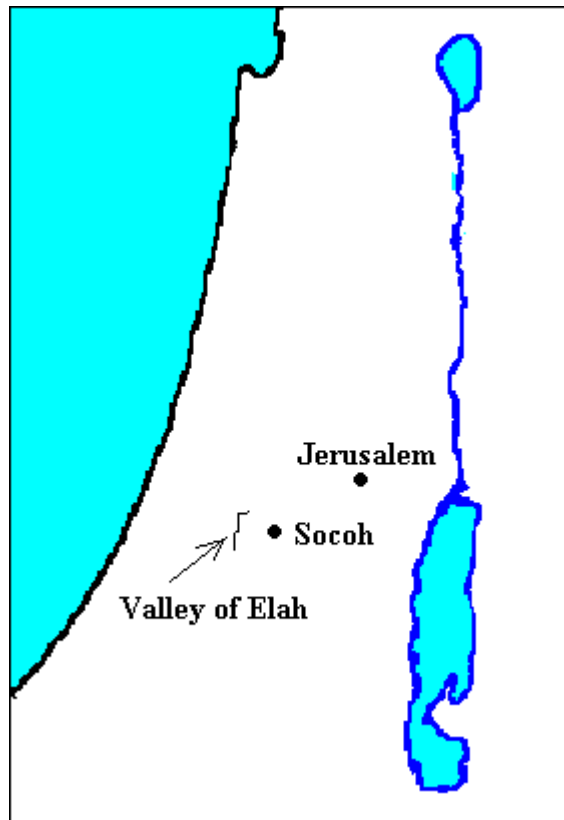
### DAVID KILLED GOLIATH – I SAMUEL 17:1 – 58

Eight paragraphs make up chapter 17 of I Samuel. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

17:1-11	Goliath Challenged Saul's Army
17:12-16	David's Three Brothers In Saul's Army
17:17-27	David Visited Brothers – Enraged By Goliath's Blasphemy
17:28-30	Eliab Chided David
17:31-40	Saul Sent David to Face Goliath
17:41-49	David Killed Goliath With A Stone
17:50-54	Israel Pursued the Philistines and Killed Them
17:55-58	David appeared Before Saul With Goliath's Head

#### I Samuel 17:1-11 – Goliath Challenged Saul's Army

*Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. I Samuel 17:1*



The place called Socoh is located about 20 miles west of Jerusalem and a bit south. It is a very broad valley, an excellent area for battle. It is reasonably safe there because there is little opportunity for an army to be surprised from ambush. It is about 2/3 of a mile across this valley, which is an open area even today. The Philistines were spread out over an area of about four miles. The army of Israel though large by local standards, covered an area of only one mile. It is not difficult to see why the Israelites were frightened even before Goliath came out to taunt them. Though this is a part of Judah, the Philistines lived near the area. They had

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taken it over and the Israelites were unable to drive them out. On this map, you can get an impression of the situation. You will also notice on the map that it is not that far from Jerusalem. The Philistines wanted to take all Israelite territory, but they were especially eager to take over Jerusalem. If the Philistines could win a battle here, it would be an excellent staging area to move against Jerusalem.

*And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines. I Samuel 17:2*

It is accurate to say that this battlefield is located in a valley. It also is necessary to mention that both the Philistine and Israelite camps were positioned on hills on either side of the valley. The Israelite camp was a bit more advantageous than that of the Philistines. On their hill, the army of Israel was situated in such a way that they could be battle-ready in an instant. It was clear, however, to both the Philistines and the Israelites that Israel was in jeopardy. Aware of their huge advantage, the Philistines were just playing with the Israelites before they totally destroyed their enemy. This can be seen in the taunting of Goliath.

*And the Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them. I Samuel 17:3*

This is an accurate picture, but we must keep in mind that there is only about 2/3 of a mile separating the two encampments. A modern general would not be comfortable with two armies so close together. The possibility of surprise attack is far too high. Another issue is the fact that this leaves both armies virtually no room to maneuver. It is one of three options – fight, not fight or flee. This was not a concern for the Philistines because they outnumbered the Israelites at least four to one. Also, the Philistine weapons were the very best and all their soldiers were well trained fighters. This gave Israel a lot to ponder.

*Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. I Samuel 17:4*

Goliath came from an area about fifteen miles south and west of the place of battle. This was an area where there was a whole colony of very tall, large people in comparison with the other people in the area. These tall people seemed like giants. In that era, people were usually about five feet tall. Imagine what the sight of a person nine feet tall would do to the confidence of an army.

*And he had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed with scale-armor which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze. I Samuel 17:5*

The author is presenting a series of pieces of information about Goliath. Each of these stresses how huge and powerful he was. Goliath had a helmet made of bronze. This would be extremely heavy. It would be far too heavy for the average person. There were some soldiers, particularly Roman soldiers who had helmets made of light metal. Bronze was the heaviest metal they had in that day. It was also the strongest.

Goliath also wore a body covering made of scale armor. This was made up of overlapping pieces of metal designed to protect from enemy weapons. The average person could not possibly fight wearing such heavy protective gear. There were many soldiers who wore a body covering of overlapping pieces of metal. This one, however, was made of bronze. This would be unbearably heavy and would cause the average soldier's death rather than protecting him.

*He also had bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders. I Samuel 17:6*

"Grieves" are like shin-guards that protect from a direct slice from a sword. These protective pieces are usually made of light metal. These, however, were made of bronze. They would be quite heavy and thus useless to the average soldier.

The javelin slung between his shoulders is confusing to some. It is well known that when not in combat, soldiers would swing their javelin over their shoulder and strap it over their arm. This would free their hands,



## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

but kept their weapon at the ready. Only a man of such great strength as Goliath could possibly use such weaponry.

*And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron; his shield-carrier also walked before him. I Samuel 17:7*

Of necessity, a spear is a very heavy weapon. This is because it is often used in situations that require great strength. The author tried to convey some idea of the size and weight of the spear Goliath used. He said the shaft of Goliath's spear is like a "weaver's beam." This is like a 2x4 and about seven feet long. One of these made of iron would be extremely heavy. If you add a spearhead weighing 600 shekels of iron, this is about 17 pounds and no average soldier could use it. A soldier could, with great effort, carry such a spear, but would be helpless to fight with it.

The author mentioned an armor-bearer carrying the shield of Goliath. There are two reasons for having an armor-bearer. You never hear of a regular soldier having an armor-bearer. The text mentions that David was Saul's armor-bearer. Kings and special soldiers, like Goliath, used armor-bearers. It was their badge of privilege. Goliath had an armor bearer because his protective clothing and offensive weapons were so heavy the huge shield would make it too much to carry and fight at the same time. Goliath was big and strong, but it was even too much for him.

The author has given us all this information about Goliath in order that we might be properly impressed with his size and the threat he posed to the army of Israel.

*And he stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. I Samuel 17:8*

This is the taunting that we mentioned earlier. The Philistines had several reasons to be confident of victory over Israel. The Philistines were highly trained and the Israelites had no training at all. The Philistines had the very best weapons and defenses. The Israelites had only garden tools and kitchen knives. There was no reason to think Israel could possibly win. Overconfidence, however, is the certainty of defeat. In spite of the Philistines' highly favored position, no decent general would allow such a situation as this to occur. Why Goliath was allowed to act in such a manner is beyond understanding.

Think of the offer he made. If he killed the Israelite who came to fight him, then all Israel would be their servants. If, on the other hand, the Israelites won, the Philistines would all be servants of Israel. He dared them to choose a man to come out to fight with him under these terms.

*If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us." I Samuel 17:9*

The terms Goliath offered were generous, but Goliath never intended for the Jews to have the opportunity to collect on this arrangement. This was a fight to the death.

It is reasonable to assume that the Philistines knew that the largest man in the Israelite army was King Saul. If anyone in the Israelite army had the slightest chance to win a battle with this giant, it would be the king. Goliath might have secretly hoped that Saul would come out to fight with him. Though the text gives no indication, there was no response whatsoever to Goliath's offer. This would cause an already overconfident band of Philistine soldiers to be even more confident.

*Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together." I Samuel 17:10*

When there was no reply, Goliath began to humiliate the Israelites, hoping to agitate someone into coming out to fight against him. He defied the ranks of Israel. This was a serious, more aggressive move. It is disturbing to be taunted. It is infuriating to be defied in such a manner. Taunting distresses, but requires no re-

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

sponse. Defiance requires a response or it is a capitulation to the diatribe of the one who is defying. He did not defy the king or the general. Goliath defied every soldier, “the ranks of Israel.”

*When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. I Samuel 17:11*

Every Jew in the camp would know about Goliath’s defiance and quake with fear. Granted, Saul was the largest man in the Israelite army. He was supposed to be the one who inspired the troops to bravery in battle. Instead, he had real problems with the loud haranguing that Goliath made against them. Observe that the author said, “they were dismayed.” The word translated “dismayed” is “cathath” (כָּתַח). The word means “to become confused,” “to be broken down,” “to be discouraged by fear.” The text also said, “(they were) greatly afraid.” The words translated “greatly afraid” look like this. The word translated “greatly” is “moed” (מְּדָ) which means “exceedingly,” “to an indescribable degree”. The word translated “afraid,” is “yawray” (יָוַרַי). It means a terrible dread. The author has taken words that are extreme beyond description. He is grasping for words to describe just how frightened they were. There is no way Saul could inspire his men because he was at least as frightened as they were.

### I Samuel 17-12-16 – David’s Three Brothers In Saul’s Army

*Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men. I Samuel 17:12*

One might wonder about the word, “Ephrathite.” The place where David was born was called “Ephrathah” before it was called “Bethlehem.” This verse speaks of the advanced age of Jesse. There were rules and regulations for conscription in Israel. As far as the age of men was concerned, Jesse was unusually old. One of the reasons our author mentions Jesse’s age is that a man that old could require that his sons, especially his heir, stay home and care for the family.

We shall see shortly that the three oldest sons were already a part of Saul’s army. The oldest son, who would usually be the father’s heir, should have been at home. He could only be in the army by his or his family’s choice. With three sons in the army, another one would not be required. It could be requested, as Saul did; it could be volunteered, but could not be required. A request from the king, however, is difficult to refuse.

*And the three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the first-born, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. I Samuel 17:13*

The precision of the Scriptures is always exciting. The inclusion of the names of the three sons performs two functions: First, it gives us the names so that we do not have to wonder which of the older brothers were involved in the army. Second, it is a way to add great emphasis to the statement about Jesse’s family involvement in the war effort.

This family had contributed more to the war effort than most of the families of Israel. We should keep in mind that this was a voluntary move and it was not required by Saul or by the nation.

*And David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, But David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem. I Samuel 17:14, 15*

Again, the author stressed the fact that David was the youngest of Jesse’s sons. This is the third time the author mentioned the fact that the three eldest brothers were soldiers in the military campaign.

The use of the word “but,” in verse 15, suggests that we are involved in a strong contrast. The contrast is between the three brothers being in the army and David both tending his father’s flock in Bethlehem and going back and forth to the camp of Saul at the battlefield. According to this verse, David was with Saul when he was requested and then spent the balance of the time tending his father’s flock.

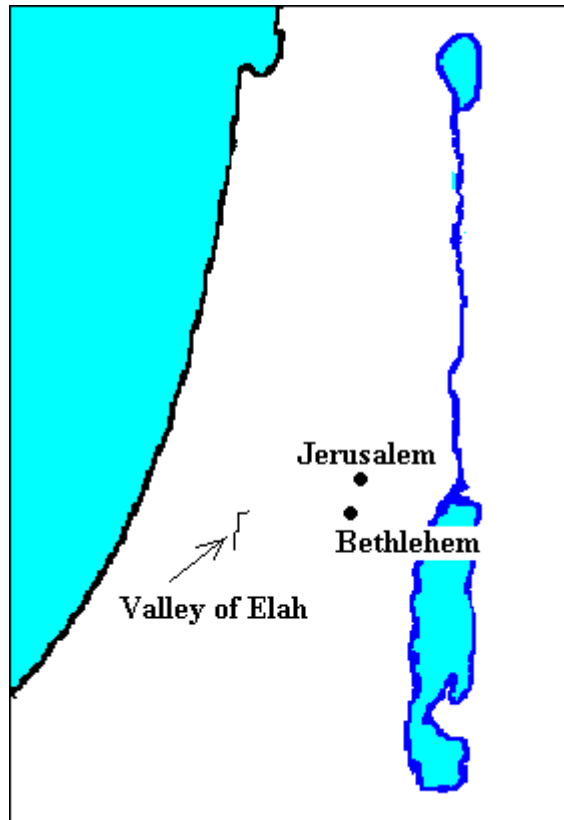
## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

*And the Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days, and took his stand.  
I Samuel 17:16*

The scene shifts back to the battlefield. It is one thing for Goliath to frighten Israel and King Saul once, but to do it every day, morning and evening, for 40 days had to be totally devastating for all Israel. Each time the Israelites made no response only gave the Philistines just that much more confidence that they had this battle won before it started.

### **I Samuel 17:17-27 – David Visited Brothers – Enraged By Goliath’s Blasphemy**

*Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers. I Samuel 17:17*



This verse is an introductory statement for this segment. David was to run to the camp and bring the gift of food for his brothers. As you can see on the map, this is a trip of about 17 miles as the crow flies. Observe that he will be carrying ten loaves of bread plus other things that were even heavier. This also would be quite bulky. This is a demanding task in this very mountainous terrain to say the least.

*Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of their thousand, and look into the welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them. For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines." I Samuel 17:18, 19*

This burden would substantially increase the weight of the package David was to carry. David, however, was accustomed to very demanding physical tasks. He was in excellent physical condition. It would be difficult, but it was not beyond his ability.

While David was delivering the gifts of food, he also was instructed to check to see how his three brothers were doing. Whenever family members are involved in war or serious threat of combat, there is the felt need, on the part of the family, to get information concerning their welfare.

In verse 19, the author identified the location of the battle. This also tells us that the position of the two armies has not changed.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

*So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. I Samuel 17:20*

The fact that David left the flock in the care of a “keeper” indicates that this was a wealthy family. A “keeper” was a hired shepherd. Notice that the text states that David got up early. If you look at the places in the scripture where the people were about to travel, in most instances they left very early. This was especially true if they had to go more than a day’s journey. It was not just that they were early risers, though they were. It is also because this is a very warm climate and travel in the early morning was far more comfortable than later in the day. If they were going more than a day’s journey, they had to stop at about three o’clock to make sure that they had a place to stay for the night. The nights in Israel can be extremely cold. This trip would take most of a day. In order to accomplish this, David would have to run very fast.

*And Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. I Samuel 17:21*

This was a daily occurrence. It was a precautionary measure that each army would carry out so that they were prepared against a surprise attack by the other army. This was doubly true when the two armies were in such close proximity.

*Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. I Samuel 17:22*

This would be a typical action of most any young man. He was much more interested in seeing the excitement of the battle line than in seeing that the proper people received their gift. This is the picture of brash youth. David not only went out to see the battle line, he entered into it. Fortunately, nothing was happening at the moment. Had either side initiated an attack, he would have been in the middle of the action without protection or weapon. He went right to the position of his brothers. They may well have been at the very front line of this battle-ready force. You can imagine the surprise of his brothers not only to see him, but to also see him right at the front of the battle line. It also helps us to understand the distress the brothers expressed in his coming there.

*As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard them. I Samuel 17:23*

From an officer’s point of view, he could not allow this very young family member to distract his troops from their position of high alert. Again, if this young man was in his area of command, it was this officer’s responsibility to assure the boy’s safety. While the brothers were talking with David, they would be neglecting their responsibility to be alert for anything the Philistines might do to catch them off guard.

At this very moment, Goliath came out to humiliate the Israelites and goad them into coming out to fight with him. He was swaggering and they were cowering. David was taking this all in. One can only imagine what was going through David’s mind.

*When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid. I Samuel 17:24*

David also observed that when Goliath came out to frighten the soldiers, the army of Israel literally fled in retreat. They were really afraid of him. It appears that the whole Israelite army was afraid that one man would attack and by himself defeat them. This is one of the most embarrassing humiliations an army ever experienced. Goliath was playing with Israel the way a cat will play with a mouse before killing it.

*And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." I Samuel 17:25*

## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

Apparently, David was talking with the soldiers about Goliath. They asked if he had ever seen the giant. Recent daily experience told them that Goliath was coming out to defy all Israel. In part, at least, this was the soldiers attempt to explain why they were retreating in the face of one Philistine.

The soldier's statement indicates that he was at a loss to find a military solution to this threat. We must keep I mind that the soldier most capable of confronting this giant was hiding in his royal tent. Saul had made a very generous offer of great wealth and position for anyone who could perform the nearly impossible task of killing Goliath. Obviously, this was an act of desperation. Any soldier lured on by the hope of wealth and position would certainly be killed, but this was not the worst consequence. If that soldier fought and lost, then all of the Israelite army would become the slaves of the Philistine, and the land of Israel would come under the total dominance of the pagans to the west.

*Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" I Samuel 17:26*

David was intrigued by the offer; perhaps it was his youthful disdain of danger. Though he came from a family of some wealth, it is possible that he was lured on by the desire for private wealth. According to the text, however, he was deeply offended that a pagan such as this would insult Jehovah and His people in such a way. Whatever the attraction, David was definitely interested in challenging the pagan giant.

The words of David are revealing to say the least. Observe the way he spoke, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and **takes away the reproach of Israel?**" There is a definite loyalty toward Israel and God that is evident in this verse and to which David clung throughout his lifetime. For David, the very existence of Goliath was a reproach to Israel.

David's words are as near to contempt as one can get as he described the actions of the pagan giant, "**That he should taunt the armies of the living God.**"

*And the people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him." I Samuel 17:27*

The soldiers explained to David all the things that would be given to the man who killed the giant. The embarrassment if this is that the man who would seem to have the greatest opportunity to kill the giant was cowering in his royal tent. David's conversation with the soldiers was simply a reaffirmation of what David had already heard would be done for the person who killed Goliath.

### I Samuel 17:28-30 – Eliab Chided David

*Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." I Samuel 17:28*

This was a sad, family moment. Unfortunately, it was not that unusual for an eldest brother to speak this way to "the baby of the family." Eliab spoke to David, in a crowd of brusk soldiers, in a humiliating way. There is absolutely no doubt that the flock that David kept was huge. This was Eliab's unfortunate way to attempt to portray David as a little boy who could not as yet be trusted with major responsibility. Eliab had two accusations against David: First, he accused David of being insolent. At least as far as the text is concerned, there is no evidence of insolence. Second, He also accused David of being wicked of heart. This accusation is even worse. Again, there is no evidence of wickedness in this text. It might not be wise to be in a war-zone, but it certainly is not wicked. The truth is that if anything, just the opposite is true. Is it possible that Eliab is upset because Samuel chose David to be the future king rather than himself, the eldest son in the family? One wonders if that is not the case. One thing is certain, Eliab's assessment of his brother was totally uncalled for.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

One must consider Eliab's assessment of David's motive – Did David just wanted to see the battle zone? David was certainly an inquisitive young man. This was not the safest place for Eliab's youngest brother. Again, it would not be unusual for a young man to be inquisitive to see the excitement of battle while not thinking of the possible dangers.

*But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" I Samuel 17:29*

David's words provide some insight. His statement would have been sufficient if he had just said, "The word 'now.'" This is a vivid expression of David's exasperation. This addition makes it painfully clear that in David's mind, this was just one more example of the demeaning, irritating attacks with which Eliab customarily treated David. It is abundantly clear that there is no love lost between these siblings.

*Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before. I Samuel 17:30*

Observe that apparently David did not wait to hear his brother's response. He had already heard more than he wanted to hear from Eliab. It is possible that Eliab did not answer at all. David turned to another soldier and asked the very same question as before. This is the third time that David asked the same question. It may be that it sounded just too good to be true.

### I Samuel 17:31-40 – Saul Sent David To Face Goliath

*When the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him. I Samuel 17:31*

The author does not identify which words of David are being referred to here. The fact that this statement immediately follows three consecutive times that David asked this question suggests that this may be the information that was conveyed to Saul. Obviously, no one in the army of Israel was even remotely interested in the offer. The very fact that someone even asked the details, and in this instance three times, identifies a level of interest greater than that of the whole army of Israel put together. It was appropriate that the soldiers brought this to the attention of the king. They were absolutely certain that Saul would want to know about these inquiries.

Saul sent for David. He wanted to talk with him about his interest in the offer. Again, if Saul had the courage of his office, there would have been no problem to deal with in this manner. That kind of courage did not reside in the royal tent. Saul was willing to consider most anything that would get them out of this ominous bind.

*And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." I Samuel 17:32*

This statement sounds like youthful exuberance. There is probably an element of that in this statement. In this instance, however, it appears that this is exactly what David meant. It could be considered boastful, unless you know this young man and his trust in God. This is his honest appraisal of the situation. He was not talking about his own ability, though it is certainly action that would use his skills. Despite David's skill and experience, this is something that God would have to do on their behalf. In the midst of this youthful confidence, there is a certain humility that in most instances permeates the life of David.

*Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth." I Samuel 17:33*

Saul was not thoroughly impressed with David's confidence. Looking at David's youth and contrasting this with Goliath's experience in war and his unusual size, Saul was convinced that David was a bit overconfident. Clearly, David would have to convince Saul that it was not too great a risk for the future of the army of Israel and the control of the whole land to hang in the balance of David's skill against Goliath's size and experience.

## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

*But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I Samuel 17:34*

David set out to convince Saul that he was not too great a risk. He described his own experience in the face of grave, overpowering danger. He wanted Saul to realize the risk of fighting Goliath and defending his father's sheep against a lion or a bear are about the same.

*I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. I Samuel 17:35*

In this verse, David continues to try to sell Saul on his offer. He described how he had seized the lion and delivered the helpless lamb from his mouth. Naturally, the lion would then attack him. He killed the predator. David focused on two things that also would be helpful in facing Goliath. He informed Saul of his great skill with weapons in order to kill the lion. He also informed the king of his unusual concentration in the face of overpowering danger. Both of the qualities David described for Saul would be essential if Saul is going to allow David to represent all Israel in the fight to the death with Goliath.

*Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God." I Samuel 17:36*

David continued his sales effort. Though Eliab considered David inept, still he had demonstrated skill and courage that few people, his brothers included, would be able to match.

David then turned to spiritual considerations. He described Goliath in terms of spiritual ridicule, "this uncircumcised Philistine." David also compared Goliath with the lion and bear, "he shall be like one of them.

*And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you." I Samuel 17:37*

David drew a second comparison. In the same way that it was God who delivered David from the lion and bear, in the same way God will deliver David, and thus all Israel, from the hand of this Philistine.

We cannot be certain what convinced Saul. The text does not say. One must admit that it seems like sheer folly for Saul to entrust the fate of the nation into the hands of a lad, one not old enough to be a soldier. How does Saul look at this scene and discern wisdom rather than folly? It appears that rather than an evaluation of David's possibilities, the situation in which they found themselves justified this decision, in the mind of Saul. Things were so bad, Saul and his army could not walk away from the pending death at the hands of the Philistines. At the same time, Saul did not have another alternative, much less a better one. David could fail and they would go into captivity. If Saul did nothing, they would still end up as slaves of the Philistines. This was a very poor strategy, but immeasurably better than the alternative. Put yourself in the place of one of Saul's soldiers. You are frightened for your life. Your king is in worse shape than you are. Suddenly you receive word that the king has risked the lives and futures of the whole army on a young boy not old enough to be a soldier. Scary, isn't it?!

*Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. I Samuel 17:38*

Again, put yourself in Saul's position. You are frightened for your life and will not risk it to free your army and people from certain death or servitude. Now you are trying, pitifully, to place your huge pieces of armor on a young boy who will risk his life so you will not have to risk yours. How would you feel? This verse is a sad picture from two sides. David, in Saul's armor, is like an ant in an elephant's chair. It is ridiculous, but Saul was in a bind. Again, Saul, who would not face Goliath, prepared David to do what he was too cowardly to attempt. This is a lesson in tragedy.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

*And David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off. I Samuel 17:39*

Saul was a huge man. David, on the other hand, was really quite small. Seeing David in Saul's armor would have been humorous if it had not been so pathetic. When David realized that Saul's armor though very special, was useless to him, he took it off. He did not mention the fact that the equipment would many times too big for him to wear or use.

*And he took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine. I Samuel 17:40*

David decided that he would use the tools and weapons he had used all his life. His weaponry was very simple, but in his hands, they were very effective. He had a very heavy stick for infighting. He had his sling and stones which were deadly from a distance. David did not wait for Goliath to approach him, but immediately went after him.

### **I Samuel 17:41-49 – David Killed Goliath With A Stone**

*Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. I Samuel 17:41*

Seeing David make a move, Goliath went into action. In effect, David was in a two against one struggle. Goliath had an armor-bearer. David stood all alone. The battle was on, there was no turning back now. It was, for both men, a fight for their freedom and their country. The stakes were life and death.

*When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. I Samuel 17:42*

Goliath was rather more incensed than amused. He believed that he could defeat any Israelite soldier in battle. He felt humiliated and insulted by this turn of events. He was looking at outward appearances. David was young and appeared like a little boy, not strong like a man. This made a definite contribution to Goliath's overconfidence.

*And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. I Samuel 17:43*

As you look at this verse, observe that Goliath did two things: First, he made fun of David – not a wise move on his part. He made an assumption without evidence to support his thinking. He could see David's size and appearance, but he knew nothing about David's skill or experience. From his vantage point, it appeared that this was going to be very easy.

The second thing that Goliath did was to curse David by his gods. This made the engagement a spiritual battle. In that day, every battle was considered a struggle between the deities of the two countries involved. This particular battle was between God and Baal, the god of the Philistines. Though Goliath did not realize it, this gave David a distinct advantage for he had great faith in Jehovah.

*The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field." I Samuel 17:44*

Goliath was about to make his third mistake. He made disdainful remarks about David. This only inspired David's courage and determination to show just how wrong Goliath was. You may have observed that Goliath is talking, but David is quiet, but determined that the name of Jehovah would not be humiliated by this pagan.



## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

*Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. I Samuel 17:45*

Now it is time for David to speak, but not in sneering or derision. It was very important for David to point out that he was far outclassed in terms of arms. This is important because it was clear evidence that it was the fact that God did this and not David. In this verse, David spoke of God in two ways: He spoke of “the LORD of hosts.” This name highlights the irresistible power of God. It refers to the LORD as the God of the Army that will be victorious.

David also spoke of “the God of the armies of Israel.” Israel was really a “nobody” nation. In the eyes of many, particularly the pagans, Jehovah was no greater than the little nation He defended. David wanted this pagan to realize that Jehovah was a God of power. David reminded Goliath that he had been taunting Jehovah. It was a way of reminding him that he had brought this destruction upon himself by his taunting. David was convinced that Goliath would shortly have the opportunity to rue the day that he taunted Jehovah.

*This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, I Samuel 17:46*

David continued his announcements to Goliath. Having been taunted by Goliath about how he would feed David to the birds, David now reminds Goliath of what he intended to do with him and with the Philistines.

Observe that David told Goliath that the LORD would deliver him into David’s hands. David promised that he would give the dead bodies of the Philistines to the birds and the wild beasts. This Israelite’s purpose was not to make a name for himself or for Israel. His purpose was to let the whole world know that there is a God in Israel. A casual reading of the text sounds as though the real difference between David and Goliath was that David was a humble servant of God while Goliath was a braggart servant of Baal.

*And that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands. I Samuel 17:47*

David continued his reporting of his purpose for fighting. David wanted all the assembled Philistines to know that the LORD does not deliver by sword and spear. This is interesting because the Philistines actually worshipped their swords. Indeed, when they won a battle, they counted their captives and every 50<sup>th</sup> captive was sacrificed to their swords. This battle is the LORD’s and David is quick to affirm this fact. He wanted Goliath and all the Philistines to know that the LORD would give the victory into the hands of Israel

*Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. I Samuel 17:48*

Talking is now over. Now it is time for action. The Philistine tired of the things David wanted him to hear. Goliath left his secure position and moved to attack David. The young Israelite counter attacked. This had to surprise Goliath. He certainly had to expect that David would run away, the way all the soldiers did when he came out to challenge them. David proved to be a different foe. Particularly surprising would have been the fact that David did not flee, but actually ran quickly to engage Goliath.

*And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground. I Samuel 17:49*

If we read this verse very carefully, David was under tremendous pressure at this point. Goliath was approaching him with great haste. Each step, on both sides, could bring disastrous results. David proceeded as though there was no tension whatsoever. This, also, had to be a surprise to Goliath. David selected a stone

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

and placed it in his sling. To most westerners, the sling seems like a great toy for children, but an imprecise weapon to say the least. This was a false impression. There is a good example for us in the book of Judges.

*Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. Judges 20:16*

We do not know if Goliath was familiar with this lethal skill. One would think that he was well aware of it as a seasoned soldier. He should have encountered it at some point. It would appear that he simply was overcome with overconfidence. He deals with David as though the young warrior were unarmed. For whatever reason, he failed to take this threatening weapon seriously. David, like the left-handed warriors, did not miss his mark. Goliath was fatally wounded. If he were able to think at this point, he had to experience the ultimate humiliation – being felled by a young boy and a Jewish boy at that.

### **I Samuel 17:50-54 – Israel Pursued the Philistines and Killed Them**

*Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. I Samuel 17:50*

In this verse, the author's statement is almost one of disbelief. Notice how he wrote it, "Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and stone." By repetition, the author added great emphasis when he said, "And he struck the Philistine and killed him."

The author pointed out a difficulty David faced. He had won the battle, but he did not have a sword with him. He had promised Goliath that he would sever his head, but he had no weapon with which to accomplish that action.

*Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. I Samuel 17:51*

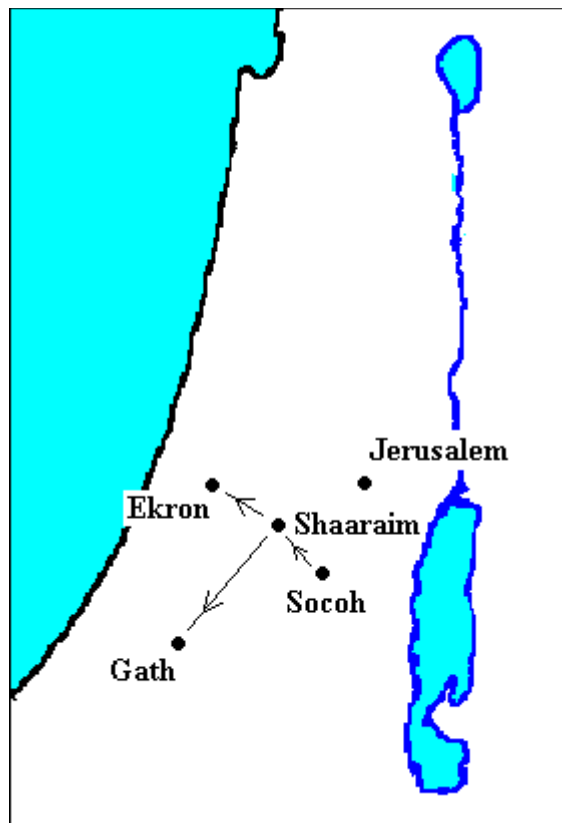
The exhilaration of this moment had to be beyond description. Notice that David was able to manipulate the giant's sword. Up to this point, the Philistines had been smug and humiliating. If you look carefully at this verse, you will see quite a surprise. The author said, "David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath." Goliath was so overconfident that he had not even drawn his sword.

The Philistine smugness evaporated. They fled. This means that they had no intention of keeping their word and becoming the slaves of the Israelites in the off chance that David should win. The Philistines fled even though they had several advantages. They out-numbered the Israelites by at least four to one. They had highly trained soldiers and the Israelites had no training at all. Still when their giant was killed, they fled for their lives.

There was another concern. The Philistines were pagan idolaters, but they believed that their god had been defeated by the God of the Hebrews and that would mean that they had no hope. In spite of their agreement to become the slaves of the Israelites, they felt that they had no hope but to flee. It seemed their only option.

*And the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. I Samuel 17:52*

## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH



You can only imagine the shock and surprise the men of Israel and Judah experienced to see the seemingly unbeatable giant killed and the dauntless Philistine soldiers fleeing in disarray. The Israelites ignored their inferior position and chased after the fleeing Philistine soldiers. On this map, observe the direction of their flight. They fled west through the valley and then north to the gates of Ekron. They then turned south and east fleeing to Shearaim and then further south to Gath. This is a distance of about 38 miles through very rough terrain. What a picture of disarray! They had no plan of escape. They were just trying to stay alive. Observe also that the text says that the slain Philistines lay along the road where they fled. This is a perfect route. The Philistines had little experience with defeat. They did not remember that the perfect prescription for the death of an army was to flee.

*And the sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps.  
I Samuel 17:53*

We do not know if the army of Israel killed all the Philistines or not. The way the author wrote is not conclusive. One thing is clear, when the chase was over, the Israelites plundered the Philistine camps on the way home. The Israelites may have begun this campaign with no real weapons of war, We can be very sure that they were now armed with the very best weapons available at this point.

*Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.  
I Samuel 17:54*

Observe that there is no record that David took any part in the plundering as such. The text does tell us that he took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem. On this map, you can see that this is a distance of at least 25 miles. There is no explanation as to what David did with the head of Goliath once he got it to Jerusalem. He could not take it to the temple because it would be unclean and whoever brought it there was also unclean. The sequence of events, at this point, is quite unclear. One thing stands out; David took Goliath's weapons and put them in his own tent. It was common custom for the victorious general to bring the head of his enemy as evidence that he had been victorious. There is no explanation as to why David hid the weapons in his tent. We can only conjecture.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

### I Samuel 17:55-58 – David Appeared Before Saul With Goliath's Head

*Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know." I Samuel 17:55*

It is interesting, if not strange, that Saul could entrust the whole future of his nation into the hands of a person and not know anything about him. Nevertheless, that was the case. It is equally surprising, since Abner was the one who received the gifts from Jesse through David and he did not know the name of David's father. The text does not comment. Could it be that this very plain gift went unnoticed? After all, this was for the king. We will never know.

*And the king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." I Samuel 17:56*

One wonders why the king was so determined to know the name of David's father, now that David was a hero. Could it be that he wondered if David came from a family of honored soldiers? Again, could it be that Saul had a mind to honor David's father? There is no way to tell. We do know that it was unusually important to Saul to discover just whose son this brave young man was.

*So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. I Samuel 17:57*

This verse seems like a recapitulation of the story. There is, however, some new information in the verse. The timing of this scenario is not at all clear. We do not know if David was taken to the king immediately following the rout of the Philistines. We know that the Saul's home was not in Jerusalem, but in Gibeah. We are unclear about whether David was presented to the king before or after going to Jerusalem any more than we know why he went to Jerusalem in the first place.

At some point, Abner took David into the presence of Saul. When David came before Saul, he presented the head of Goliath as evidence of his victory. It is like saying, "I promised you that I would kill this man. Here is the evidence of my successful mission.

*And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." I Samuel 17:58*

Finally, Saul was about to get the information he had been demanding. It is surprising that Saul said absolutely nothing about the great victory and deliverance from death that David achieved in defeating Goliath. Saul simply inquired about David's father. It is difficult to accept this from Saul. The king coward in his royal tent while David risked everything to spare Saul's frightened life. In response, Saul only said, "Whose son are you?" This, however, is unfortunately not out of keeping with Saul's usual decorum.

David was gracious in victory. He might have really humiliated the king, but he did not. That does not mean that David hadn't thought about it as a good idea. David referred to his father as, "your servant." David seems reluctant to even talk about the victory or to talk to the king. He was satisfied that God had given them victory over their pagan enemies.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the stark contrast between good and evil; between faith and non-faith. Here is a brief summary of the major messages about both good and evil.

GOOD	EVIL
Experience with faith leads to confidence – v. 32	Pagan opposition is real – v. 4
Faith is the foundation of bravery – v. 32	The unfaithful are intimidated by evil – v.11
Faith leans upon immutability – v. 36	Evil is persistent – v. 16
Faith has no need to brag – v. 44	Evil is not dependable – v. 51

## DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

GOOD	EVIL
Faith is rewarded with success – v.48	
People will not always acknowledge faithfulness v.58	

No matter what the form or details of the conflict, it will always be the battle between good and evil. We will never grow until and unless we are involved in this struggle first-hand. As we experience God overcoming evil on our behalf, we have growing confidence to expect Him to do even more than we experienced before. This is how faith and confidence grow.

Think carefully about how you pray when things are not going the way you would like. Think about how you pray when you are being rebuffed when you did nothing wrong. Do you ask God to stop the pain? Do you ask Him to intervene so that you do not suffer too much? In the New Testament, they rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the Name.



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 18

### SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID – I SAMUEL 18:1 – 30

1. There are seven paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 18. Write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph on the following table.

18:1-5	
18:6-7	
18:8-9	
18:10-16	
18:17-21	
18:22-29	
18:30	

2. In I Samuel 18:1-5, the author dealt with the relationship between Jonathan and David.
- A. In 18:1, 2, Both Saul and Jonathan were greatly impressed with David. In view of the events of chapter 17, what would you say attracted each of them to David?
  - B. In 18:3, 4, Jonathan initiated a covenant with David and gave him his robe, armor and weapons.
    - 1. In view of these verses, what does it appear was the theme of this covenant?
    - 2. In 18:4, Jonathan gave David his robe, armor and weapons. What appears to be the meaning of this gesture?
  - C. In 18:5, David was placed “over the men of war.”
    - 1. What does this mean?
    - 2. In light of this verse, what is happening to David’s reputation both before the government and among the people?
3. In I Samuel 18:6-9, David returned from battle with Saul and the army.
- A. How were Saul and the army received?
  - B. What was Saul’s response to this welcome?
  - C. In verse 9, there is a report of Saul’s reaction. What does it say?
  - D. What does this tell you about Saul?
4. In I Samuel 18:10-16, Saul reacted to the welcome extended by the people.
- A. In 18:10, the author explained Saul’s feelings.
    - 1. Explain the author’s meaning when he said, “an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul.”
    - 2. Explain, in careful detail, what the author meant when he said, “He (Saul) raved in the midst of the house.”
  - B. David twice escaped Saul’s attempt to murder him.
    - 1. What does this tell us about David?
    - 2. What does this tell us about Saul?
  - C. In 18:12, the author described the relationship between Saul and David.
    - 1. What is that relationship?
    - 2. In this verse, the author explained the reason for that relationship.
      - a. What reason did he give?
      - b. What did the author mean by this reason?
  - D. In 18:13, Saul acted upon his feelings about David. The verse describes two things Saul did as well as how David responded.

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1. Explain the two things Saul did.
  2. Compare what Saul did with 18:5. What did you learn?
  3. What does the author mean by, “He (David) went out and came in before the people”?
  - E. Study 18:14, in view of what Saul had done to David. What did you learn?
  - F. In 18:15, the author described Saul’s response to the report in 18:14. How would you describe this in today’s terms?
  - G. In 18:16, there is a contrast with 18:14. What does the author tell us in this contrast?
5. In I Samuel 18:17-21, Saul plotted to kill David
- A. In 18:17, the author carefully described the contrast between Saul’s words and motives.
    1. What information can you glean from this contrast?
    2. Think carefully about Saul’s statement to David. How would you evaluate this statement?
    3. Think carefully about the author’s report of Saul’s thought. What do you see?
    4. What other situation in Scripture does this verse call to mind?
  - B. In 18:18, the author reported David’s response to Saul. Study David’s words carefully. How would you describe this response?
  - C. Study 18:19 very carefully. It describes Saul’s action in response to David’s reply.
    1. How would you describe this action?
    2. Who is Adriel?
    3. What might prompt Saul to give Merab to Adriel rather than to David?
  - D. In 18:20, 21, the author indicated that Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David.
    1. What motive of Saul does the author report?
    2. If you were David and Saul said to you, “For a second time you may be my son-in-law today,” what would you think?
6. In I Samuel 18:22-29, the author reported Saul’s attempt to get David to marry Michal.
- A. In 18:22, Saul instructed his servants to speak to David.
    1. Look carefully at what the servants were instructed to say. How would you describe this message?
    2. Is there any reason why Saul would not deliver this message himself?
  - B. In 18:23, David responded to the message Saul’s servants brought to him.
    1. What was the concern voiced by David?
    2. Was David accepting their suggestion?
  - C. In 18:24, 25, the servants reported to Saul and received new instructions.
    1. In verse 25, Saul mentioned a dowry. In view of 17:25, how do you feel about Saul’s offer?
    2. In verse 25, the author reported Saul’s purpose in this proposal. How would you describe this purpose?
  - D. In 18:26, Saul’s servants gave David the message they were instructed to give.
    1. How would you describe David’s response?
    2. Compare David’s response with 18:23. What did you observe?
    3. What does the author mean when he said, “before the days had expired...”?
  - E. In 18:27, David provided the required dowry. What can we learn from this verse?
  - F. I Samuel 18:28, 29 form a single sentence.
    1. This is a cause-effect statement. Describe in detail the causes reported by the author.
    2. Describe what the author meant by the effect he reported.
    3. If you were Saul, how would you feel at this point?
7. In I Samuel 18:30, the author described David’s experience after he was married to Michal.
- A. How would you describe these events?



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 18

- B. In view of the author's report in 18:28, 29, how would you think Saul felt about his dealings with David?
  - C. In view of 18:12, how would you describe the events that took place in 18:13 – 30?
8. Reflect upon the events of chapter 18.
- A. What theme continually emerges throughout the chapter?
  - B. Now look at your life. What does this chapter say about you and your life?



## LESSON 18

### SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID – I SAMUEL 18:1 – 30

There are seven paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 18. These paragraphs are summarized on the following table.

18:1-5	Jonathan Loved David: David Served Well Leading Army
18:6-7	David Heralded Returning From Battle
18:8-9	Saul Angry, “Saul Slew Thousands; David Ten Thousands”
18:10-16	Saul Tried To Kill David – He Feared David
18:17-21	Saul Plotted to Destroy David – In Marriage And in War
18:22-29	David Married Michal: Saul’s Trap Failed
18:30	David Became Famous Fighting Philistines

#### 1 Samuel 18:1-5 – Jonathan Loved David: David Served Well Leading Army

*Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. I Samuel 18:1*

In the closing verse of chapter 17, David was speaking with King Saul. It would follow that the word “he,” in verse one, is a reference to David. We are not told what attracted Jonathan to David. Our knowledge of Jonathan causes one to wonder if it was not both David’s confidence in God and the unusual bravery that grew out of that relationship. We only know that it happened while David was in conversation with the king. This has to suggest that Jonathan was allowed to be present for this conversation. This part of I Samuel focuses on David. Still, it offers us a glimpse of the beautiful spirit of Jonathan.

*And Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. I Samuel 18:2*

It appears that Saul was as taken with David as Jonathan was. The text does not indicate this. The actions of Saul, however, point in this direction. Saul refused to allow David to return to his father’s home. We indicated earlier that with three sons, including the eldest, in the service of the army, Jesse did not have to send any more of his sons to help with the war effort. We also pointed out, however, that law or no law, it is difficult to say no to the king when he requests the services of one of your sons.

Previously, Saul asked Jesse to send David to serve him. Now, however, Saul simply did not give David permission to go home.

At this point, a couple of burning questions enter one’s mind. This was a tense time for Israel. As much as Saul would like for the embarrassment of the dangerous standoff with the Philistines be kept secret, still such news has a way of leaking out. Jesse had to be aware, at least to some extent, of the tenuous situation. His youngest son was now long overdue in returning home from taking gifts to his brothers and officials. He also was to find out how his brothers were getting along.

*Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. I Samuel 18:3*

The text does not tell us the nature of this covenant. We will deal with that more carefully later in the text. Whatever its composition, the covenant was based upon their affection for each other. Interestingly, we see a relationship here that was initiated by Jonathan, not David. On one hand, that is as it should be because as heir to the throne, people might wish to establish a relationship with him. On the other hand, protocol would require them to wait and let him initiate that relationship.

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Notice how the author described Jonathan's relationship with David, "He loved him as himself." In an era when court intrigue was rampant, it is surprising for the heir-apparent to initiate such a relationship, much less a covenant. This was a way of saying that Jonathan would defend David with his life.

*And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. I Samuel 18:4*

This is much more than sharing clothing. The clothing that Jonathan gave David was emblematic of his position as heir to the throne. Jonathan gave David his weapons, armor and royal robe. There is no indication that David gave Jonathan anything. In such a situation, it would be appropriate for both parties to exchange something, but it was not important to report what David exchanged with Jonathan, if he gave anything at all. Essentially, Jonathan gave David his position as heir to the throne of Israel. There is no report about how Saul felt about this even though David was still in his good graces. The text is silent, but in that day they felt that God chose the king. In this instance, it must have appeared to Jonathan that God had chosen David to be king. It is amazing that Jonathan was comfortable with that possibility.

*So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. I Samuel 18:5*

At this point, Saul is very pleased with David. Saul entrusted more responsibilities to David's care and David accomplished these tasks very well. Before long, though he was very young, David was placed as commander of all the forces of Israel. David demonstrated that it was a wise choice to entrust this responsibility to him. There were men in Saul's service who had many years of valiant service to their king and he knew it. They were men of great maturity and proven skill in leadership. Still, David was placed in authority over them. The surprising thing is that these professional soldiers were as happy with David's appointment as the common people were.

The text indicates that everything entrusted to David's care prospered. This is the thing that rulers and their officials look for in their young administrators. It is not so unusual for a young officer to gain the ear of the king. Again, it is not that unusual for a young officer to gain the favor of the people. It is most unusual for such a young, inexperienced official to be held in highest esteem by both ruler and the people.

### **I Samuel 18:6-7 – David Heralded Returning From Battle**

*And it happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. I Samuel 18:6*

This verse seems like a flashback, but we cannot be certain of the timing. It is not surprising for the common people to rejoice as their troops return in victory. Victory is always a joyous time. In view of the precipitous situation that had just collapsed as David slew the giant, the victory was all the more exciting and the people were going to celebrate.

We should keep in mind that Saul is returning in the traditional manner of kings returning in victory. Whether or not the king was at all involved in the victory, he took the accolades. In this instance, Saul would be riding on a white donkey to signal to one and all that he returned victorious over his enemies.

*And the women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." I Samuel 18:7*

It is not difficult to understand why the people would focus on David. He was the one who killed Goliath and initiated the rout of the Philistines. Saul had no part in this victory at all. He should have, but he was too frightened to do anything. Whenever someone who has no power distinguishes himself, it is very apt to be a lopsided response. In such instances, this will inevitably strain relationships between the innocent victorious and the uninvolved authorities. That is exactly what happened here.

## SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID

The text does not tell us how this song got started. It may have been that it was their view of the simple truth. Saul, however, was very good in military things. It just so happened that David was much, much better. It so happened that David had courage and confidence in God to deal with a situation that only frightened Saul into staying safely in his royal tent all during the encounter. God was giving David favor wherever he went. At first, Saul had this favor. As he thought more and more of himself and less of God, his appeal vanished. Put yourself in Saul's position. He is the king returning in victory and the women are singing a song that exalts a young man not old enough to be part of the army but he receives ten times the accolades that you receive. That is the position of Saul. To say that he was upset is the understatement of the year.

### I Samuel 18:8-9 - Saul Angry – “Saul Slew Thousands; David The Thousands”

*Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" I Samuel 18:8*

Despite the fact that these women were simply telling the truth, Saul was beside himself in anger fired by envy; a most dangerous combination. Nevertheless, David, who distinguished himself in battle, now received the blame for something he did not initiate and could not control.

Seriously, if Saul had joined these women in their rejoicing accolades for David, he would probably have been the benefactor as the one who gave David the opportunity to distinguish himself. The blow to Saul's ego was too devastating for reasoning. Though Saul apparently said nothing, in his mind he spelled it out to the last detail. In his mind, David had taken everything except the throne itself. In one sense, that was true, but it was Saul's fear that caused this, not David's greed.

*And Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on. I Samuel 18:9*

This is not surprising at all. This is the way people are tempted to act when they are convinced that a person has done them wrong. They watch the suspected person carefully lest they hurt them again. In this frame of mind, Saul could never give David a chance to be anything but guilty of disloyalty.

Having seen this display, Saul made some unfortunate assumptions. He apparently did not deal with whether these assumptions were true or not. His wounded ego forced him to fear the worst. Saul ascribed motive to David. He held David responsible for this situation as though he had created it intentionally. He was feeling that David nurtured this separation of the people's affection from Saul. There was nothing David could do to offset this assumption because it was based upon Saul's anger and not on fact. It was the product of the fear produced by a wounded pride. The only thing that would help would be if David vanished or if he fell from the good graces of the people.

### I Samuel 18:10-16 – Saul Tried To Kill David – He Feared David

*Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul's hand. I Samuel 18:10*

This verse is the topic of lively debate. The debate centers around the words “an evil spirit from God.” The Hebrew text is not this precise. The issue at stake here is whether or not an evil spirit can be “from God.” There is agreement on the idea that God can allow an evil spirit to perform his dastardly deeds. There is total disagreement that God has an evil spirit as well as a Holy Spirit.

However one describes this situation, the result is the same. An evil spirit caused Saul to rage throughout the palace.

The word translated “raved or raged” means “to prophesy,” “to sing or speak by inspiration.” An evil spirit would not inspire one to prophecy, speak the truth and inspire goodness.

There is a gentle, but very important contrast in this verse. The author carefully described David's actions, “David was playing the harp WITH HIS HANDS.” We must assert that the addition of the words “with his

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hands” adds essentially nothing to our understanding of David’s actions. The only way most people can play the harp is with their hands. These three words could be omitted and we would still understand what David was doing. The inclusion of these words serves a different purpose. In the contrast, Saul has a spear in his hands to kill David. David, contrariwise, used his hands in an attempt to soothe and comfort the king.

Imagine yourself in David’s situation. The king is out of control, in a fit of rage, for which there is no possible solution. You have been brought to the king’s court to soothe his out of control feelings when nothing, including your beautiful music can help, but you are still expected to produce results. Saul wants to be soothed, but you seem to be the source of his rage. Family and staff pray you will be effective because their lives are at stake. Your own life is at stake.

*And Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice. I Samuel 18:11*

At this point, the object of Saul’s rage is painfully clear. The author reported Saul’s deepest feelings, “I will pin David to the wall.” These kinds of feelings tend to fester. As they get worse, the seemingly offended party tends to ascribe even more tragic motives to the one who seems to be rising above him. The confrontation finally came in the form of attempted murder. Having failed in this attempt once, Saul tried again. Saul should have known that the second attempt would be more difficult than the first because he had lost the element of surprise. David, knowing that his life was in danger, would be far more cautious than he had been. One might wonder why David would remain in the throne room when the king was trying to kill him. One does not just get up and run out of the king’s presence without being properly dismissed.

The difficult thing for David was that this was all false. There was nothing the endangered person could do to right the relationship. This is because he did nothing to create the problem. The problem lay within Saul and David had no access to the creation of the problem.

*Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. I Samuel 18:12*

This is really the issue that developed between Saul and David. The king could clearly remember what it was like when the LORD was with him. Battles were won. He enjoyed the affirmation of the people as he had never known it before. The hopes and aspirations of Israel were being realized on every hand. That was then: this was now. The Lord had been with Saul. Through Saul’s disobedience and unwillingness to place his trust in God rather than himself, the LORD was no longer with Saul. Victories were no longer easy and certain. The affirmation of the people was no longer crisp and dependable.

Saul could see, however, that the LORD was with David as He had been with Saul. A sense of desperation develops when the presence of the LORD with its many blessings, departs. A deep fear stirs within the man who knows that the LORD is no longer with him, but sees conclusive evidence that the LORD is with his adversaries. As the fear increases and matures, it burns in white-hot anger.

It appeared to Saul that David was systematically trying to quietly take his throne away from him. That was not true. That, however, was Saul’s perception. Perceptions can often be more damaging than truth.

*Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. I Samuel 18:13*

Saul’s perception moved him to action. He was determined to do everything possible to thwart what he thought of as David’s evil designs. Exposure is very often the key to political prosperity. The first thing Saul did was to remove David “from his presence.” This means that David was barred from the palace. This move accomplished at least three things:

Saul did not have to see David and be distracted by him on a daily basis.

This took visibility in the halls of power away from David. This visibility was essential for the survival of any would be leader.

## SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID

This would be seen as a demotion for David. Political reversals have a dilatory effect upon the aspirations of aggressive political figures.

Saul also demoted David in the military command. In 18:5, you read these words:

*So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 1 Samuel 18:5*

In 18:13, however, David was demoted to being the commander of 1,000 troops. This was such a great demotion that few people who experienced this were emotionally able to continue in the service of their country. This is almost always politically fatal.

Saul was walking a tight-rope. Demoting an opponent is a bit like adding salt to soup. Just the right amount does wonders for the taste. Too much salt, however, destroys the soup altogether. Had Saul simply removed David from the military service, the king would have destroyed himself and made David a rallying point of the people. Sympathy for an abused leader is swift and powerful. By simply demoting David to a much lesser place of responsibility, Saul possibly could create the image of failure for David that he wanted to see.

*And David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him. 1 Samuel 18:14*

There is a strong contrast between Saul and David in this paragraph.

SAUL	DAVID
The LORD was not with Saul – v. 12	LORD was with David – 12
Saul is angry – 12	David was not angry
Saul is afraid of David – 12	David was not afraid
Saul undercut David <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Barred David from palace – 13</li> <li>b. Demoted him to command 1,000 troops – 13</li> </ul>	He just went about his work – 13
Saul suffered public relations defeat – v. 7	David was handed public relations coupe – 18:7
Suffered serious losses.	Prospered greatly – 15
Saul dreaded David	No reaction to Saul's anger
Second place in eyes of Israel v. 7	All Israel and Judah loved David – 16
Greatly disturbed	David at peace – 116

The harder Saul worked to destroy David, the more successful and prosperous he became. The problem was, Saul worked the wrong way for the wrong reasons. David prospered in everything he did. Saul thought David prospered because he worked hard to remove Saul as king. David knew the truth was he prospered because God was with him.

*When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. 1 Samuel 18:15*

Observe that the cause of Saul's dread was that David "prospered greatly." This is envy and jealousy in its most fearful expression. This is a very sad commentary on Saul. He was the king, while David was a very young man that virtually no one knew. Saul had power; David was powerless under Saul's control. In spite of the fact that most everyone knew Saul and very few people knew David, still when "Saul say that he (David) was prospering greatly, he dreaded him." How sad!

The word translated "dreaded" is "meod" (מְּדָד). This word describes "aggravated vehemence." It is a harsh reaction because of hatred. We would call this vitriolic despising. It is one of the strongest words for active hatred in that language. David increased in prospering while Saul increased in violent hatred that would erupt in destructive ways. This is a prescription for disaster.

*But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them. 1 Samuel 18:16*

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The spotlight shifts again. Observe that the verse begins with the word “but.” As always, this signals a strong contrast. Saul is pictured as torn with envy and jealousy. David, on the other hand, experiences Israel’s love and is at peace.

The author said, “he went out and came in before them.” This phrase originated in a walled city. When the city was in danger, the gates were closed and barred. No one could go in or out. During peaceful times, the gates are left open and people can go in and out without fear. The author was pointing to this. David was the center around which the controversy swirled. He went about his life seemingly oblivious to what was happening because he was not participating in this unfortunate situation. The controversy was about him, but he was not a participant in it. The fact that David could continue his life oblivious to the consternation of the king is in itself an additional source of irritation for Saul.

### I Samuel 18:17-21 – Saul Plotted To Destroy David – In Marriage And War

*Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles." For Saul thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." I Samuel 18:17*

There is a high level of desperation evident in this verse. Saul’s plan to destroy David was clear evidence of this. Look at the quality, or its lack, of Saul’s plan.

There is **deception**. He pretends to give David a gift – his older daughter, Merab. This was not a gift. David earned his bride when he killed Goliath.

There is **murderous intent**. Saul wanted to give David a wife, but urged him to fight the Philistines as before. The last part of the verse exposes his intent that this would result in David’s death.

There is a form of **blasphemy**. Saul spoke of, “the LORD’S battles.” He was speaking of the Philistines. The text makes it clear that it is motivational cover for Saul’s desire for the murder of David without becoming personally involved. It is interesting that later on David would try to use the same ploy to cover his evil involvement with Bathsheba.

Observe that it was Saul who approached David, not the other way around. Normally, it was the man or his representative, who approached the father of the intended bride to begin negotiations for a bride.

*But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?" I Samuel 18:18*

On a number of occasions, the humility of David is quite obvious. This is a case in point. Keep in mind that David was unaware of Saul’s design. This proposed marriage though it was supposed to be part of David’s gift for killing Goliath was really intended to bring about his own death.

The verse begins with the word “but” indicating a contrast between Saul’s motive and David’s sense of unworthiness. David offered three reasons why he should not be married to the king’s daughter.

1. **“Who am I?”** The king’s daughter deserves a husband who already has established status in the kingdom. I do not qualify.
2. **“What is my life?”** Again, the king’s daughter deserves a husband who has both position and holdings to enable her to maintain the lifestyle she had enjoyed in her home. I don’t have that.”
3. **“(Who is) my father’s family in Israel?”** In that culture, one of the reasons for arranged marriages was so that sons and daughters did not marry beneath their family’s position. David was saying, ‘my family could not qualify to marry the daughter of the king. We have neither the position nor the holdings to justify such an arrangement.’”

It is true that no one would ever expect that someone from Jesse’s family would marry royalty. David often reflected on the fact that he was the youngest son in his family. Thus, he would hardly qualify as a “good husband” even for someone who was his own financial and social equal. Given all of this, David saw no way that he was a candidate to be the king’s son-in-law. This, in part, grows out of the fact that he felt that what he did to Goliath was nothing worthy of merit. In fact, it did just that. There is historic precedent for David.

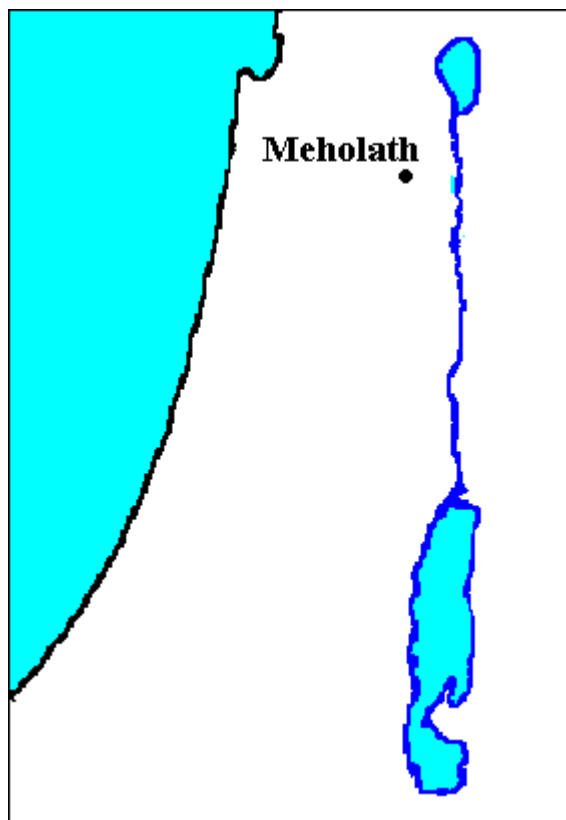


## SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID

When Caleb was embroiled in the heat of a failing battle, he promised the hand of his daughter to the man who could save the day for his forces. The difference was that Caleb kept his promise, Saul did not.

*So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife. I Samuel 18:19*

This particular verse does not really show Saul's true colors. Saul offered his older daughter, Merab, to David, but David declined. By the way, this was a very risky choice that David made. In most instances, it was not wise to refuse the offer of a king. This was particularly true when the offer was the king's daughter. Normally, it was not healthy to tell a king you do not want to be related to him. It is possible that David was keenly aware of the scheming of Saul and wanted to distance himself from him. We have no evidence to base this statement upon.



Saul finally gave his oldest daughter to Adriel. He is mentioned only twice in Scripture and both of these references deal with his marriage to Merab. Very little is known of Adriel. We know that he was a Meholathite. This is a city in the Jordan River Valley near Beth Shean. You can see the probable location on this map.

Notice that the author reported, "Saul's daughter, who should have been given to David." This statement causes one to wonder what else happened when Saul offered Merab to David. Certainly, if Saul really wanted David to be his son-in-law, David would have had to acquiesce. One wonders if Saul was rebuffed by David's humility and withdrew the offer.

It is interesting to observe what Saul did. Saul offered his daughter to David, a young man who was held in highest esteem by the whole population. Saul ended up giving this daughter to a man who never distinguished himself in any way. By the way, this could have dealt a death-blow to David's ego and opened the door for him to make some terrible errors in his work as well as his relationships with Saul.

*Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. I Samuel 18:20*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

There is no explanation concerning why Michal loved David when her father hated him so much. We can only conjecture. There is a second surprise in this verse. Saul despised David and wanted to kill him. Now, he is quite agreeable to offer to marry his daughter to David. One needs to be wary when an enemy is too quickly agreeable. Things that appear too good to be true, usually are. We must be aware that the groom's father was expected to initiate the negotiations for a wedding. Here the potential bride's father is going to initiate the proceedings. It would be done, however, through a servant. Ultimately the two fathers were to meet face to face for these negotiations.

*And Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today." I Samuel 18:21*

Despite the things being said, Saul was still looking for ways to destroy David without being seen as being personally involved. Though the text does not mention it, Saul certainly knew his daughter very well. It appears that he was planning that her destructive ways would have a destructive effect on David. We know for certain that this was quite apparent later in their married life, as we will see in II Samuel.

Saul had a plan that he had not yet revealed to David. First, he would ask David to be his son-in-law. Notice how Saul put the question to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today." There is great effective pressure in this statement.

- a. This is an announcement, not a question to be answered.
- b. The use of the words, "for a second time," are very telling.

It is a way of saying, 'You rejected my offer the first time. Here is an opportunity to correct your error and you will take it if you know what is good for you.'

### **I Samuel 18:22-30 – David Married Michal: Saul's Trap Failed**

*Then Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David secretly, saying, 'Behold, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'" I Samuel 18:22*

One wonders why Saul had to have a servant speak to David secretly. This is an issue that their culture required the potential bride's father to handle personally. It was not acceptable for anyone to deal with this issue on his behalf. One of the characteristics of evil is the need to be secret. One reason would be that he failed to keep his word on a previous marriage agreement with David.

Unfortunately, Saul's major concern in these marriage negotiations was not the welfare of his daughter. There were two considerations that Saul had to accomplish in these negotiations. Everything else was less important at this point.

It had to rid Saul of the problem of David.

It had to be done in such a way that the people would not think Saul was responsible for the tragic end of David.

If you look carefully at this verse, Saul urged his servant to tell David two lies. He was to say, "The king delights in you and all his servants love you." We are not told of the servant's love for David, but the text is very clear that Saul had an irrepressible hatred for David. It was Saul's sincere hope that the relationship between David and Michal would accomplish this goal for him.

Imagine what David would think when the servant said that the king delighted in him when Saul had tried twice to kill him. The way this is worded, David would be asking for the hand of Saul's daughter. In this way, it could be pointed out that that David had initiated this whole scenario. This would totally deflect responsibility away from Saul if David died.

*So Saul's servants spoke these words to David. But David said, "Is it trivial in your sight to become the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?" I Samuel 18:23*

## SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID

The servant of Saul dealt with one issue while David dealt with a totally different one. The text is silent about why David took this position. Was it because he was awed by the greatness of the honor of becoming the son-in-law of the king? One doubts this seriously. Is it because David's life had already been threatened twice and he had great difficulty believing that this was a true invitation from the king.

The servant of Saul did exactly as he was told. This means, however, that Saul's intended deception was already known or would be almost immediately by this servant. In Saul's attempt to deceive David, he betrayed his real character to another person – the servant.

David did not deal with the suggestion on the surface. David knew his position in society. Like anyone else in his situation, he knew his place and he stayed in it. Jesse was a man of some means. We know that he had servants and abundance. This was really nothing in comparison to the king and those in high places. David knew that in comparison to the king, his father was an extremely poor man.

Not only did David view himself as poor, but also as being of no reputation. He spoke of himself as being "lightly esteemed." This was not really true, but it was, in fact, his view of his station.

*And the servants of Saul reported to him according to these words which David spoke.  
I Samuel 18:24*

Saul's servant faithfully reported to Saul all that David did. David did not see his actions as rejecting the offer of a king. David viewed this thing as a ridiculous suggestion from a servant. You will realize that there was no direct response from Saul. We will be able to tell from Saul's actions and statements how he reacted to David's response.

One wonders what Saul felt when the report was given to him by his servant. Saul had not issued a command, so one could not fault David for disobedience. Saul wanted David to jump at the chance to marry the king's daughter and that did not happen.

*Saul then said, "Thus you shall say to David, 'The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. I Samuel 18:25*

In reality, Saul owed David a wife. He had promised this to the one who killed Goliath. Saul assumed that when David refused the daughter first offered him this ended the agreement. One can understand Saul's thinking. The other side of this is the fact that there was nothing in the original offer that dealt with the possibility that the successful warrior might not want to marry at this time or that particular daughter. It should at least have been open to negotiation as new conditions that needed to be considered and resolved.

The offer the servant brought to David from the king was very carefully worded. If we assume that Saul acted appropriately, (which we do not,) the offer is deceptive. The servant said that Saul, "Does not desire any dowry." He then immediately identified the dowry the king wanted. – "...EXCEPT a hundred foreskins of the Philistines to take vengeance on the king's enemies." In this very dowry statement, there is an attempt to deceive. The servant said, "To take vengeance on the king's enemies." There is no doubt the king wanted to take vengeance upon his enemies. The closing sentence of this verse, however, identifies Saul's real motives.

The author gives us a glimpse into the motives of Saul. We must keep in mind, that the dowry for the king's daughter was immense and non-negotiable. One either met the conditions or he did not. Saul wanted it to appear that he was making a huge exception. Saul knew that this was something that David could do. Saul was counting on the risk to cost David his life without casting any blame on Saul. Certainly, David would have known that Saul's daughter loved him. Again, to be the son-in-law of the king was a great honor. This time, however, it was really not as great an honor as it appeared to be.

Notice the way this offer is worded. The text reads, "Saul planned to MAKE David fall by the hand of the Philistines." Saul was not trusting to luck. He wanted to make sure that David was dead. This sounds a great deal like what we will encounter in the story of Uriah in II Samuel.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

*When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired I Samuel 18:26*

This verse represents a shift in David's thinking. Initially, David sounded appalled to think that a person like himself could be the son-in-law of the king. We also have the situation where David had to watch carefully because Saul had twice tried to murder him. It appears to mean David had no idea that Saul was setting a new trap for him. Now, in this verse, his attitude has changed. The author declared that the offer pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. The text makes no effort to explain this change.

Notice that the author said, "before the days had expired, David rose up..." This sounds as though he was given a certain number of days in which to accomplish this task. The text does not confirm this, but it would fit the plan perfectly. The pressure of time could make David more concerned about the time than about his life. It could easily cause him to take risks he would normally avoid.

*David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife. I Samuel 18:27*

It appears that David was now more than eager to accomplish the necessary conditions. He took his men and killed twice as many Philistines as required. There could be no doubt that David was committed to fulfill his master's wishes.

Put yourself in Saul's position. He negated a previous agreement with David. His own reputation was now on the line. David had far exceeded the requirement. There was little that Saul could do except keep his promise. The tragedy for Saul was that the purpose of this agreement was to get rid of David. Rather than accomplish that goal, David again distinguished himself in battle and instead of getting rid of David, it placed him right in Saul's own family. Saul got rid of his daughter, but he did not get rid of David. This was a great loss for a king. He needed many sons to be princes and heirs to the throne. He needed daughters to make agreements with other nations. Now he had neither.

*When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, I Samuel 18:28*

This sounds like God added insult to injury for Saul. The LORD was with David. It was equally clear that the LORD was not with Saul. It was an awkward situation for the king. Words fail to describe the depth of Saul's hatred of David. At the same time, it is equally difficult to describe completely how much Michal loved David. In a situation where Saul was supposed to experience great victory and relief, he failed miserably. However, in a situation where David was supposed to lose his life, he lived and gained a wife who really loved him. The LORD certainly was with David.

*Then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually. I Samuel 18:29*

The net result of Saul's dark design to rid himself of David was that he became "even more afraid of David." This had to be devastating for the king. In the past, he simply loathed David. He knew he could find a way to get rid of this disturbing one. Kings could and did this sort of thing often. Now, however, Saul was frightened of the person who had no claim to fame except what the LORD had given him.

Put yourself in Saul's place again. God had been with you and gave you victory over every foe. You disobeyed His command and now the LORD was no longer with you and it was painfully obvious. To make matters worse, though the LORD was no longer with you, he was now with your nemesis and you are worried that this "nobody" will take your throne away from you. The way this verse is written, it is clear that Saul's view of David as a despised enemy is even greater and more threatening than ever before. It became the pre-occupation of Saul's reign. Whenever this happens, the kingdom suffers severely. It certainly did.

## SAUL ATTEMPTED TO TRAP DAVID

*Then the commanders of the Philistines went out to battle, and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So his name was highly esteemed. I Samuel 18:30*

Following David's defeat of Goliath, the Philistines went home and left Israel alone for a prolonged period of time. For some reason, the Philistines experienced a resurgence in their desire to destroy Israel. In part, at least, it must have been that they could not handle the fact that they had been defeated and that by a very young boy. For whatever reason, they began their attacks again. This, of course, would necessitate the army of Israel going out to do battle with them again.

Though David was once over all the army of Israel, he was now just the captain of 1,000 men involved in the battle. With each attack, David served bravely and wisely and distinguished himself more than all the leaders of Israel. As before, each of these brilliant encounters only increased his popularity among his men and the people. In the midst of Saul's tunnel vision to destroy David, the young warrior became more and more the man of the hour. Nothing could have disturbed Saul more than this. Though he was king, he was being upstaged by a young warrior who was effortlessly taking the limelight away from Saul. His kingdom was slowly slipping away from him. He was helpless to stop the flood tide.

## CONCLUSION

There are a host of ideas presented in this chapter. There is a contrast of two ideas that surface repeatedly throughout these 30 verses. The contrasting ideas are as follows:

This is what happens when the LORD is with a person.

This is what happens when the LORD is NOT with a person.

When I think of the wonderful things Saul was able to accomplish for Israel because "God was with him," it is exciting to say the least. Just reflecting on the wonderful way God worked in David's life because God was with him is breath-taking. By the same token, it is shocking to see the litany of tragedies that took place in Saul's life when because of his disobedience God was no longer with him.

This is a startling lesson on the importance of obedience. It was a reminder I needed to hear. What about your life? As you read through this chapter, what reflecting were you able to do concerning your own obedience? Was it more like David? Could it have been more like that of Saul?



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 19

### SAUL AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO KILL DAVID – I SAMUEL 19:1 – 24

1. There are only three paragraphs in the nineteenth chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

19:1-7	
19:8-17	
19:18-24	

2. In I Samuel 19:1-7, Jonathan confronted Saul about sin – killing David.
- A. Think carefully about Saul's instructions in 19:1.
    - 1. What assumptions has Saul made in issuing these instructions?
    - 2. There is a strong contrast in this verse. What are the two sides of this contrast?
  - B. In 19:2, the author presented a contrast between 19:1 and 19:2. As you study this contrast, what do you learn?
  - C. In 19:3, Jonathan gave David a series of instructions.
    - a. What is the tone of these instructions?
    - b. Compare/contrast the instructions in 19:1 and those in 19:3. What did you learn?
  - D. In 19:4, 5, Jonathan made a logical presentation to Saul about David.
    - 1. How would you describe Jonathan's frame of mind when he said this?
    - 2. What reasons did Jonathan give his father for the exhortations he made?
    - 3. If you were Saul, how would you feel hearing this from your son?
  - E. In 19:6, Saul responded to Jonathan's exhortations.
    - 1. The author said that "Saul vowed." What does this mean?
    - 2. What did Saul vow to his son?
    - 3. What was added to Saul's vow when he said, "as the LORD lives"?
  - F. In 19:7, Jonathan reported the previous events to David.
    - 1. On the basis of this verse, how did Jonathan respond to the vow of his father?
3. In I Samuel 19:8-17, Michal deceived her father.
- A. In 19:8, the scene shifts to a battle with the Philistines.
    - 1. How does this verse picture David?
    - 2. What does this say about David in view of the content of 19:1-7?
  - B. In 19:9, the author is talking about Saul.
    - 1. Read 19:8, 9 carefully.
      - a. What is contrasted?
      - b. What is the message in each of these verses?
    - 2. There is another contrast in 19:9.
      - a. What two things are contrasted?
      - b. What do you learn from this?
      - c. If you were David, in this verse, how would you feel?
  - C. In 19:10, Saul attempted to murder David.
    - 1. Compare 19:10 with 19:6. What have you learned?
    - 2. Now compare 19:9 and 10 with 16:13 and 14. What is the relationship between the two passages?
  - D. In 19:11, Saul tried again to find David.
    - 1. How would you say Michal gained the information she shared with David?
    - 2. Try to explain why, in view of recent events, David fled to his house.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- E. In 19:12, Michal, at great personal risk, assisted David in escaping from the people who would kill him. What reasons can you find for Michal to do this?
  - F. In 19:13, Michal again attempted to protect David.
    - 1. How did she do this?
    - 2. There is a shocking statement in this verse. What is it?
    - 3. How can you explain this surprising fact?
  - G. In 19:14, Michal again protected David
    - 1. What did she do?
    - 2. How would this protect David?
  - H. In 19:15, Saul changed his tactic, but not his intended purpose
    - 1. What is his new tactic?
    - 2. Why do you think he changed his tactic?
  - I. In 19:16, Saul's servants discovered a deception.
    - 1. How would this help David?
    - 2. In what way would this particular deception help?
  - J. In 19:17, Saul confronted Michal with her deception.
    - 1. What was Saul saying to Michal?
    - 2. Is there any possible justification for what she had done?
    - 3. How did she respond to Saul? Why?
4. In I Samuel 19:18-24, Saul's several attempts to kill David had failed.
- A. In 19:18, David fled to Samuel
    - 1. How would this benefit David?
    - 2. What good was it for David to be with Samuel?
    - 3. In what way would it be better to be in Naioth than in Ramah?
  - B. In 19:19, 20, Saul sent soldiers to take David captive.
    - 1. What did Saul's men discover when they arrived?
    - 2. What happened?
    - 3. Put yourself in the place of Saul. How would you feel when you received a report like this?
  - C. In 19:21, the author described Saul's reaction to the report of 19:20.
    - 1. What would prompt Saul to do this?
    - 2. Again, why would he think a third mission would do any better than the two previous missions?
  - D. In 19:22, 23, Saul realized his plan had failed three times.
    - 1. Put yourself in Saul's position.
    - 2. He was prophesying more than the three groups he had sent to kill David.
    - 3. How would you feel?
  - E. In 19:24, there appears to be an unusual report. How would you explain this verse?
5. Review the teachings of this chapter.
- A. What is the major teaching of this passage?
  - B. What message does this present for your life and ministry?



## LESSON 19

### SAUL AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO KILL DAVID – I SAMUEL 19:1 – 24

There are only three paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 19. You will find a summary of each paragraph on the following table.

19:1-7	Jonathan Confronts Saul About Sin – Killing David
19:8-17	Michal Deceives Saul: Protects David: Lies About Him
19:18-24	Saul's Plans Frustrated: Servants Attempt To Murder David: Prophecy Instead

#### I Samuel 19:1-7 – Jonathan Confronts Saul About Sin – Killing David

*Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. I Samuel 19:1*

This situation has been in the offing from the time David killed Goliath. Now Saul and his son Jonathan were in confrontation over David. This tension was ignited because Saul instructed Jonathan to kill David. The problem here is simple: Saul saw David as an enemy. Jonathan, on the other hand, viewed David as his best friend. There is no possible way that Saul would have been unaware of the very close friendship between Jonathan and David. This had to be a situation that Saul designed to accomplish two things: 1. To get rid of David. 2. To force Jonathan to declare his allegiance either for his father or for his best friend, David. One can understand why Saul would expect Jonathan to stand with him. After all, Jonathan was the heir-apparent to the throne. If David was a threat to Saul's throne, he was an even greater threat to Jonathan's hopes of reigning in Israel.

Observe, that even the servants were instructed to kill David. It appears that this was a collateral consideration. Even if Jonathan refused to kill David, the servants would feel the pressure to obey the king's command and kill David.

Saul's character was beginning to show itself to a growing circle of people around him. At the same time, there was no way that Jonathan was going to betray his changeless covenant with David in order to obey his father's evil command. Now, the allegiance of all concerned would be clearly seen.

*So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself. I Samuel 19:2*

The lines of confrontation were drawn. Jonathan would have to display his allegiance before his father and all the servants, or would he? Saul had made another miscalculation. Instead of obeying Saul's instruction to kill David, Jonathan rather went to tell David that Saul was seeking to kill him. Jonathan urged David to be on his guard the following morning when the murder was to be carried out. Because of this, Jonathan urged David to hide.

This created a real problem for David. His responsibilities required that he be in an open area where he would be vulnerable to the plans of Saul.

*And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I shall tell you." I Samuel 19:3*

Jonathan designed a plan to protect David and provide him with the latest information. He would talk with Saul about David. This took real courage because Jonathan knew that Saul hated David with a passion. Jonathan promised to tell David what his father said about him.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

*Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. I Samuel 19:4*

This is a shocking turn of events. Jonathan took his life in his hands and spoke well of David in the presence of Saul. Everybody knew that Saul did not want to hear anything good about David. Not only did Jonathan speak well of David, he spoke of Saul's plans to kill David "a sin." This goes far beyond the limits of normal courage.

Jonathan also reminded his father that David had done him no harm. This took great courage. Jonathan also reminded Saul that David had done only good things for Saul. There was no way for Saul to explain why it was appropriate for him to seek to kill David in the light of what Jonathan had said. Jonathan had a gracious spirit toward his father, but he was asking penetrating questions. He wanted his father to do the right thing even though Saul was very bitter against David.

*For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, by putting David to death without a cause?" I Samuel 19:5*

At great personal risk, Jonathan reminded Saul that David had risked his life and killed Goliath when no one else was even willing to attempt to defeat the giant. Notice that he also reminded his father that the LORD brought a great deliverance for all Israel out of this encounter. The result of this affirmation was not lost on Saul. It meant that if Saul continued to seek to kill David, he was standing against the LORD himself. This was a terrible indictment, but it was true. Jonathan reminded Saul that he had rejoiced when David killed Goliath. If this was not enough, Jonathan also reminded Saul that to kill an innocent man was a sin against innocent blood. Jonathan risked one more accusation of his father. He said that his efforts to kill David were without a cause. This was about as great a denunciation as he could possibly bring against his father the king. Jonathan may have been the king's son, but he was not beyond the pale of punishment if the king was angry with him. The text does not identify Saul's feelings, but it stands to reason that he was at least shocked if not tremblingly furious. He would not be the first king's son to be killed by his enraged father.

*And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." I Samuel 19:6*

This is a surprising turn of events. There is absolutely no doubt that Saul and Jonathan were severely at odds over the life of David. Jonathan thought that Saul should be grateful to David for the excellent service he had rendered. On the other hand, Saul thought that David should be put to death for insubordination.

Surprisingly, Saul vowed to Jonathan that David would not be put to death. Observe the way Saul framed his oath, "As the LORD lives." Because they saw God as eternal, such an oath could never be broken. Observe also that Saul did not promise that David would not die. He only promised that David would not be put to death.

This put Jonathan on the spot. This was his father talking about his best friend. Jonathan had made a convincing argument and when Saul made his oath, it should have meant that he would do nothing to harm David. Saul, however, did not say that. Knowing how much Saul hated David, Jonathan should have known that it would be surprising if Saul ever changed his mind about this decision. As we have seen several times, things that seem too good to be true, probably are.

*Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly. I Samuel 19:7*

One can understand why Jonathan became a bit gullible. After all, this was his father. Jonathan engaged in this conversation with his father to find out what David should anticipate from the king. As soon as possi-

## SAUL AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO KILL DAVID

ble, Jonathan called David to give him the information. Because it appeared that all was safe, Jonathan brought David to his father. This was an important move. It would immediately be clear that Jonathan was on David's side and Saul would not be able to entrust him with delicate information pertinent to this case any longer. It is hard to overestimate the importance and the danger of this move.

Now it was as though nothing had happened. The problem with that is that there was that memory of the fact that Saul had instructed him and the servants to kill David. David served Saul as he had before this incident. One wonders if David really felt that safe as he served the man who had three times attempted to put him to death. It had to be an uneasy truce. David knew that Saul could change his mind at any moment. Saul knew that it was his intention to use this as a way to get David to let down his guard. As far as Saul was concerned, despite his oath to Jonathan, nothing had changed. He would continue to look for a more secret way to get rid of David.

### **I Samuel 19:8-17 – Michal Deceived Saul: Protected David: Lies About Him**

*When there was war again, David went out and fought with the Philistines, and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled before him. I Samuel 19:8*

There is a serious contrast that runs throughout this chapter. Saul is working very hard to find a way to kill David and failing miserably. David, on the other hand, is simply going about his life as usual. The result, however, was that David continued to impress people with his great skill and valor. He was particularly successful in defeating the Philistines. This is interesting because the Philistines were the fiercest fighters in the world of that day. In everything that he did, God was prospering David. Though this is very obvious in the story, it is amazing that Saul just does not seem to figure out what God is doing. That, of course, is the whole crux of the problem that causes him to fail and keep on failing.

*Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. I Samuel 19:9*

The contrast mentioned earlier is present here as well. The Spirit of God was with David making him very successful. The author mentioned that "There was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul". We have dealt with this issue previously so we will not go into that issue again. Suffice it to say that God does not use evil spirits to accomplish holy works.

It is appropriate to ask the question, Why would Saul have the spear in his hand? It is clear that Saul was as determined to kill David as he had ever been, no matter what oath he had taken with his son.

There is a contrast in this verse. Saul has a lethal weapon in his hands and he intends to use it to destroy David. At the same time, David was playing his harp with his hands and using this gift to bring comfort to a leader who was beside himself.

Saul was constantly losing the trust of his people. It is not surprising when he takes an oath and then personally violates that oath in order to do what he said would never happen. Look at the picture. Saul is sitting in his house holding his spear. David had seen this more than once in the past. If I were David, I would play nervously at best in a situation like this. At the least, I would be watching very closely.

*And Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. I Samuel 19:10*

The author leaves no doubt that Saul intended to take the life of David. This is interesting since he had taken a vow that David would not be killed. To increase the surprise, the oath was taken with his own son, Jonathan. As happened on several occasions, Saul attempted to kill David with his spear and David slipped away and avoided Saul's evil intent.

David fled safely from Saul, but he went to his own home. The author does not comment on this move. One wonders why he would not comment on this. If David is fleeing for his life, his own home would be one of the first places Saul would send people to try to find him. This may be one more expression of what David

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

often did – Saul was trying to murder David; David went on with his life as normally as possible. If David continued with this plan, however, he was going to be killed because Saul was determined to rid himself of this frustration. Everyone seems to be convinced of this except David.

*Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death." I Samuel 19:11*

To the surprise of no one, Saul sent his spies to watch at David's house. This is the first place that they would expect him to go. It is the last place he should have gone if he realized the danger of his situation. The intent of Saul is obvious. He was going to catch David when he left his home and put him to death.

Michal seems to have taken these threats more seriously than David did. She urged him to flee because she knew what her father was doing. In part, she realized what was in process because she knew her father. She had studied his actions for a lifetime. She knew that he would stop at nothing to kill his enemies.

*So Michal let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and escaped. I Samuel 19:12*

There is no doubt of Michal's loyalty at this point. She urged David to flee. She helped him by letting him down through a window in their mansion. David was able to elude the spies who were watching his house. It would not be a fun experience to be the one who had to try to explain to their officers how they let David slip through their fingers.

There is an irony here. Saul gave Michal to David in order to let her be a snare for David. She turned out to be the one who spared David's life when her father so desperately wanted to see David dead.

*And Michal took the household idol and laid it on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with clothes. I Samuel 19:13*

There is a shock in this verse. One of the idols of the idolaters of that day was the goat. David worshipped the LORD and would have nothing to do with idols. It is clear that the idolatry of Saul's household carried over into his daughters married life. Not only did Michal have an idol, it was life-sized. One wonders why David would allow this to happen in his own home. This idol would not fit into any little house of that day. This means that they had a huge home at the expense of daddy.

This is an ancient ploy. Put something in bed to make it look like the person is there when they are really fleeing as fast as they can. The intent of this is to give the person a head start in case they would be followed. We need to point out that Michal was taking a serious risk in supporting her husband against the wishes of her very angry father. At least at this point, her total allegiance was with her husband, David.

*When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." I Samuel 19:14*

This verse indicates the extremes to which Saul was willing to go to vent his wrath on David. This verse gives one an insight into the growing exasperation of Saul as he repeatedly failed to get rid of his enemy. Look back at the attempts on David's life. Sometimes, Saul attempted to kill David himself. At other times, he sends others to do it so that he would not be directly involved because David was highly respected among the people of Israel. On other occasions, Saul set David up so that he could bring about his own death. The thing is that Saul goes back and forth between these options. It indicates frustration and lack of a cohesive plan. He is frantically grasping at straws trying to kill the man who would one day take his throne. Now Saul is taking a more direct attack. He sent messengers to take David from his home. Michal told the men who came for David that he was sick. Again, this was an attempt to give David more time to distance himself from those who might chase him down. Michal was taking even greater risks by working actively against her father who was trying to kill her husband. If her father got angry enough or frustrated enough, she would not be the first child of a king that was killed by the king and his men. She was definitely taking a serious risk in order to protect her husband and give him time to escape.

## SAUL AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO KILL DAVID

Also, Michal was committing herself in a game that had very high stakes. If David was found and put to death, she would be at the mercy of her father. It is doubtful if there would be much mercy there. Saul had already chided her for siding with his enemy.

*Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed, that I may put him to death." I Samuel 19:15*

The text does not say, but Saul must have gotten the impression that David was not in his home. This is a good reason to send his people to "see David." The way this is written suggests the possibility that they would go and ask to see him and then take him to the palace.

Desperation is raising its ugly head. Saul has had to change his plan again. He wants them to bring David to him and he will kill David himself. This plan was fraught with danger for Saul. David was too popular to be eliminated as an enemy of the king. This would probably cause an uprising against the king. Saul's frustration has caused him to be willing to take that risk and bridge that possibility. Saul was willing to kill David himself while the young warrior was on his sickbed. This would certainly be viewed as an act of cowardice. No one in the realm would forget this cowardly act.

*When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol was on the bed with the quilt of goats' hair at its head. I Samuel 19:16*

One suspects that the messengers of Saul were not surprised to see that David was missing. This is at least part of the reason that they wanted to see him for themselves. When they went into the house, they found the idol and the goat's hair quilt in the bed instead of David. In some situations, this would be seen as a surprise. In that time and culture, this kind of intrigue was an everyday occurrence in the courts of the world. The one surprising thing, at this point, is that Michal was willing to play out this scheme of deception as long as she did. Granted, she was the daughter of the king, but that did not make her immune from his dangerous fits of rage.

*So Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And Michal said to Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I put you to death?'" I Samuel 19:17*

Saul was either not thinking clearly or his self-preoccupation blinded him. He had deceived his daughter and others about David. Now he is disturbed because his daughter was involved in the same way as he was. He apparently forgot or did not want to remember that once she was married, she was no longer a member of his family. She literally owed her allegiance to her new family and husband – David.

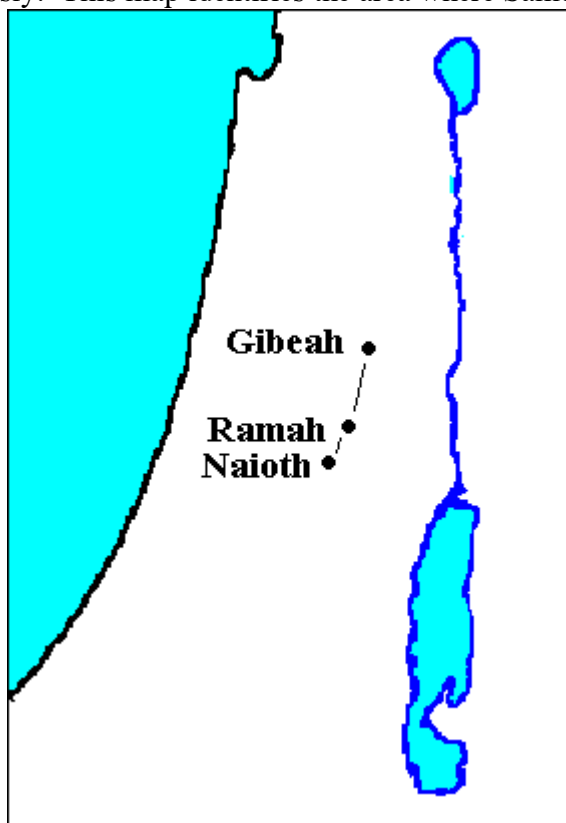
Observe the response of Michal. She actually told a lie to her father. Lies were not a new experience in the household of Saul. She said David had threatened her life. This was usually a foolproof excuse for her. A woman would be excused for almost anything if she were threatened by a man. His apparent threat was responsible for the deception of her father. This would probably exonerate her, but it would add to Saul's fury with David. It would give Saul more incentive to want to kill his son-in-law.

### **I Samuel 19:18-24–Saul's Plans Frustrated: Servants Attempt to Murder David: Prophecy Instead**

*Now David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. I Samuel 19:18*

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David was not fleeing aimlessly. This map identifies the area where Samuel lived.



We must keep in mind that Samuel was the one who got David into this situation in the first place. Samuel was the only person in the realm that had any power with Saul. There was a second reason that David fled to this area. This was a good area to hide. There were a number of caves and mountainous areas in which he could hide and escape if the men of Saul got too close.

Observe that Samuel went to Naioth with David. The author did not explain this move. It appears that this was a safeguard for himself as well as for David. This was an even better place to hide. This was not so much an expression of fear on the part of Samuel as an anticipation of the extent to which Saul was prepared to go to rid himself of his enemy- David.

*And it was told Saul, saying, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." I Samuel 19:19*

The text does not indicate who it was who that informed Saul of the whereabouts of David. Also, the text does not indicate how that person knew where David had gone. In every kingdom, there were many people who were willing to be the eyes and ears of the king in an attempt to gain favor with their monarch. However, this was gained, Saul knew exactly where to find David. At least he thought he did. Observe, however, that the informant did not tell Saul that Samuel was with him. Again, this is not explained. It may indicate that this person gained this information prior to the time that Samuel went into hiding with David.

*Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied. I Samuel 19:20*

Suddenly, it appeared that Saul had David right where he wanted him. As so often happened, God used a simple means whereby to frustrate the enemies of His kingdom. In this instance, it not only frustrated the enemies of God, but also gave clear witness to the overwhelming power of God. That is what happened here. One wonders, who said God has no sense of humor? Saul sent men to get David and they ended up prophesying with the prophets and failed to carry out the task for which the king sent them. Observe that the Spirit of God came upon men who were bent on doing evil. The net result was that the plan of Saul was once again

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frustrated. As you look at this scene, one wonders why Saul had such a difficult time realizing that he was not going to outwit God.

It is interesting that nothing is said about what happened to these servants of Saul who came to take David captive and ended up prophesying. Certainly, Saul would not take kindly to their failure to carry out his assigned task. We do not know if these servants ever went back to Saul. That would be a frightening possibility. Saul would be in rage about this. Did these servants just leave the area and go into hiding? We will never know.

*And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. So Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. I Samuel 9:21*

This is very humorous, though Saul would not have thought so. Again, there is no explanation about whether or not this second contingent of servants went back to Saul after they prophesied. One seriously doubts that they did go back. Not a good idea at all. It would not be in the best interest of their ongoing health. This verse gives a heightened view of just how desperate Saul was in his desire to kill David.

True to form, God used a very simple plan to frustrate the evil designs of the one whom he had allowed an evil spirit to motivate. What an irony! Saul sends a contingent of servants, probably soldiers, on a mission of death. God sent these same people to prophecy with the prophets and they never disturbed David at all. When Saul sent a third group of messengers to deal with David, God invited them to join in with the prophets to prophecy as well.

It would be hard to imagine just how frustrated and angry Saul was becoming as time after time his instructions were set aside and messengers of death became people of worship.

*Then he himself went to Ramah, and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." I Samuel 19:22*

You can see the intensity of Saul's frustration mounting. He sent three contingents of men to bring David back and they all joined with the prophets in prophesying before the LORD. Now, Saul is prepared to go himself due to the fact that his trusted messengers had all failed to even reach David much less take him into custody and bring him back to Saul.

In route, Saul checked to see if he could find out where David had gone. David was in the same place where he had been since he fled. Saul is trying to be very careful and leave no stone unturned in his attempt to find David. One can easily understand since Saul had tried to get David on three occasions and each time his efforts were foiled by his trusted servants joining with the worshippers rather than carrying out the evil scheme of their king.

*And he proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah. I Samuel 19:23*

Having received information about the location of Samuel and David, Saul hastened to find them. Saul came to the place where both Samuel and David were located. It is interesting that God did not make any attempt to keep the whereabouts of Samuel and David a secret from Saul. In spite of the fact that Saul knew where they were, he would still not be able to carry out his evil designs.

Saul had to become very excited at the prospect of being at the same place where Samuel and David were. It had to seem as though this mission was as good as accomplished. Now, however, the Spirit of God came upon this evil king and enabled him to prophesy along with the others. What a sight that must have been. Saul was here on a mission of death and God changed the agenda for the day.

*And he also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" I Samuel 19:24*

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This verse sounds as though Saul was completely nude. This is the same picture you saw when David danced before the Ark of the Covenant when they brought it to Jerusalem. Everyone in that part of the world wore a basic garment that looked a bit like a floor-length tee shirt. This was their basic clothing. The king and other high officials, however, had a special garment to identify their important position. As Saul went along with the prophets, he removed his royal garment. He was now in his floor-length tee shirt. He was so impressed by the Holy Spirit that he lay down on the ground a full day and night while the prophets prophesied.

Notice that the text says, “He too prophesied before Samuel.” Saul came to find David. The truth is that at this point, Saul was as close to David as it was possible to get and did not know it because he was prophesying with the prophets. The message that stands out here is that Saul was foiled again in his attempt to kill David. The Holy Spirit was protecting David against all the designs of King Saul.

## CONCLUSION

Repeatedly in this chapter, Saul set a plan to kill David.

Jonathan and servants instructed to kill David – v. 1

Saul attempted to murder David with spear – v. 20

Soldiers sent to watch David’s house and kill him in the morning. V. 11

Soldiers came to take David to Saul to be killed. v. 14

Soldiers came into David’s house to take him to Saul to be killed – v. 15

Saul sent soldiers to Ramah to kill David – v. 20

Saul sent more soldiers to Ramah to kill David – v. 21

Saul sent a third group of soldiers to bring David back. – v. 21

Saul himself went to Naioth to kill David – v. 22

In each of these cases, God intervened and frustrated the evil plans of Saul. When a person is doing the LORD’S will, God will watch over them and nothing, no one can harm them.

We live in a time when more people are being persecuted because of their faith than at any time in the history of the church. The good news is that like David, we can dare to act in a way that others might feel is too risky, but we can have confidence that God will see His work done and His will accomplished in the world. We must ask ourselves, am I prepared to entrust my life into the protective hands of God? David did!



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 20

### DAVID COVENANTED WITH JONATHAN – I SAMUEL 20:1 – 42

1. There are six paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 20. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each of these paragraphs.

20:1-11	
20:12-16	
20:17-23	
20:24-29	
20:30-34	
20:35-42	

2. In I Samuel 20:1-11, talked at length about David's safety and his loyalty to Saul.
  - A. In 20:1, one can sense David's tension as he expressed his confusion to Jonathan. David asked three questions trying to find out why Saul wanted to kill him. In two of these questions, David used the words "iniquity" and "sin." What is the difference between the two words?
  - B. In 20:2, Jonathan seriously disagreed with his good friend, David. What was the basis of Jonathan's disagreement?
  - C. In 20:3, Jonathan's comments in 20:2 did nothing to change David's mind or relieve his fears. In view of their conversations in 20:1-3, why was David not convinced by his trusted friend?
  - D. In 20:4, Jonathan changed the subject of their conversation.
    1. What did Jonathan do?
    2. Why would he do this?
  - E. In 20:5-8, David found a way to accept Jonathan's offer as reported in verse four.
    1. How would his request be helpful?
    2. In 20:6, there is a problem that David created for Jonathan. What was it?
    3. In 20:7, David described his criteria by which to judge Saul's motives.
      - a. What was that criteria?
      - b. What other possibilities are there?
      - c. How satisfactory are these?
      - d. How can you explain David's final question in verse eight?
  - F. In 20:9, Jonathan responded. How would you describe that response?
  - G. In 20:10, 11, David and Jonathan planned their strategy. How would you describe this exchange?
3. In I Samuel 20:12-16, David and Jonathan covenanted for their mutual protection.
  - A. In 20:12, Jonathan used a conditional statement to express the positive results he anticipated finding.
    1. What was the condition?
    2. What was the anticipated promise?
  - B. In 20:13, Jonathan continued with the negative conditional statement.
    1. What was the condition?
    2. What was the promise?
  - C. In 20:14, Jonathan expressed a note of personal concern.
    1. What was it?
    2. Why would he be so concerned?
  - D. In 20:15, Jonathan had a very different concern.
    1. What was that concern?
    2. Jonathan's statement suggests a very specific implication that he has made. What does he imply?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

3. Was Jonathan's implication a solid possibility?
- E. In 20:16, the author made a summary statement. In this statement there are two vital pieces of information.
  1. With whom did Jonathan make his covenant? Why?
  2. Jonathan said, "May the LORD require 'IT' at the hands of David's enemies." What is "it"?
4. In I Samuel 20:17-23, David and Jonathan planned their safety signals.
  - A. In 20:17, Jonathan insisted that David make his vow again.
    1. To what extent would this be necessary or helpful?
    2. What is added by the statement of Jonathan's love for David?
  - B. In 20:18, the scene changed. To what does Jonathan's attention return? What does this statement mean?
  - C. In 20:19, the author made it clear that Saul could not possibly miss David's absence.
    1. What would you assume the danger level of this decision to be?
    2. What would be their options if apprehended?
  - D. In 20:20-23, Jonathan explained how he would convey the information to David.
    1. In verse 20, are there any possible problems with Jonathan's plan to inform David?
    2. In verse 20, Jonathan announced a rather risky procedure. How would you describe it?
    3. In verse 21, Jonathan described the way he would report positive results. What possible problem could this entail?
    4. In 20:22, Jonathan dealt with the negative possibility. What was he saying?
    5. In 20:23, what did Jonathan mean when he said, "Behold the LORD is between you and me forever."?
5. In I Samuel 20:24-29, Jonathan made excuses on David's behalf.
  - A. In 20:24, Saul sat down at the feast, but David was absent. In 20:25, the author described the seating arrangement at Saul's table.
    1. How would you explain the author's message when he said, "But David's place was empty"?
    2. Observe the author's report, "And the king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall." What could the author mean by this?
  - B. In 20:26, Saul obviously noticed that David was absent. His reaction seemed generous. Why would he react this way when he hated David?
  - C. In 20:27, Saul quizzed Jonathan about David's absence.
    1. If you were Jonathan, how would you feel?
    2. Observe Saul's reference to "David" in this verse. Why would he say that?
  - D. In 20:28, Jonathan answered Saul's question. How would you describe and evaluate this response?
  - E. In 20:29, Jonathan gave more detail about David's absence. What, if any, problems can you find in this report?
6. In I Samuel 20:30-34, Saul threatened Jonathan over David.
  - A. In 20:30, Saul let the full force of his anger explode.
    1. How did Saul describe Jonathan?
    2. What problem can you discover in this identification?
    3. Observe again the way Saul referred to David. Why would he say this?
  - B. In 20:31, there are two sentences in the verse. One begins with the word "for" while the other begins with the word "therefore."
    1. What do these pieces of information tell you?
    2. Think carefully about Saul's statement. What do you learn from them?
  - C. In 20:32, Jonathan responded with two very strong questions.

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 20

1. Compare and contrast these two questions.
2. How would you define Jonathan's emotional tone when he said these things?
- D. In 20:33, Saul responded to Jonathan's confrontive questions. How did he do that? In this verse, the author identified Jonathan's conclusion based on Saul's actions. How did Jonathan conclude?
  1. How did the author describe Jonathan's attitude?
  2. What did Jonathan do? Why?
  3. What could be the consequences of such an action?
  4. In this verse, the author said, "He was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him." To whom does the author refer by the word "him"?
7. In I Samuel 20:35-42, Jonathan warned David over the plotted murder.
  - A. In 20:35-38, Jonathan gave David several signs that made it clear what he had learned from his father.
    1. Read 20:35 very carefully. See if you can find the problem with Jonathan's conduct that any knowledgeable Jew would have picked up if they observed this scene.
    2. In 20:36, Jonathan gave David a signal. What was it?
    3. Again, in 20:37, Jonathan gave David another signal. Can you discover it?
    4. And again, in 20:38, Jonathan presented his obvious message to David.
      - a. What did Jonathan say?
      - b. What did he mean?
  - B. In 20:39, 40, the author described what has happened. How would you explain this?
  - C. In 20:41, three things happened.
    1. Identify the three things David did.
    2. What did these actions mean?
  - D. In 20:42, Jonathan said two things in this emotion packed statement.
    1. What did he say?
    2. What did he mean?
    3. Again in this verse, Jonathan reminded David of their covenant. He had done this several times. Compare this statement of the covenant with previous statements of this agreement, such as 20:15. What did you learn?
8. In chapter 20, the author molded several very important teachings into a carefully crafted message.
  1. What messages did you observe?
  2. What have you learned about the way you confront difficult and uncomfortable situations?



## LESSON 20

### DAVID COVENANTED WITH JONATHAN – I SAMUEL 20:1 – 42

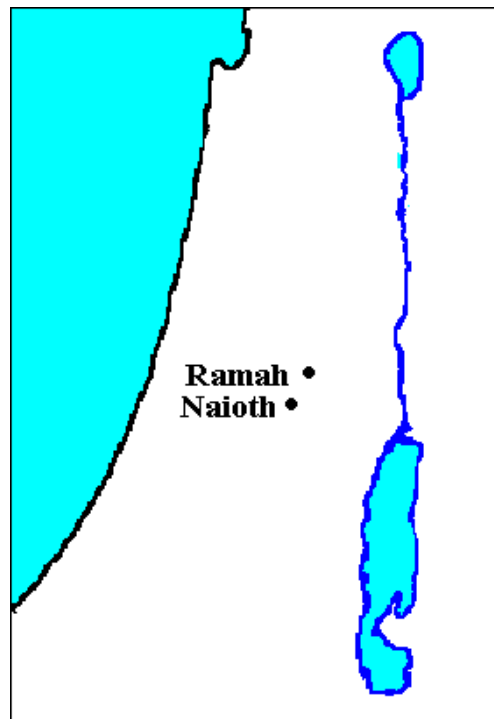
There are six paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 20. On the following table, you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

20:1-11	David and Jonathan Discuss David's Loyalty
20:12-16	David and Jonathan Covenant for Protection
20:17-23	David and Jonathan Plan Safety Signals
20:24-29	Jonathan Made Excuses for David's Absence
20:30-34	Saul Threatened Jonathan Over David
20:35-42	Jonathan Warned David Over Plotted Death

#### I Samuel 20:1-11 – David and Jonathan Discuss David's Loyalty

*Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?" I Samuel 20:1*

In the closing portion of chapter 19, Saul's attempt to capture David failed. This was because Saul's men became prophets and abandoned the search for David. David fled from Naioth to the place where Jonathan was. This was apparently at Saul's home. As you can see on the map, the city of Gibeah was approximately 5 miles from Naioth.



It is not surprising that David was quite upset. His tension showed in his confrontation with Jonathan. He asked Jonathan three questions. They were as follows:

1. What have I done?
2. What is my iniquity?
3. What is my sin before your father that he is seeking my life?

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As you look at this list, it is clear that one must determine whether these are three questions or one question asked in three different ways. The answer will hinge largely on some definition of terms.

1. The word translated “iniquity” is “awon” (אָוֹן). It means “fault,” “iniquity” or “sin.” It is moral evil. It involves guilt and punishment.
2. The word translated “sin” is chatta’ah” (חַטָּאת). It means “sin” or “sin offering.” It is “to be guilty of sin,” “to receive punishment for sin.”

It is clear that these are synonyms. It is essential that we understand that this is just one question asked in three frustrating, different ways.

Part of David’s frustration came from the fact that he assumed that Saul’s anger grew out of something that he had done. It did not. Saul’s anger grew out of two different things: First, Saul assumed that David wanted to take the throne from him. That, of course, was not true. Second, it was over the people’s favorable response to David which was greater than their response to Saul.

It was very clear to David that Saul wanted him dead even though it had not been told him; even though Saul hid his intentions by pretending his friendship.

*And he said to him, "Far from it, you shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. So why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!"*  
*I Samuel 20:2*

Saul had fooled Jonathan. Saul was angrily confused that Jonathan befriended David. Jonathan staunchly disagreed with David’s assessment.

The basis of Jonathan’s assessment is as follows:

He said that Saul did nothing without disclosing it to him. This assumes Saul’s integrity and trust in Jonathan. That assumes a great deal. Jonathan was very strong in his rejection of David’s position.

*Yet David vowed again, saying, "Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death." I Samuel 20:3*

In spite of this, David’s position had not changed. He could read Saul like a book. He said two things to summarize it: He said, “Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight” He also said, “Do not let Jonathan know this lest he be grieved.” This indicates that David had a trusted informant besides Jonathan among Saul’s inner circle. David was telling Jonathan, in gentle terms, that Saul was deceiving Jonathan by his mixed motives. This is obvious when Saul said of Jonathan, “lest he be grieved.” David rightly assessed his situation when he said, “There is hardly a step between me and death.” Whatever else David was, he was keenly perceptive.

*Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." I Samuel 20:4*

Jonathan did not argue the point, though up to this point he did not agree with David. Jonathan seems to almost ignore his disagreement with David. He made David a promise, “Whatever you say, I will do for you.” This is total commitment to the one whom Saul thinks wants to take the throne away from Jonathan. At the extreme, this could put Jonathan on the spot. Suppose that David told Jonathan that the only thing that would guarantee David’s safety would be to kill Saul. In reality, this possibility was always in the shadows. We will deal with this a bit later.

*So David said to Jonathan, "Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I ought to sit down to eat with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field until the third evening." I Samuel 20:5*

In verses five through eight, David responded to Jonathan’s promise in verse four. David had an idea about how Jonathan could keep the promise that he had just made. In ancient Israel, the new moon was always a cause for a secondary level of celebration. [The first level of celebration was Passover and Succoth].

## DAVID COVENANTED WITH JONATHAN

A second level celebration was the monthly New Moon celebration. In this request, David found a way to obviate Saul's intent. This would make it very clear to Jonathan. In this scheme, David was going to risk his life in order to accomplish two things: First, this would force Saul's intentions out into the open. Second, it would enable Jonathan to become aware of Saul's mission as David and others already were.

Because David was an important figure in the regime of Saul, he was expected to eat each meal at Saul's table. No one would even consider not showing up for this command performance. Jonathan could give permission for one of these table guests to be absent for a meal, but to be absent for three days would hardly be acceptable. David knew that this placed Jonathan in an awkward position with his father. This would not distress Jonathan too much since he was doing this to help Jonathan understand the inherent danger of the situation. If David were correct, this would certainly clarify the safety issue for Jonathan. The thing that would be most distressing to Jonathan was that David was asking him to take part in a dishonest scheme.

*If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.' I Samuel 20:6*

This is the point where David asked Jonathan to participate in a deception of Saul. It is most difficult to consider this when David and Jonathan were both so honest in their dealings. There is no doubt that this is something David would rather not do.

*"If he says, 'It is good,' your servant shall be safe; but if he is very angry, know that he has decided on evil. I Samuel 20:7*

David set the boundaries for determining whether or not Saul could be trusted at this point. David's proposed logic was simple. It was based on Saul's response. If Saul says, "it is good," then you know David's fears are unfounded and false. If David is right, then it will become obvious by the calm way Saul accepts the dishonest explanation. David also made arrangements for a possible negative response. It would certainly indicate Saul's evil intent.

*Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. But if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself; for why then should you bring me to your father?" I Samuel 20:8*

Observe that though David and Jonathan were closest friends, David never lost sight of the important position Jonathan held in the government. David always referred to himself as Jonathan's servant. In this verse, David attempted to convince Jonathan about just how threatening these conditions really were. Up to this point, Jonathan was unswerving in his position.

There is a confrontation level that is direct. It begins with the material the author presented in verses five through seven. In this verse, David reached the climax of his message in these four statements:

- a. Request – "Deal kindly with your servant."
- b. Reason – "For you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you." (Observe that this is not just an unbreakable covenant. It is a three-way covenant. If either David or Jonathan violated the covenant, they have acted against the LORD as well as the other person.)
- c. Proof of sincerity – "but if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself."
- d. Rationale – "For why should you bring me to your father."

This is intended to be evidence that would convince Jonathan that David is both innocent and sincere about his fear of Saul's intentions.

*And Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I should indeed learn that evil has been decided by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you about it?" I Samuel 20:9*

The text is silent, but one suspects that there is a raging silence following David's outburst.. Jonathan's words in this verse are equally as forceful as those of David. Observe that Jonathan appears to ignore David's request. The issue is not whether or not David is guilty. It does not deal with the veracity of David's conviction.

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tion concerning Saul's intent. For Jonathan, at least, the issue he wants to affirm is that he would certainly tell David. Jonathan added emphasis to his statement by presenting it in the form of a question. It is as though Jonathan blurted out, "How could you possibly think I could discover that my father intends to do you harm and then not tell you of this great danger?"

*Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" I Samuel 20:10*

Like Jonathan, David's reply is as though Jonathan never spoke. David's words, however, assume that he has heard Jonathan and can depend upon him. David simply wanted to know the details of how he would be informed if and when Saul gave a harsh response. This suggests that David fully expected to receive a report that Saul indeed harbored a deadly intent against him.

*And Jonathan said to David, "Come, and let us go out into the field." So both of them went out to the field. I Samuel 20:11*

To his credit, Jonathan, though he did not anticipate an evil report as David did, still was prepared to deal with what he considered a most remote possibility. In this verse, it is as though Jonathan is humoring David with the necessary precautions attendant upon that possibility.

### I Samuel 20:12-16 – David And Jonathan Covenant For Protection

*Then Jonathan said to David, "The LORD, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if there is good feeling toward David, shall I not then send to you and make it known to you?" I Samuel 20:12*

As Jonathan begins to speak with David, observe the way he spoke of God. Jonathan did this in two ways: He used two names for God. "The LORD" The Hebrew word translated "LORD" is (YHWH). This is the divine name that focuses upon the fact that God is eternal. This name is used most often in situations where God's justice is being emphasized. Almost all the prophets begin by describing the extent of the sins of the people.

Jonathan also spoke of "GOD". The word translated "God" is "Elohim." This name is used repeatedly to indicate divine omnipotence. It is used in most situations to emphasize God's mercy. Indeed, most of the prophets end their prophecies using the name "GOD."

Jonathan spoke of "The LORD the God of Israel." In almost every instance, the names appear together to stress that God is a merciful judge. Old Testament authors used the name, "the LORD the God of Israel" to speak of God as the merciful judge as well as the God who was faithful and merciful with His chosen people despite their sinful ways over many centuries. This gives us a glimpse into the attitude with which Jonathan spoke to David about a covenant.

Jonathan called upon Jehovah, the merciful Judge, to be the witness, the go between witness that he wants to verify their common agreement. He begins his promise with the use of a question. The use of this question adds strong emphasis to his promise. The promises recorded in verses 12 and 13 are in two parts: Each part is presented in the "if...then" conditional statement form.

- a. (+) "If there is good feeling toward David..." It is apparent that this is the truth Jonathan anticipates experiencing. (THEN) "shall I not send to you and make it known to you?" It is a way of promising, emphatically, that this is exactly what he will do.

*"If it please my father to do you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. I Samuel 20:13*

- (-) "IF it please my father to do you harm." Jonathan dealt with this negative possibility even though it seemed most remote to him. "THEN, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not make it known to you and send you away."



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In the promise part of this conditional statement, Jonathan seeks to accomplish two specific things: First, he wanted to state emphatically the promise for which he invites David to hold him accountable. Second, Jonathan also wanted to make his purpose in this covenant abundantly clear. He said, “that you may go in safety.” David’s safety was Jonathan’s preoccupation. Jonathan concluded his promise to David by expressing his prayer for him, “May the LORD be with you as He has been with my father.”

In the next few verses, the author expresses the promises to which he wanted David to agree.

*And if I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness of the LORD, that I may not die?  
I Samuel 20:14*

Jonathan’s concern was most understandable. This was an era in which an incoming king assured his own safety and the continuance of his reign by killing all the relatives of the king whom he replaced. Though David and Jonathan were closest friends, still Jonathan fit that category for David’s reign. Jonathan was simply and reasonably asking for assurances of safety for himself and his family. He said, “If I am still alive.” Jonathan was very realistic. These were dangerous times in the history of Israel’s army. Jonathan continued with a predictable question, “Will you not show me the lovingkindness of the LORD that I may not die?” It is very clear that Jonathan anticipates a positive answer to this important question. This is the first of two questions. In this question, Jonathan sought to make certain his own safety.

*"And you shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." I Samuel 20:15*

In his second question, Jonathan asked, “And you shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever.” First, Jonathan sought a promise of his own safety. He then requested the safety of every member of his family. As indicated earlier, this is a most understandable concern for Jonathan. Observe that he pressed on to make the promise even more precise and demanding. He said, “not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” It appears that Jonathan was convinced that at some point God would intervene and kill off every enemy of David. Jonathan wanted it to be David’s responsibility to guarantee that when this happens, Jonathan’s household would be exempted from that devastating elimination. It is clear that at some point Jonathan expected God to totally destroy all the enemies of David. He wanted to make sure that he was not part of that group of people.

*So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD require it at the hands of David's enemies." I Samuel 20:16*

Observe the way the author recorded this verse, “So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David.” There is a big difference between “making a covenant with David and making a covenant with the house of David. If the covenant is with David, then only he is bound and it says nothing to his heirs after him. If the covenant is with the house of David, then David and all the future members of his household would be bound to keep the covenant and protect all of the future members of the house of Jonathan and his extended family forever. That is precisely what Jonathan had in mind. It is clear that in these questions Jonathan concedes that David will be the next king of Israel.

### **I Samuel 20:17-23 – David and Jonathan Plan Safety Signals**

*And Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life. I Samuel 20:17*

There is an urgency in the actions of Jonathan. This verse can be confusing. We need to emphasize what the author is saying. First, Jonathan made David take a vow. The need for such a vow was totally on the part of Jonathan. David would never do harm to Jonathan under any circumstances. This vow apparently gave Jonathan a measure of comfort, but it did absolutely nothing for David. He was already totally committed to Jonathan’s safety. The cause of this insisted vow, according to the author, is Jonathan’s great love for David. Observe the author’s description of this relationship – “He loved him as he loved his own life.”

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*Then Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed because your seat will be empty. I Samuel 20:18*

Jonathan had objected to David's plan to find out Saul's intentions. Now, Jonathan describes essentially the same plan to provide this information. The scheme centers around the new moon celebration as an excuse for David's absence. Again, this is a very risky scheme. It can mean they both counted on the fact that Saul would discover David's absence.

*When you have stayed for three days, you shall go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself on that eventful day, and you shall remain by the stone Ezel. I Samuel 20:19*

They designed a three day absence from the king's table. There would be no way Saul could miss David's absence for even one day much less for three days.

Having planned the absence so that Saul would be sure to notice, they then planned the way Jonathan would secretly convey his findings to David without being observed. It was of utmost importance that neither David nor Jonathan be discovered in this information exchange. If Jonathan were observed, it would become clear that he was in complicity with an enemy of Saul. If David were discovered, he would be reported to Saul and quickly apprehended. In either case, the discovery would be disastrous.

*And I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. I Samuel 20:20*

In verses 20-23, Jonathan explains the way he will secretly announce the discovered information to David. This plan involves a lever of subterfuge because it was too dangerous to let anyone, especially his servant, know what was happening.

We know from our previous study that Jonathan was masterful both in his use of the bow and the sword. For him to shoot an arrow very wide of an announced target should have caused his servant great surprise if not real confusion about what was happening.

*And behold, I will send the lad, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I specifically say to the lad, 'Behold, the arrows are on this side of you, get them,' then come; for there is safety for you and no harm, as the LORD lives. I Samuel 20:21*

Jonathan explained to David the means he would use to inform him of what he learned from Saul. Jonathan explained that he would instruct the servant to go and get the arrow. He further explained that the instructions would contain the vital information. For instance, if he said, "behold the arrows are on this side of you, get them." Jonathan explained that the words "then come" indicated that there was safety for David and no harm as the LORD lives." This of course, is what Jonathan anticipated he would be saying.

*But if I say to the youth, 'Behold, the arrows are beyond you,' go, for the LORD has sent you away. I Samuel 20:22*

Jonathan then said, "But if I say to the youth, 'Behold, the arrows are beyond you,'" go, for the LORD has sent you away. Again, Jonathan certainly did not believe that this was the message that he would send to his friend, David.

*As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever." I Samuel 20:23*

Having given these instructions, Jonathan reminded David that the promise they had given each other in the presence of the LORD was binding upon them both forever. This meant, as previously indicated, that this covenant agreement was not only binding upon them, but was forever binding upon the children of both of them forever.

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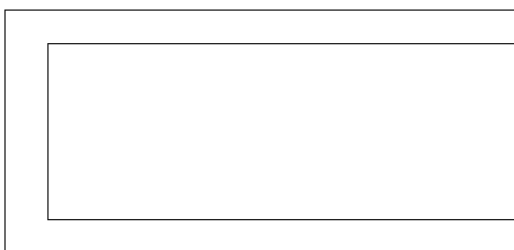
### I Samuel 20:24-29 – Jonathan Made Excuses For David's Absence

*So David hid in the field; and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food.  
I Samuel 20:24*

The plan was set in motion. Jonathan attended the celebration of the New Moon, but David hid himself. Saul came to the celebration suspecting nothing as indicated earlier, an empty place at the king's table was an insult and everyone would notice, especially the king.

*And the king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall; then Jonathan rose up and Abner sat down by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. I Samuel 20:25*

The wording of this verse provides us with several important pieces of information. First, we need to be reminded that they did not use chairs in those days. Tables were only about eighteen inches off the ground and the diners would lie down resting on their left elbow to eat. Also, we must keep in mind the shape of the tables and the order in which people were seated. On the following diagram, you will see several pieces of information illustrated for us.



David Abner SAUL Jonathan

Saul could not possibly help immediately noticing that David was absent. Again, the text tells us that Saul's place was located by the wall. This was a common practice for kings. This guaranteed that no one could make a surprise attack from behind him. Reigning kings were constantly on the alert, taking every possible precaution to protect themselves lest someone surprise and kill them.

*Nevertheless Saul did not speak anything that day, for he thought, "It is an accident, he is not clean, surely he is not clean." I Samuel 20:26*

It was inevitable that Saul would be aware of David's absence. The text does not indicate that Saul was suspicious of this particular absence, but it would be a frightening thing to fail to be present when invited to dine at the king's table.

The text indicates that Saul thought that it was an accident. Saul would have to think it was accidental. It would be preposterous to even think otherwise because of the inherent danger in refusing the king's invitation. The author then clarified his intent by clearly stating that Saul considered it accidental. The New Moon was more than just a festival celebration. It was a religious celebration. It was a joyous celebration of God's wonderful provision for their needs. As in any religious celebration, one must be properly prepared in order to participate. Part of this was the preparation of being "clean" or "cleansed" in order to participate. Again, Saul would consider it unthinkable that anyone would fail to honor his invitation. Apparently, David had failed to cleanse himself and thus would be unable to participate.

Notice that Saul repeated his conclusion that David failed to appear because he was unclean. This places strong emphasis on the statement. It just had to be an impossibility that kept David away.

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The text does not speak to the issue. One wonders, however, if Saul had secretly planned to use this command appearance as an opportunity to trap David and kill him, but it appears to be more than just a possibility.

*And it came about the next day, the second day of the new moon, that David's place was empty; so Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?" I Samuel 20:27*

The celebration of the New Moon lasted for three days. Saul still had two days in which to determine the situation with David. It can be assumed with certainty that Saul awaited the events of the second day with great interest.

On the second day of the celebration, Saul noticed, again, that David was absent. At this point, Saul confronted Jonathan about David's absence. In one sense, it is a bit impertinent that Saul would hold Jonathan responsible for David's actions. It is clear that Saul believed that Jonathan knew more about David's affairs than he was saying. This, of course, was both true and false. Jonathan did know what David was doing. At the same time, Jonathan knew nothing of where David would go when fleeing from Saul.

Observe the way Saul questioned Jonathan. He said, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal?" There are two important observations one must make about this question. First, it is Saul's assumption that Jonathan knew what David had planned. He also assumed that David's intentions were not good. Second, observe that Saul referred to "the son of Jesse" rather than to "David." We must ask why he would do this. In Israel, a person's name is very important. To fail to mention a person's name was considered an insult in that culture. In the story of David's life and in the Psalms he wrote, David had no patience with the enemies of God. He asked God to kill these men and their sons. He also asked God to dash the widows upon the rocks so that the unborn sons of God's enemies would be killed and their names would die out. This was the greatest possible tragedy that could happen in the life of an enemy of God. By carefully not mentioning David's name, Saul was seeking to dishonor David as well as his father, Jesse.

*Jonathan then answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem, I Samuel 20:28*

Jonathan answered Saul in a very matter of fact way that oozes with kindness. Look at the way Jonathan answered Saul's bitter question. Observe that Jonathan did not tell an outright lie in his answer to Saul. At the same time, we must observe that he did not tell everything that he knew. Jonathan carefully made sure that what he said would in no way indicate to Saul where he might find David. Observe that in verse 28, Jonathan gave an initial, general answer to Saul. In verse 29, however, Jonathan gave a more detailed answer to Saul's question. He simply said, in verse 28, that David earnestly asked permission to go to his home in Bethlehem.

*For he said, ' Please let me go, since our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to attend. And now, if I have found favor in your sight, please let me get away that I may see my brothers. ' For this reason he has not come to the king's table. " I Samuel 20:29*

In verse 29, Jonathan gave more detail. He explained the reason David needed to be away. He did this in two statements. He said,

"Our family has a sacrifice in the city." In almost every situation, a sacrifice involved the entire family. It was essential for every member of the family to be acknowledged as participants in the Jewish feasts.

Jonathan reported that David said, "My brother has commanded me to attend." Neither Jonathan nor our author explains the details of this statement. We know that Jesse was still alive. He might still be in control of his family. We also know that occasionally as the father aged and began to lose some of his mental and leadership capacity, he would turn control of the family over to the son whom he had cho-

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sen to control the entire family after his death. This could account for the brother commanding David to be present.

There is a hint, at this point, that we should not overlook. Observe that Jonathan quoted David as saying two things.

Jonathan quoted David as saying, "Please let me go since our family has a sacrifice." Jonathan also quoted David as saying, "If I have found favor in your sight, please let me get away that I may see my brothers." There appears to be a problem with what appears to be David's excuse. It appears that David is asking Jonathan's permission to be absent from the king's table. It is possible that this is the proper chain of command, but not probable. In verse 29, Jonathan gave more detail. He explained the reason David needed to be away. He did this in two statements. He said,

"Our family has a sacrifice in the city." In almost every situation, a sacrifice involved the entire family. It was essential for every member of the family to be acknowledged as participants in the Jewish feasts.

Jonathan reported that David said, "My brother has commanded me to attend." Neither Jonathan nor our author explains the details of this statement. We know that Jesse was still alive. He might still be in control of his family. We also know that occasionally as the father aged and began to lose control of his faculties, he would delegate authority to the son whom he had chosen to control the entire family after his death. This could account for the brother commanding David to be present.

### I Samuel 20:30-34 – Saul Threatened Jonathan Over David

*Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? I Samuel 20:30*

Saul set aside all pretence and let the fury of his anger explode toward his son. In verse 30, Saul's anger is quite obvious, but his choice of words was extremely careful. As you read this verse, some facts immediately stand out:

Saul admitted that he was convinced that Jonathan was working with David against the king.

Saul could see that everything that Jonathan did was to ensure David's reign and preclude his own.

Saul was insistent that Jonathan succeed him as king. Therefore, Saul considered the things that Jonathan did to protect David as being foolish.

Saul placed the blame for this "foolishness" upon the fact that Jonathan was the son of a "perverse rebellious woman."

Saul carefully avoided mentioning the fact that Jonathan, the foolish boy, was also his son.

Observe, again, in this verse that Saul does not use the word "David." He rather spoke of the "son of Jesse." It is a way of degrading David by degrading his name.

*"For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die." I Samuel 20:31*

There are two sentences in this verse. The first sentence begins with the word "for." This is an indication that an explanation is forthcoming. Again, Saul again identifies Jonathan's friend as "the son of Jesse," and not as "David." Saul's logic is simple. He said, "as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established." It is clear that Saul wants Jonathan to succeed him as the king. Saul never asked Jonathan whether he should be king or wanted to be the king. Saul conveniently forgot that it was God who chose him to be anointed as king. Saul assumed that he could make the choice since he was the king. Jonathan knew better. It was clear to him that God had chosen David to be the next king and he was comfortable with that situation.

The second sentence in this verse begins with the word "therefore." This indicates that a conclusion is forthcoming. Saul's conclusion is, again, quite simple. He said, "Now send him to me, for he must surely

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die.” The Hebrew text reads a bit differently and is quite telling in its intent. You might translate this sentence, “For he is a son of death.” If one said, “Jonathan is a son of Saul,” it gives more than Jonathan’s family relationship. It says that Saul was responsible for Jonathan’s welfare and future. It says that Jonathan belongs to Saul and is totally dependant upon Saul’s provision. Now, if we say that David is a son of death, we are saying that David belongs to death. It would be that David was inextricably under the control of death, just as Jonathan was under the control of Saul. Saul’s statement was about as forceful as it could possibly be.

*But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" I Samuel 20:32*

This verse begins with the word, “but.” This indicates that the content of the verse is being contrasted with the content of verse 31. Jonathan’s thinking is just the opposite of Saul’s thought. Jonathan’s contrasting reply is in the form of two confronting questions, the second more challenging than the first. We must stop to be reminded that in that culture, a son would never challenge or confront his father in this manner. It was socially unacceptable to do so. This gives us an impression of just how strongly Jonathan disagreed with Saul.

Look at Jonathan’s questions. These two questions are essentially the same. The one only adds emphasis to the other. The emotional level of these questions is extremely high. In verse 31, Saul announced that David is the son of death. In his abrupt questions, Jonathan bluntly disagreed with his father and challenged him to explain why David should die. This was a most risky way for anyone, even the king’s son, to speak to the king.

*Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. I Samuel 20:33*

As you can see, Saul did not honor his son’s questions with an answer. He rather answered with a reaction. The author’s report of this reaction is stark and telling. He said, “Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down.” It is a way of saying that Saul tried to kill his son. Moments earlier, Saul was trying to protect Jonathan’s life and potential reign. Suddenly he tried to kill his son. It is ironic that Saul dealt with Jonathan in precisely the same way he had dealt with David - he tried to pin him to the wall with his javelin.

The last part of this sentence indicates what Jonathan learned from this encounter with his father. The author said, “So Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death.” That would be obvious. The thing that would not be obvious was Jonathan’s reaction to his father’s outburst and attempt to kill him. It is as if no attempt had been made on his life.

*Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him. I Samuel 20:34*

As was just suggested, Jonathan did not react personally, but he did react and potentially at great personal risk. This verse is composed of one sentence made up of two parts. The first part of the sentence identifies Jonathan’s reaction. The second part of the sentence explains the cause of his very risky reaction.

The description of Jonathan’s reaction reveals two vital pieces of information:

“Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger.” This is a very violent statement. It was frighteningly risky because no one was permitted to react to the king in fierce anger. This is especially obvious when you keep in mind that as recently as the previous verse Saul attempted to kill Jonathan. Nevertheless, Jonathan let his passionate feelings show toward his father in no uncertain terms.

“And did not eat food on the second day of the New Moon.” In Jonathan’s fierce anger, this portion of the verse indicates the things Jonathan did.

- a. He absented himself from his father’s table without permission. As you know, this is what sealed David’s fate with Saul. Having narrowly escaped death at his father’s hand, Jonathan took an even riskier step by failing to be present at his father’s table for the rest of this celebration.

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- b. The second thing that Jonathan did was that he refused to eat the food of the sacrifice at the celebration of the New Moon. It was required that every member of the family participate. This was an obvious humiliation for the king. He had been challenged and his threat had served no remedial purpose whatsoever.

The second part of the verse begins with the word “for.” This indicates that a reason for the previous action is about to be given. The text records two very important pieces of information:

“He was grieved over David.” There was an uncommon bond between these two men. Jonathan could not bear to see how his father unfairly dealt with David. When given an opportunity to explain, Saul attempted to murder his own son rather than explain his murderous plans.

“Because his father had dishonored him.” This may be difficult to explain. Saul made no accusations false or otherwise. However, when he verbally decreed David’s death, he opened the door for every person eager for royal approval to either kill David or bring him to Saul to be executed. This is the way they dealt with common criminals and David would now be branded as one of them.

### I Samuel 20:35-42 – Jonathan Warned David Over Plotted Murder

*Now it came about in the morning that Jonathan went out into the field for the appointment with David, and a little lad was with him. I Samuel 20:35*

Notice that the text says, “In the morning.” This means that it is the third day of the New Moon celebration. During the three days of this celebration, they were to focus their attention on thanksgiving to God for His providence and not on their work. Jonathan has continued to absent himself from his father’s table without permission. Worse yet, he is pretending to practice his military skills at a time when all Israel should have been celebrating God’s abundant providence for their lives. He had agreed to report back to David on this occasion. He was a soldier. It was not unusual for warriors to practice their skills whenever the opportunity presented itself. It also would be common for him to have a child or an aid to be with him to retrieve the arrows he shot.

*And he said to his lad, "Run, find now the arrows which I am about to shoot." As the lad was running, he shot an arrow past him. I Samuel 20:36*

In verses 12 and 13 of this chapter, Jonathan spelled out for David the way he would inform him of the information he learned from his father. Now, Jonathan must convey his discoveries to David in such a way that no one, but the two of them, would know what was happening. Both of their lives depended upon this security. Jonathan decided to use his shooting as a parallel to David’s situation. David would understand immediately. The young man would not realize that anything was going on except target practice. With this in mind, Jonathan intentionally shot an arrow way beyond the target location. Had anyone knowledgeable been watching, they would have been aghast that Jonathan made such a potentially dangerous mistake.

*When the lad reached the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the lad, and said, "Is not the arrow beyond you?" I Samuel 20:37*

Read this verse again. The boy is standing at the place where the arrow landed. He can see the arrow! He then heard Jonathan cry out, “Is not the arrow beyond you?” Put yourself in the young boy’s position. You can see the arrow. You hear the king’s son say, “you have not gone far enough.” You are confused. You can see the arrow right in front of you, but you should not tell the king’s son that he is wrong. So you go farther looking for the arrow that you have already found. This would certainly confuse the young man, but David is listening carefully and understands very well.

*And Jonathan called after the lad, "Hurry, be quick, do not stay!" And Jonathan's lad picked up the arrow and came to his master. I Samuel 20:38*

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Having given David a hint in the previous verse, Jonathan spoke more plainly in this verse. He said, "Hurry, be quick, do not stay." These words would probably confuse the young boy even more, but they gave David two pieces of information:

He was being told that he must act quickly.

He was also being told that he must not stay in this place any longer. It was a way for Jonathan to assure David that Saul intended to kill him. David could not figure out why Saul wanted to kill him.

Though Jonathan risked his life trying to find the answer to David's question, he too knew no reason for this threatened murder.

*But the lad was not aware of anything; only Jonathan and David knew about the matter.*

*I Samuel 20:39*

This verse is a brief parenthesis in the story. In this verse, the author clearly states what has become obvious in the text. Jonathan continued with the game of pretend. The young boy was in the middle of this game and knew nothing of what transpired around him. On the other hand, both David and Jonathan knew painfully well what it all meant.

*Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad and said to him, "Go, bring them to the city."*

*I Samuel 20:40*

At this point, Jonathan wanted to say farewell to his dearest friend, but the little boy was there. Jonathan solved that problem by giving the weapons to the young boy and urging him to take them back inside the walls of the city.

*When the lad was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David more. I Samuel 20:41*

Though only David and Jonathan were present, this was a very risky meeting for both of them. If one person on the wall saw them and reported it to Saul, it would lead to the death of both David and Jonathan. This gives us an idea of just how important it was to both of them to be able to say their farewells.

David approached Jonathan. The way in which he did this expresses how deeply his feelings ran. In the text, the author identified four things that David did. These actions are very important.

1. **HE FELL ON HIS FACE TO THE GROUND.** This was a very symbolic act. It identifies the one bowing as the willing servant of the one before whom he bowed. In the story of Joseph, Genesis 42:6, when Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food, they bowed to the ground before the one whom they took to be the ruler of Egypt. David bowed to the ground three times. The repetition of the symbol of subservience was for the purpose of emphasis. He really meant it. The irony of it was that the one who would soon be king declared his subservience to the one whose family would be dependent upon him.
2. **"AND BOWED THREE TIMES."** This is the way a subject approached his king. It was a signal of indebtedness, of subservience that David offered to Jonathan in gratitude. It is as if David were saying, I owe you my life and would gladly serve you all my days.
3. **"AND THEY KISSED EACH OTHER."** As we have indicated earlier, the kiss was one of the four signs of peace and forgiveness the Jewish people offered each other. You may remember that the father of the Prodigal Son kissed his errant son when he returned. Also, Joseph showed his brothers all four signs of forgiveness and then the text says, "and afterwards his brothers spoke to him." Genesis 45:15
4. **'AND WEPT TOGETHER, BUT DAVID MORE.'** There is a subtle perception in this statement. It was clear that life could become increasingly tenuous for them. The probability of their mutual survival was narrow at best. The author, however, added the simple statement, "But David more."



## DAVID COVENANTED WITH JONATHAN

This gives us an insight into David's mind. The fact that Jonathan risked his life repeatedly in order to gain the information that David needed caused David's eyes to overflow. Both men realized that they might never meet face to face again.

*And Jonathan said to David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city. I Samuel 20:42*

As they were about to part, Jonathan was the only one who spoke. Was David too shaken to speak? We do not know, but it seems reasonable.

Jonathan spoke of two different things in this sentence. First, Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace. There has to be at least two sentiments behind this statement:

David was Jonathan's very best friend. He did not want anything to happen to his friend.

Jonathan, for quite some time, had been thoroughly convinced that David would be the next king. To the chagrin of Saul, Jonathan was excited that David would be the next king and that he would not be.

In chapter 18, after David had slain Goliath, it was clear to Jonathan that David would one day be the leader of Israel. It was in 18:4, 5, that Jonathan removed his royal robe and armor and gave them to David. This is the second time in this chapter that Jonathan made mention of a covenant with David. In 20:16 it says, "So Jonathan made a covenant with 'the house of David.'" In the following verse, the author said, "And Jonathan made David vow AGAIN..." Now at the end of this same chapter, Jonathan pressed upon David the terms of their covenant, "The LORD be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever." Two things drive Jonathan to this repeated rehearsal of the terms of their covenant.

Jonathan knew that David would be king and he would not. He was happy about this prospect.

In that era, most every new king had to protect his throne by killing every known relative of the previous king. Jonathan was quite comfortable with the prospect of not succeeding his father to the throne, but he had to protect his family. Thus, he covenanted with David for their mutual security. He then made a covenant binding their two houses to this security pack. He then repeatedly drew David's attention to the fact that the covenant had been made between them and God and was forever binding upon both families.

There is a dire picture in the final sentence of this verse and chapter. Indeed, it is verse one in chapter 21 in the Hebrew Bible. David and Jonathan were parting in some depth of sorrow. They had no idea what the future held for them, but it would never be the same again.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, there is an expression of two very different kinds of anger. Saul's anger was fueled by his jealousy of David and his frustration with Jonathan who wanted David to be the next king. Saul's anger also was fueled by pride. If Jonathan was to be the next king, it would be the beginning of Saul's dynasty. So thoughtlessly was Saul's anger out of control that he attempted to murder his own son.

Jonathan represents a very different kind of anger. He was angry at injustice. He was unselfishly open-minded giving his father the opportunity to explain his fury. Jonathan was as committed to his anger as Saul was to his. At the risk of his life, Jonathan defied his father by angrily rising from his father's table and refusing to eat. Jonathan used his anger to protect life and attempt to honor justice.

Interwoven into the fabric of this portrait is yet another picture; that of sacrificial love. Jonathan, from the beginning, had sensed that David was to be the next king and he affirmed that divine choice. In the heart wrenching vistas of this chapter, Jonathan demonstrated the depth of his love for David and his absolute commitment to support David in the task to which God had called him.

Unfortunately, in the modern church, we have unintentionally presented an unbiblical view of anger. We portray anger as only bad; an emotion from which we should always be free. This is not a biblical view. Jonathan used his anger to accomplish a godly good. The New Testament is very direct. Paul said, "Be an-

## **THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION**

gry and do not sin.” Ephesians 4:26. The wrong is not in the anger, but in the purpose and use to which we put this hounding emotion.

All of us, on occasion, are confronted with situations where our anger automatically rushes to the surface. There are things we should be angry about. Jesus became furiously angry. We need to reflect upon our expressions of anger. With which member of Saul’s family is our anger most likely to identify?

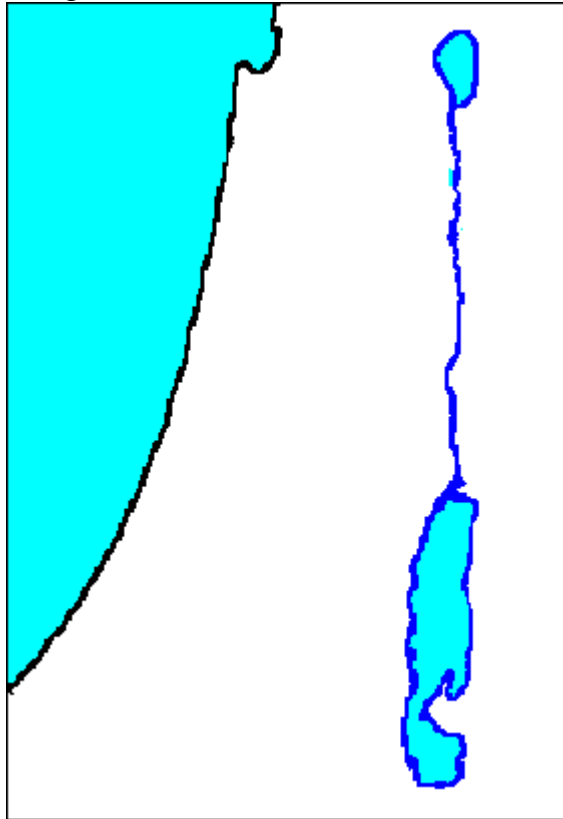
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 21

### DAVID PRETENDS MADNESS BEFORE THE KING OF GATH – I SAMUEL 21:1 – 15

1. There are only three paragraphs in the twenty-first chapter of I Samuel. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

21:1-6	
21:7-9	
21:1-15	

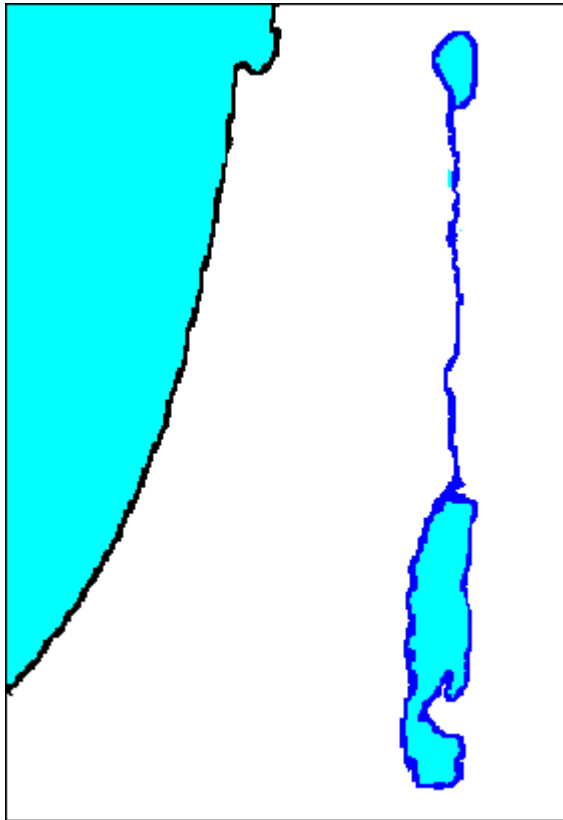
2. In I Samuel 21:1-6, David fled to Nob to get bread.  
A. In 21:1, David fled to Nob to get bread.



1. Consult a Bible atlas to observe David's trip from Naioth to Nob. Record your findings on this map.
  2. Observe what the author described as the meeting between David and Ahimelech.
- B. In 21:2, David responded to Ahimelech's question.
1. What was David's response?
  2. How would you evaluate this response?
  3. If you were Ahimelech, how would you feel?
- C. In 21:3, 4, David requested food from Ahimelech.
1. What is the difference between "ordinary bread" and "Consecrated bread" ?
  2. Why would Ahimelech's concern over whether the men "Have kept themselves from women"?
- D. In 21:5, 6, David responded to Ahimelech's concerns.
1. What did David say?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

2. In view of David's original explanation of his mission, how would Ahimelech feel about this need?
3. In I Samuel 21:7-9 – Doeg, one of Saul's servants, saw David.
  - A. In 21:7, the author reported that Doeg was in Nob.
    1. What does he tell us about Doeg?
    2. What did the author mean when he said, "Detained before the LORD"?
  - B. In 21:8, David made a request.
    1. What was his request?
    2. In view of the purpose of the mission that David explained to Ahimelech, if you were Ahimelech, how would you feel about this request?
  - C. In 21:9, Ahimelech responded to David's strange request.
    1. Reread verses 8 and 9. How would you understand this strange request?
    2. If you were Ahimelech, what would you think?
4. In I Samuel 21:10-15, David pretended madness in Gath.
  - A. In 21:10, David fled from Nob to Gath.



1. On this map, record the flight.
  - a. About how far is this flight?
  - b. What kind of terrain did he traverse?
2. Think carefully about David's destination.
  - a. What do we know about this destination?
  - b. Why would David even think of going there?
- B. In 21:11, David encountered a difficulty.
  1. What difficulty did David encounter?
  2. How would the leaders of this place gain this information?
  3. What did this difficulty mean to David?

## DAVID COVENANTED WITH JONATHAN

- C. In 21:12, David reacted to what he heard. Attempt to spell out what the author meant when he described David's reaction.
  - D. In 21:13, David reacted to their discovery.
    - 1. What did David do?
    - 2. What risks was David taking?
    - 3. What good would this action accomplish?
  - E. In 21:14, Achish reacted to David's response.
    - 1. How would you describe the attitude of Achish?
    - 2. Why would he feel this way?
  - F. In 21:15, Achish asked two questions of his advisors.
    - 1. What is he asking?
    - 2. What is the tone of these two questions?
5. Review your study of chapter 21.
- a. What have you learned?
  - b. In what way will this impact your own spiritual journey?



## LESSON 21

### DAVID PRETENDS MADNESS BEFORE THE KING OF GATH – I SAMUEL 21:1 – 15

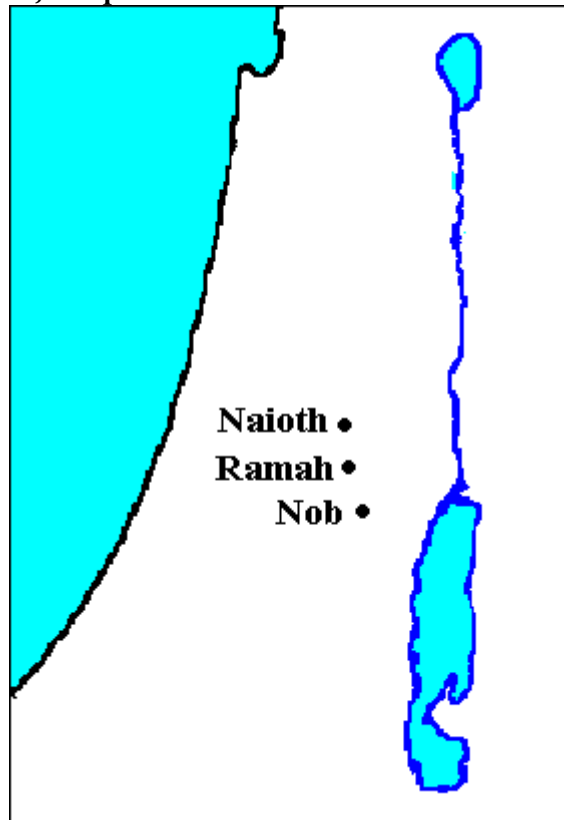
There are only three paragraphs in the twenty-first chapter of I Samuel. A brief summary of each paragraph appears on the following table.

21:1-6	David Fled to Nob to Get Bread
21:7-9	Doeg, Saul's Servant Saw David: David Took Goliath's Sword
21:10-15	David Pretends Madness in Gath; Fear of Achish

#### 1 Samuel 21:1-6 – David Fled to Nob to Get Bread

*Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?" I Samuel 21:1*

**“Then David said to Ahimelech, the priest”**



The last place that the text mentions David as being was in Naioth. In this verse, David fled to Nob. The city of Naioth is located near Ramah. Nob, on the other hand, is located right near Ramah. On this map, you can see that this is a distance of about ten miles.

**“And Ahimelech came trembling to meet David”**

It is very significant that Ahimelech was trembling when he came to meet David. The trembling clearly indicates the emotional tensions that the people felt while the struggle between Saul and David played out. On the other hand, the fact that Ahimelech came out to meet David is equally significant. These were times of danger and intrigue. During such times, no one knows whom they can trust. There is always someone, friend or foe, who is willing to inform against you for the proper considerations. Ahimelech demonstrated his friendship by even coming out to meet David, the enemy of the king.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

### **“Why are you alone and no one with you?”**

Obviously, Ahimelech was confused by the fact that David dared to come alone, without guards, to protect him. This confusion is understandable. David was a person with high visibility in the kingdom. Everyone knew his earlier honored position before Saul. They also knew that he had been demoted to being captain over 1,000 men. He is being hunted by the king's loyal guard, but he dared to come this close to Jerusalem with not even a small guard to protect him. Now, there were men who accompanied David, but Ahimelech and people of Nob were not aware of it. If people knew this, it would immediately signal trouble and David did not want that to happen. The poorest kept secret in the kingdom was that Saul wanted David dead.

*And David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter, and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.' I Samuel 21:2*

### **“The king has commissioned me with a matter”**

This is interesting. David was talking to a friend. He could have simply have told Ahimelech the whole grizzly tale. He chose not to impugn Saul at this point. At the same time, David told his friend a lie. Why would he do this? The text does not tell us. One possible consideration is that if anyone made this matter known to Saul, Ahimelech could claim ignorance.

### **“Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed young men to a certain place.”**

This, of course, was not true, but Ahimelech did not know that. Some of what David said might have seemed reasonable, but not all of it. We will spell this out momentarily. True or false, David had given his friend at least an alibi.

*Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found." I Samuel 21:3*

David wasted no time. He came right to the point. He needed food. According to the explanation David gave to Ahimelech, Saul had sent him on a secret mission. Knowing the location, David had just left on this mission, but he had no food. Secret missions are always carefully planned. It would never begin without food. The truth was that David had to flee in a hurry. He had no time to make provisions for the trip. A definite weakness in David's claim is the fact that secret missions are as close to being totally clandestine as possible. They would do everything possible to avoid an encounter with even one person. To have to ask for food rather than carrying it with them or at least just buying food would raise many questions.

Observe the way David made his request. He said, “What do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever can be found. This is a “hat-in-hand” request. It speaks of deference, not authority. Friend or no friend, if this was a legitimate royal commission, David would have stated his needs and there would have been no question about availability. Aside from their friendship, Ahimelech should have been able to see through this ruse and he probably did. Friendship can make allowances that otherwise would have been challenged and refused. The fact that they just wanted food, no matter what it was, should have given Ahimelech pause. It may have given him pause, but the text does not say so.

*And the priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women." I Samuel 21:4*

### **“There is no ordinary bread on hand”**

This is what Jesus talked about with the Pharisees in Matthew 12:3. This would be very difficult to understand in our culture. It would be most unusual for any of us to be totally without a piece of bread in our homes or those of our neighbors. This, however, would not be unusual in that day and place. People bought only enough bread for one day – no more; no less. It is perfectly understandable that there might not be a piece of bread in the whole city except the “Bread of Presence.”



## DAVID PRETENDS MADNESS BEFORE THE KING OF GATH

### **“But there is consecrated bread”**

This is a reference to the holy bread that was placed on the table of showbread regularly. This table and the symbolic “holy bread” was placed in the “holy place.” Each day, it was replaced and the older bread was consumed by the priests as a part of their daily food.

### **“If only the young men have kept themselves from women.”**

As indicated, this bread was part of the food the consecrated priests could use. When a priest left his home and came to serve in the temple, he had to first be cleansed. If a man had been with a woman, he was considered ceremonially unclean. He would then have to undergo a ceremonial cleansing before he could serve at the altar or consume any of the food reserved for these priests. It is this to which Ahimelech referred when he asked if the men had been kept from women.

*And David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy?" I Samuel 21:5*

### **“Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy.”**

It may seem strange to us, but before a religious Jew could leave on a journey toward battle, he must refrain from sexual relations with a woman. You may remember that when David urged Uriah to go to his house before rejoining the troops in battle. Uriah refused to go to have relationships with his wife. This is found in II Samuel 10:11. In the same way, that a priest must refrain from such relations when it is time for him to return to serve at the temple, David could honestly say that the men had been kept from women prior to the beginning of their campaign. They had been consecrated to God in this way ever since.

### **“Though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy:**

This is a way to strongly emphasize his message. David was saying that his men were ceremonially clean when the group began their mission. This means that they now were more obviously ceremonially clean through their march. The word “vessels” is a reference to their physical bodies.

*So the priest gave him consecrated bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away. I Samuel 21:6*

### **“So the priest gave him consecrated bread”**

The text does not indicate whether Ahimelech believed the message David presented to him. It simply says that he gave the bread to David.

### **“For there is no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD.”**

The author is reemphasizing the fact that there was no other bread in the city. Ahimelech was willing to allow David to have this special bread.

### **“In order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away.”**

One wonders why the author would belabor this explanation of the “holy bread” when it would be totally understood by every Jewish man of that day. They would have to know all about the sacrifices before being accepted as a Jewish man at what we call their “bar-mitzvah.”

## **I Samuel 21:7-9 – Doeg, Saul’s Servant Saw David: David Took Goliath’s Sword**

*Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds. I Samuel 21:7*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

**“Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD.”**

Royalty had a number of revenue sources. These sources came in the form of taxes. They also came in the form of the sale of crops and animals raised on his farmland. This man was a servant of Saul. It is not clear whether he was an employee or a slave taken in battle during Saul’s successful military campaign.

**“And his name was Doeg, the chief of Saul’s shepherds”**

Observe that this verse gives us some important information about the man. First, he was apparently a worshipper of God even though he was an “Edomite.” Being an Edomite, but serving in Saul’s employee, suggests that he was a slave taken in Saul’s successful battle with Edom.

Now, the text also indicates that he was “detained before the LORD.” The text makes no effort to explain this situation. It probably suggests he had come to the place of worship to make a sacrifice or complete a vow, but could not complete it because he was for some reason unclean. This would cause him to need to stay in the temple area until his ceremonial cleansing was accomplished.

*And David said to Ahimelech, "Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent." Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me." 1 Samuel 21:8-9*

David’s question had to be a shock to Ahimelech. As we will see, this question did not require an answer, because David already knew the answer.

David’s explanation in the second part of this verse should have startled Ahimelech even more. We know that David had to flee from Saul in a great hurry. In doing so, David fled without taking with him the sword that Jonathan had given him. Think about this. David supposedly was on an urgent mission on behalf of Saul, but he had no weapon at all. Certainly, Ahimelech had to realize that something that David was telling him did not make sense at all. It is senseless to talk about a special campaign on behalf of the king and to have no weapon. It seems no possible way that Ahimelech would be able to believe David’s excuses at this time.

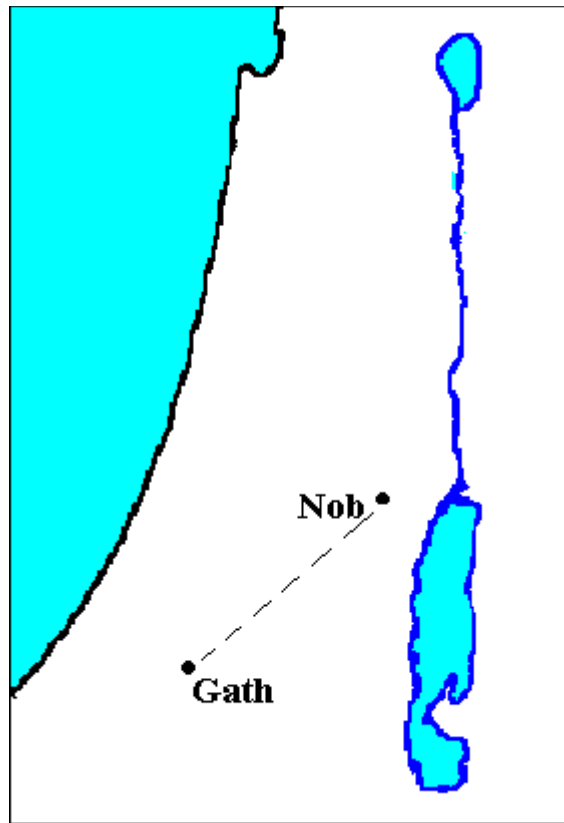
David asked if there was a sword or spear there when he was the one who placed both Goliath’s spear and sword at this place of worship. Again, Ahimelech would not be fooled by this obvious ruse.

By the way, Goliath’s sword was huge. The fact that David could use it speaks well of his great strength. This verse gives one an impression of the depth of desperation that David experienced.

**I Samuel 21:10-15 – David Pretends Madness in Gath: Fear of Achish**

*Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. 1 Samuel 21:10*

## DAVID PRETENDS MADNESS BEFORE THE KING OF GATH



This verse gives one an impression of the depth of desperation that David experienced. First, as you can see on this map, it was a trip of about 28 miles over some of the most difficult terrain in the country. David was aware of just how much danger he faced and ran a long way looking for cover. Secondly, the people of Gath were Philistine enemies of his people; enemies who worshipped idols particularly these two: First, they worshipped the god Baal. The second was their most sensitive idol- their sword. David fled to Gath, but despite the dangers he faced, this was not David's most brilliant move.

*But the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands'?"*  
*I Samuel 21:11*

The people of Gath may have been Israel's enemies, but they knew what was happening there. The persons referred to as "the servants of Achish," are probably not slaves who clean floors or serve food. In all probability these are his trusted advisors. They knew that David was singled out to be the next king. Notice, however, that they speak of David as already the king when Saul still reigned and looking for a way to kill the future king. Observe also, that they knew about the lyrics the women of Israel were singing, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands."

These servants of Achish were not just reporting recent events. This was a warning and David apparently overheard. It was a way to try to warn the king.

*And David took these words to heart, and greatly feared Achish king of Gath. I Samuel 21:12*

If David had not realized these dangers before going there, he knew it now and became very wary of what the king might do. It is quite surprising that David, at this point, did not take his men away from this very dangerous situation.

*So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard. I Samuel 21:13*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

By this time, David was inside the country and in the midst of their leaders. Thus, he was most vulnerable. If David were going to survive, he would have to find some way to get away from them without arousing their anger. He had to pretend that he was insane. He scribbled on the doors in the ways that did not make sense. He allowed the saliva to run down on his beard as though he was unable to control his bodily functions. From the Philistine point of view, they could not afford to have someone so unpredictable in their midst. David was a good actor. He convinced them that he was out of his mind.

*Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me "Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?" I Samuel 21:14, 15*

It was apparent that David made his performance in a place where the king could see it. When the king saw these antics, he was obviously concerned about what this mad man might do in the palace. King Achish was quite upset that his leaders had brought this madman to him in the first place. Achish questioned his ministers in a harsh, angry manner about why they would bring such an unpredictable person into proximity with himself.

In the final verse of this chapter, the anger of Achish took a sarcastic turn. He was trying to get a point across to his servants. He wanted them to be very certain that he did not need insane people in his stronghold. These people were charged to protect the king and his interests. Achish was obviously angry with them. When David and his men came everything seemed quite normal. To be fair, these people had no way to know that such a situation would develop. In fact, as we know, it had not happened. David was pretending. He did such a good job that Achish was totally convinced that David was demented.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, there is an overarching idea that surfaces. When people dealt with David in an inappropriate manner, God protected him. Again, when David made a choice that was not a good direction, God enabled him to escape without being destroyed as he could easily have been.

It is wonderful that in His great mercy and grace, God has forgiven us of our sins. There is more. Things happen in life. When others deal with us in less than an appropriate way, God will come to our aid: He will turn their abuse into benefit to accomplish His will. The story of Joseph is our best example. When we make decisions that are less than our best, God can intervene and protect His people, even from themselves.

People will not always treat us appropriately. We will not always make our best decisions. Nevertheless, God will work even through these difficulties to accomplish His will in our lives and in the world. There is a deep sense of gratitude that this awareness creates within us. There is a surpassing sense of gratitude to God for His goodness to us. Because of this truth, there is a sense of peace in which we can live our lives knowing that God is in control and that He will use even the most terrible attacks in order to accomplish His will and to serve His people.

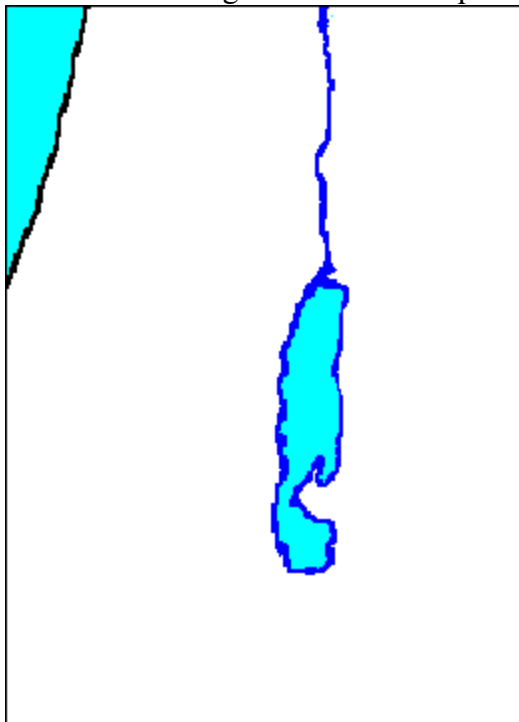
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 22

### SAUL SLEW AHIMELECH AND THE PEOPLE OF NOB – I SAMUEL 22:1 – 23

1. In I Samuel chapter 22, there are five paragraphs. Write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph on the following table.

22:1,2	
22:3-5	
22:6-10	
22:11-19	
22:20-23	

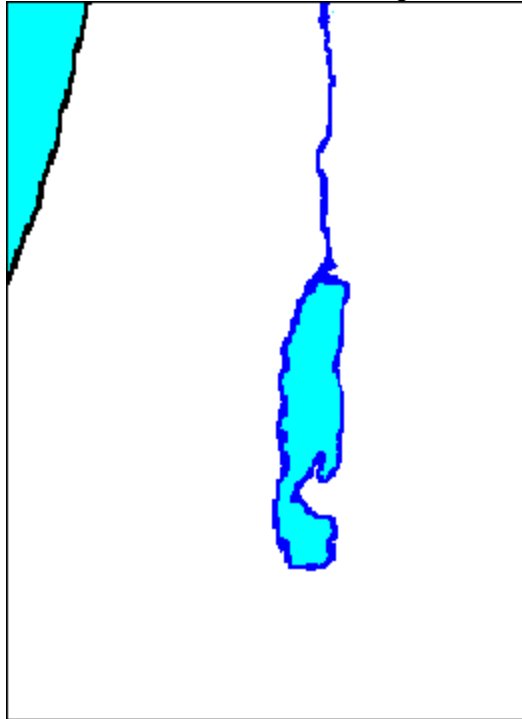
2. In I Samuel 22:1-2, David and 400 discontents hide in the Adullam cave complex.
  - A. In 22:1, David fled from Gath and took refuge in the cave complex near Adullam.



1. On this map show how David traveled on this trip.
    2. David's entire family came to him at the cave. In view of their attitude as shown in chapter 17, how can we account for this?
  - B. In 22:2, there were 400 men who joined David at the cave complex.
    1. How do you think they knew David was there, but Saul did not know it?
    2. Study this verse to consider the kinds of people who joined David here.
      - a. What does this tell you?
      - b. What problems can this potentially create?
  - C. What benefits could this also create?
3. In I Samuel 22:3-5, David hid his parents in Moab.
    - A. In 22:3, 4, David made the long trip to Moab to find a safe place for his parents.
      1. On the map, point out the two possible routes he had to travel to bring his parents to Moab.
      2. In view of the international relations between Israel and Moab, what does it tell you that David hid his parents there?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

3. Why would he not keep his parents with him and the men?
- B. In 22:5, the prophet Gad told David to leave the cave complex and hide in the forest of Hereth.



1. On this map, show the trip that this involved.
  2. In a Biblical atlas, study the terrain of both Adullam and Hereth. What did you find?
  3. What does this verse tell you about the character of David?
4. In I Samuel 22:6-10, Doeg informed Saul of David's visit to Nob.
    - A. In 22:6, Saul and his army were camped in Gibeah.
      1. In a Biblical Atlas, discover how close they were to David's hiding place.
      2. Read this verse to see what it says about Saul. Is there anything new you have discovered there?
    - B. In 22:7, Saul talked with his advisors.
      1. What is the tone of this conversation?
      2. What appears to be the idea behind Saul's questions?
      3. Why would Saul refer to David as "the son of Jesse" rather than by his name?
    - C. In 22:8, Saul continued his talk to his counselors.
      1. Identify the charges Saul made in this verse.
      2. Where does Saul place the blame for David's situation? Why?
      3. In this verse, Saul described David's situation and intent. What is it?
    - D. In 22:9, 10, Doeg interrupts Saul's talk.
      1. Who was Doeg?
      2. In view of the report in chapter 21, what can you say about Doeg's report?
  5. In I Samuel 22:11-19, Doeg killed the priests and people of Nob.
    - A. In 22:11, Saul acted on the information provided by Doeg.
      1. In Hebrew literature, as in I Samuel, names are very important. Why do you think the author reported, "then the king sent **someone**..."?
      2. If you were Ahimelech, or one of his priests, how would you feel when informed of this commanded presence?

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 22

- B. In 22:12, Saul confronted Ahimelech. In 22:11, when speaking of Ahimelech, Saul used the priest's name. When speaking to the priest, directly, Saul refused to use his name, calling him, "Son of Ahitub." Why would he do this?
  - C. In 22:13, Saul brought charges against Ahimelech.
    - 1. In view of the report in chapter 21, how would you evaluate these charges?
    - 2. There appears to be one serious problem with Saul's assessment. What is it?
  - D. In 22:14, Ahimelech responded to the charges.
    - 1. How would you describe the tone of these remarks?
    - 2. In this verse, Ahimelech described David in four different ways.
      - a. What was Ahimelech trying to say in these descriptions?
      - b. Are these descriptions true?
      - c. How do you think Saul would react to this part of Ahimelech's defense?
  - E. In 22:15, Ahimelech continued his response. How would you summarize his defense in this verse?
  - F. In 22:16, Saul pronounced sentence upon Ahimelech.
    - 1. What was that sentence?
    - 2. How would you describe the justice of this trial?
  - G. In 22:17, Saul instructed the guards to carry out the sentence.
    - 1. Why was Saul comfortable giving the command, but the guards were afraid to carry it out?
    - 2. What was the consequence of this event?
  - H. In 22:18, Doeg was asked to do what the guards were afraid to do. How can one account for this situation?
  - I. In 22:19, Doeg changed positions because of his actions in verse 18.
    - 1. What was Doeg's title prior to this event?
    - 2. What function was he performing in this verse?
    - 3. What was the ultimate consequence, for Israel, of the things Doeg did on this occasion?
6. In I Samuel 22:20-23, Ahimelech's son fled to tell David of the destruction of Nob.
- A. In 22:20, 21, One of Ahimelech's sons escaped to tell David of the destruction of the city. What new information does this provide for us?
  - B. In 22:22, David responded to the news Abiathar brought. Read this verse again, very carefully. How would you describe David's feelings as pictured in this verse?
  - C. In 22:23, David gave Abiathar instructions.
    - 1. What did David say?
    - 2. How did he say it?
    - 3. What does this tell us about David?
7. Review your study of chapter 22.
- A. What lessons have you discovered about the way God deals with us?
  - B. What lessons have you discovered about the way God deals with the disobedient?
  - C. What will you do as a result of these discoveries?





## LESSON 22

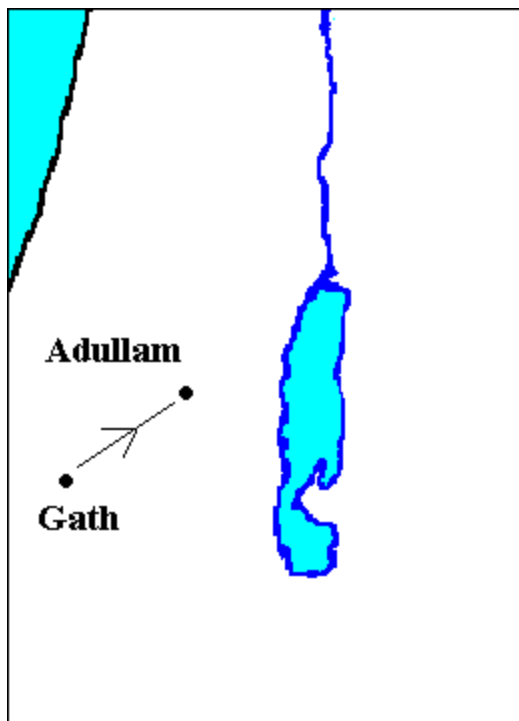
### SAUL SLEW AHIMELECH AND THE PEOPLE OF NOB – I SAMUEL 22:1 – 23

There are only five paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 22. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each paragraph.

22:1-2	David and 400 Discontents Hide in Adullam Cave
22:3-5	David Hid His Parents in Moab
22:6-10	Doeg Informed Saul About David's Visit to Nob
22:11-19	Doeg Killed Priests and People of Nob
22:20-23	Ahimelech's Son Fled to Tell David of Destruction of Nob

#### I Samuel 22:1-2 – David and 400 Discontents Hide in Cave of Adullam

*So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard of it, they went down there to him. I Samuel 22:1*



At the end of the previous chapter, David was in Gath, but he was fearful for his life. The king of Gath, Achish, was saying things that warned David that he had to move on. As you can see on this map, he went to the Cave of Adullam. This is a cave complex just outside the city of Adullam. It is approximately 15 miles from Gath.

Notice that the text says that David “escaped to the cave of Adullam.” The significance here is that David knew that his life was in jeopardy in Gath. He had to flee the area in order to keep from being killed by the people loyal to Achish.

There is a phenomenon here that people from western civilizations do not understand very well. In eastern cultures, they have a system of family that is quite different from ours. The extended family is a single unit. In many parts of the near east, the extended family will live under one roof if at all possible. In parts of Israel, one can see huge Bedouin tents that cover at least a half-acre of ground. They have large families. As each son is married, they simply add another room to the expanding tent. In these extended families, each person is responsible to every other person in the family. If someone in the family is in need, every man in

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that family must help. If one is in danger, the defense is every man's responsibility. It is not at all surprising that the entire family came to him.

The text does not tell us how the family knew that David went to Adullam. It simply says that they went there. It appears that they were joining his cause. This is part of what Saul had to be very careful about. Extended families were huge forces with great motivation. Add to this the fact that people repeatedly aligned themselves with abused people. Nowhere is this so true as with the family.

You may remember, in chapter 17, that when David went to visit his brothers, they cast doubts about his motives and made fun of his youthful abilities, at least as they viewed them. Of course, we do not see that after he killed Goliath and humiliated them as well as Saul and his entire army. The family now viewed David as the liberator of Israel. There was no possible way to tell them that their son and brother was as guilty as Saul tried to make him out to be.

*And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented, gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him. I Samuel 22:2*

One of the political constants in history is evident here. People will quietly endure an oppressive regime they are unable to topple, at least for a long time. Let a leader or force surface which is capable of releasing them from this bondage and allegiances shift instantly. This is the thing with which Saul had to contend. Guilty or innocent, let someone seem abused and the world flocks to their defense. Add to this that there were droves of people who also felt that they were being mistreated themselves. You then have a group united and solidified by a cause.

This verse also adds another ingredient. Another group of individuals flocked to David's support. The author identified them as a very different group. These people were quite upset, but for the most part were not as abused. The author described them as follows:

1. **"In distress"** - The word so translated is "matsowq" (מַצוֹק). This is described "disability." It is "to be the subject of oppression." One might say it, "a life poured out by extreme pressure.
2. **"In debt"** – this word is "nasha" (נָשָׂא). It describes one who is being pressured to repay a debt he is unable to pay. The threat of this is that he would be sold as a slave, his belongings confiscated. He would be humiliated before his extended family.

One of the things to notice about the people who gathered to support David is that they represent several different levels of emotion, commitment and frustration. These facts represent a very difficult problem for any leader to manipulate.

These groups, however, have one thing in common. These people were particularly dangerous because each in his own way had nothing to lose. Such people cannot be hurt, even if their lives are taken. When such people find a leader who shares their cause and passion, the total dedication to the task is unbelievable.

David was as incensed as they were. He was a proven military leader. The common bond between leader and his men could not easily be overestimated.

David's army was made up of 400 men. This was not a huge force in comparison with the huge force that Saul had at his disposal. On the other hand, when you are a group in hiding and on the run, 400 people is a lot of people to be responsible for and to provide for their needs.

### I Samuel 22:3-5 – David Hid His Parents in Moab

*And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you until I know what God will do for me." I Samuel 22:3*

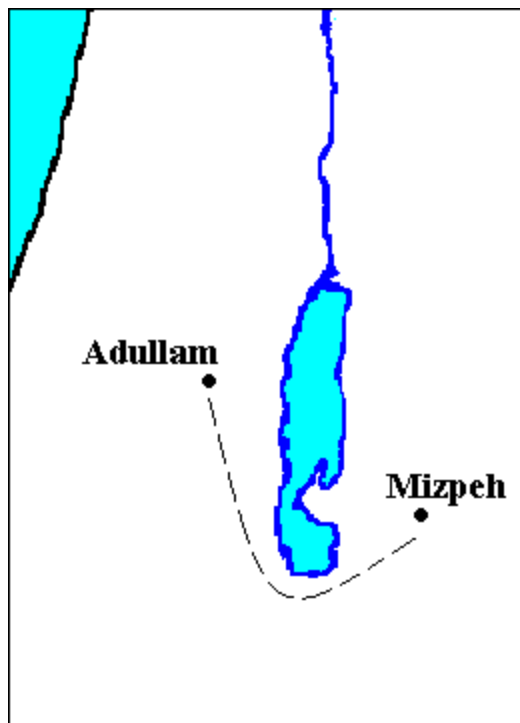
David had some advantages, but he also had some limitations. He was at a bit of a disadvantage but he knew it. He realized that he was particularly vulnerable as long as his parents were at large. Saul may not be

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able to find David, but if Saul held David's parents or members of his family, he could make life most difficult for this rebel leader. Saul could exert some strong influence over David by threatening his parents or other family members. Tyrants have done this through the centuries. David's brothers had joined him in the cave complex to stand with him against Saul. Though the previous verse did not indicate it, the parents appear to have come with the other brothers.

David's brothers were with him in the wilderness. His parents, however, would not dare to return to their home lest the men of Saul take them into custody and threaten their lives. Again, with David and his men on the run, it would not be possible for his parents to keep up with the younger men who could flee easily.

David did something quite unusual. He made contact with the king of Moab seeking help. Moab had not been all that friendly to Israel. There was a possibility, however, that they would be willing to accommodate David because of their mutual disdain for Saul. David had no way to know if they would be kind to his parents if they agreed to take them into their region. It was, after all, a very serious thing to offer comfort to the enemy of a neighboring kingdom. This reveals the level of desperation that David had not experienced before. In order to accomplish this solution, David had to take the monumental risk of traveling a long distance. One of the rules of battle is that if you can force your enemy to travel, you can find him and destroy him. On any leg of this journey, David could have been spotted and captured. This would mean certain death and David knew it.



On the map, you can see that this is a trip of about 75 miles. That is about a four-day journey through this very difficult terrain for people who were young and able to travel quickly. The return trip, of course, would be the same distance. With his aged parents, this would take at least eight days. From the early verses in this chapter, it appears that David's parents accompanied him on this journey. This would mean that David was in an exposed situation for at least eight days on the trip to Moab and about five days on the return trip. Add to this the fact that he would be traveling through areas where there were large numbers of Saul's army. You must add to this situation the fact that David would have to be on the alert the entire time lest he be observed by Saul's army which was everywhere looking for him. This was a long time for a wanted man to be exposed.

Observe the way David concluded his request of the king of Moab, "Until I know what God will do for me." This was a very delicate diplomatic maneuver. It was important that David find a way to protect his parents during the time that he was in this struggle with Saul. There was no way to know just how long the

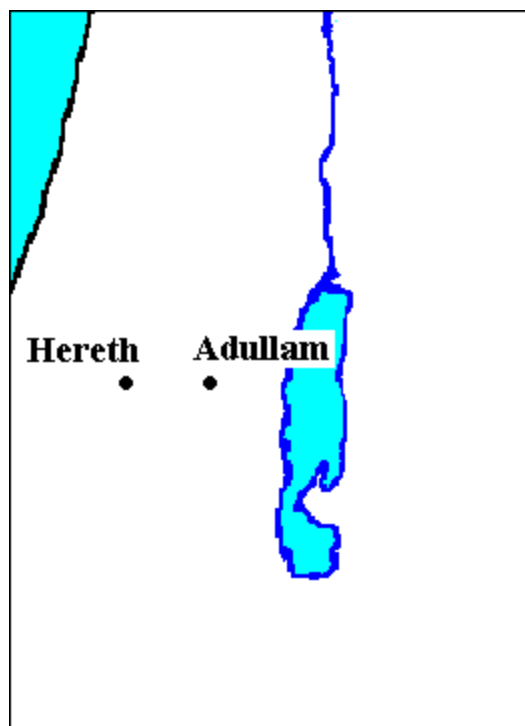
## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

king would be host to David's family. Again, if Saul found out that David's parents were in Moab, this would strain to the breaking point the already delicate relationships between the two countries. Add to this the fact that the people of Moab were idolaters and did not worship God. Still, David was very direct about the fact that it would be God who determined the outcome of this struggle. If you look through the historical and poetical portions of the Bible that deal with the life and work of David, you will note that he tended to use the name "LORD" when referring to Deity. When he used the name "God" it was almost always in a situation where it had great meaning. The name "God" highlighted the fact that God was a God of mercy. David highlighted that fact in this choice.

*Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. I Samuel 22:4*

The author does not acquaint us with the deliberations that ensued David's request of the king of Moab. He only lets us know that the parents were going to stay in Moab during the long struggle to avoid being captured by Saul. With the help of God, David was able to make this long trip and return without being discovered and captured by the army of Saul.

*And the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth. I Samuel 22:5*



We do not know where David came in touch with the prophet Gad. As you study the story of David, you will encounter this prophet in connection with some of the major decisions that David must make. At great personal risk, the prophet came to the place where David was in hiding and announced the word of the LORD for him. Put yourself in the place of David for a moment. Everyone in that part of the world knew that if there was to be a military engagement of any kind, the safest place to be was in the mountains and especially in the areas where there were many, many caves. No enemy army would chase retreating soldiers into the hills and mountains, especially in such a difficult area as Adullam. This is an area where there were many hills and lots of rough terrain and caves where David and his men could hide and surprise them. This is interesting because this was a prophet telling a military man what to do in a military situation. David obeyed without asking a question about the reasoning behind such an instruction. Nevertheless, God instructed Da-

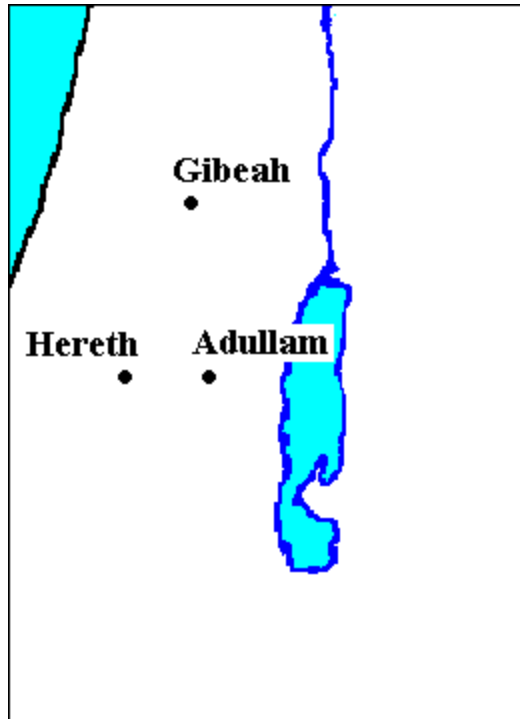
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vid to go and hide in the forest of Hereth and David did exactly as the prophet commanded. This gives us an insight into the character of David one more time.

Think about this move. Granted, there were hiding places in the forest. It was, however, a relatively flat area and was not that far from the cave complex near Adullam. In order to do as the prophet commanded, David would have to give up the security of the caves for the relatively less secure hiding place in the forests of Hereth.

### I Samuel 22:6-10 – Doeg Informed Saul About David's Visit to Nob

*Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. I Samuel 22:6*



One of the great dangers of clandestine hiding is the probability of being discovered. That is exactly what happened when David moved from the Caves near Adullam to the forests of Hereth some 15 miles away. Eventually word reached Saul that David and his men had been discovered. As you can see on the map, the location of David and his men was not that far from the place where Saul and his massive army were encamped hoping for a sighting of David and his small band of men.

There are no words, like the word “but” to indicate that there is a strong contrast in this verse. There is a contrast just the same. The verse begins with information that word had reached Saul concerning the location of David and his men. The word “now” indicates a change in the direction of the conversation. There is a picture of Saul in a very relaxing position with his servants all standing around him. The problem with this picture is that Saul has his spear in his hands. One must wonder, if he is relaxing, why does he have his spear in his hands? One would be surprised if these servants did not wonder the same thing. Anyone who had been around Saul very long would know that whenever the king held his spear in his hand and was not involved in combat, everyone should be on high alert.

*And Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? I Samuel 22:7*

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It sounds as though the people standing around King Saul were trusted people from the tribe of Benjamin. In a few verses, we will see that this may not be true. It appears that Saul may have used the words, “O Benjamites” as a term of derision. We know that at the end of the book of Judges, the Benjamites had a terrible reputation and caused great grief and struggle in the land of Israel. It may be that Saul was dealing with this when he derided these people as “Benjamites.” He asked a question. But it was rhetorical. He knew the answer and so did they. He did not want to hear an answer; he wanted to make a point. If you read carefully, you will note that this is really an accusation in the making. Saul expressed his serious concern in these words, “Will the son of Jesse give to all of you fields and vineyards?” The expected answer is “NO.” Observe, again, that Saul refused to use the name “David.” Saul’s accusation was thinly veiled. He was really saying, “Why are you playing into the hand of David when he will not do for you what I certainly will do?” This would make every one of them stop short. To be accused of treasonous activity, in the very presence of the king, was the worst thing that could possibly happen to them. He might as well have said to them, how could you be so naïve as to be party to what David is doing when I have done so much for you and would continue to do so?” It was very clear that he was convinced that they knew where David was hiding and just did not tell him. Had not Saul tried so hard to find David; had he not been so unsuccessful; it would be less traumatic to hear these words, but Saul’s exasperation point had been reached and it was clear to them all. Saul, however, was not finished with his accusation.

*"For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as it is this day."  
I Samuel 22:8*

This was a very intense accusation to say the least. Saul was announcing that someone was going to die for treason, and they knew it. This was a very serious accusation, as much for Saul as for the men who were his advisors. If Saul was right, then all of these advisors were traitors and were going to die. For Saul, however, it was just as serious. If they had been most loyal to him and he accused all of them of treason, then he has destroyed whatever loyalty they had for him and put them on the defense concerning their lives. After that, these people would try to tell him what he wanted to hear, rather than what he needed to hear. One suspects that Saul had some convincing evidence that they had not been completely up front with him about David.

This is the first mention of the fact that Saul knew about the covenant between Jonathan and David. He appears to have information convincing him that these men knew about the covenant and did not share that information with him. We do not know all the details of this charge, but on the surface it appears that Saul had it right. Apparently none of these men told him about the covenant between David and Jonathan. We cannot be sure that they knew for a fact that there was such a covenant. Again, notice that Saul refused to use the name “David,” but chose to speak of him as “the son of Jesse.” This had to be intentional because there were several sons of Jesse. At least two others had been in the service of Saul.

Saul’s second charge against these men is that, “There is none of you who is sorry for me...” This is a blanket statement, which may or may not be true. The word translated “sorry” is more than simple sorrow for misfortune. It is the word “chalah” (חָלָה) and means to be sick or afflicted. There is, however, an even deeper meaning than this. It is the word used to describe a woman’s pain when she is in travail before giving birth. It is to be wounded for someone because of the pain they experience. Saul is saying that there is not one of them that feels his pain as deeply as he does. One might describe it as screaming out, “none of you care how deeply I am hurt,” or “not one of you feel what I feel.” It is a way of suggesting that no one really cares about how he suffers.

Saul’s third charge is similar in nature. He said, “(none of you) discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me.” Observe what Saul has done by the way he said this. He has, in the heat of his anger, placed the blame for David’s actions on his son Jonathan. The word translated “discloses” is galah

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(גָּלַף). The word means “to totally disclose,” “to tell all,” “to reveal.” The word would literally portray the way a person reveals themselves if they remove their clothing. This causes one to wonder if Saul was saying that they may have hinted to him that Jonathan had made a covenant with David, but never really said so. We cannot be sure of this. When Saul said that Jonathan had stirred up David, the word translated “stirred up” is “quwm” (קוּם) and means “to rouse up,” “to confirm.” In this instance, it appears that Saul is saying that by confirming the things that Jonathan told David, the prince stirred David up to lie in ambush for Saul.

It is interesting that Saul spoke of David as “lying in ambush for Saul when in reality Saul was trying to track down David. Saul has shifted the spotlight away from himself and placed both David and Jonathan in the positions of guilt and responsibility for what was happening at this very time.

*Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, answered and said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. I Samuel 22:9*

In verse seven, Saul clearly referred to the men who attended him as “Benjamites.” In this verse, the author identifies one of the men who stood by Saul’s servants as “Doeg, the Edomite.” It is possible that the servants to whom Saul spoke were Benjamites. It is doubtful, however, that one who was not part of this group, and an Edomite, would be allowed to listen in on this conversation. This is especially true considering that Doeg’s task was that of chief shepherd for Saul. It is quite interesting that one of the people in Saul’s employ was an Edomite. Saul had done battle with the Edomites and Moabites. Both of these peoples had been enemies of long standing against the people of Israel.

It is difficult to understand why Doeg would come forth at this juncture and tell this information when Saul had just chastised and threatened the inner circle because they did not tell him what they knew. Immediately after this dangerous, distressing announcement, Doeg admits that he knew something that he had not shared with Saul. The thing that Doeg stated in this verse was absolutely true. That does not mean that it was appropriate or that it conveyed a message that was true. It is not unusual for people skilled in deception to be able to tell truth in such a way that it accomplishes the deception they wish to convey. Whether Doeg knew more than he said is a point of conjecture. The text does not say. No matter what, Doeg did see David coming to the city of Nob. He did see David coming to see Ahimelech. One wonders if Doeg realized that he was placing himself in serious jeopardy by his announcement. It is a wonder that Saul did not threaten him and ask, then why did you not tell me everything about this?

*And he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." I Samuel 22:10*

Doeg continued his report. He made several accusations that appeared differently than they were. Doeg said that Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for David. It was Ahimelech’s responsibility to inquire of the LORD for the people. If you go back to chapter 21, however, there is no report there that Ahimelech did inquire of the LORD on behalf of David. It is possible that Doeg saw Ahimelech inquire of the LORD on behalf of David, but it is not probable.

Doeg told Saul that Ahimelech had given David provisions. That is true, Ahimelech gave David the stale bread of presence, but Doeg did not tell Saul, and he probably did not know that David had not informed Ahimelech of the reason that he was in such need.

Doeg told Saul that Ahimelech had given David the sword that the young warrior had used to behead Goliath. That was true. He did see that. This convinced Saul that Ahimelech had conspired with David against the king. That was not what Ahimelech was doing when he gave David the sword. The sword was, in fact, the property of David.

Doeg did see Ahimelech do some of these things, but he told them to Saul in such a way that Saul got the deliberate impression that Ahimelech had conspired with David against the king. The truth is that Ahimelech might have been willing to conspire with David against the king, but the things that Doeg reported were given

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in a slanted way that indicated that they were in fact treasonous when David had hidden his real purposes from Ahimelech

### I Samuel 22:11-19 – Doeg Killed Priests and People in Nob

*Then the king sent someone to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. I Samuel 22:11*

When the king heard these reports, he was thoroughly convinced that Ahimelech was guilty of treason. It is interesting that when Saul instructed “someone” to go and bring the people from the city of Nob, he never indicated why he wanted them all to come. In times like these, when a man and all his extended family are required to come before the king along with all the priests who served with him, someone should have stumbled to the fact that there was serious trouble awaiting them in the king’s presence. They apparently did not attempt to escape before reaching the place where Saul was encamped, but we need to be reminded again that they had no idea of what they might have done or why the king wanted to see them. They had done nothing wrong, at least that they knew about.

*And Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." I Samuel 22:12*

The opening words of Saul should have warned Ahimelech that he was in trouble. The problem was that not knowing what he was being called before the king to explain, he would only feel confusion, not guilt. David had not done Ahimelech a favor by hiding the truth from him. Saul, on the other hand, assumed that Ahimelech was totally involved in David’s so called plot against him.

There is no doubt in my mind that Saul knew the name of this chief priest. Again, here, Saul refused to use the name of a man whom he disdained just as he refused to use the name David.

There is an interesting observation as you look carefully at the words in this brief verse. The words of Saul were harsh and demanding. The words of Ahimelech, however, were respectful if not a bit confusing. The truth is that this perfectly portrays the feelings of both at this instant.

*Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, that he should rise up against me by lying in ambush as it is this day?" I Samuel 22:13*

There is no doubt that Saul saw circumstantial evidence of Ahimelech’s conspiracy, but not all of the testimony was true and there is no reason to assume that the evidence he did see was an honest report of treason. Nevertheless, Saul drew a conclusion and charged Ahimelech falsely. The problem dealt with the motive which could only be insinuated. Saul assumed that what the motive appeared to be was real. That, of course, should have been more carefully considered.

*Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house?" I Samuel 22:14*

It is interesting that Saul did not invite Ahimelech to respond to his accusations. Saul did phrase his accusations in the form of questions which would seem to authorize Ahimelech to respond with an appropriate answer.

If you read this verse carefully, you get the impression that Ahimelech is upset. I would be. It sounds like a defense of David and in one sense it was. This was not a time to defend David. It was Ahimelech whose life was at stake in this instant.

In this verse, Ahimelech gave four statements of defense against what Saul had said. Each of these statements of defense deal with David and not with Ahimelech.



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1. **“Who among all your servants is as faithful as David?”** This was not a statement that Saul wanted to hear. First, he did not believe what Ahimelech just said. He did not believe that David was more faithful than any other servant. Second, that was not the issue. The issue was, “why have you conspired with the son of Jesse against me?” The truth of the matter was that David had been most faithful. It was a fact that David was being heralded more highly than Saul and the king could not handle that.
2. **“Even the king’s son-in-law.”** Again this is not something that Saul wanted brought to his attention. Even though it was Saul’s idea for David to be married to his daughter. Granted, it is possible to be the son-in-law and still conspire to destroy the person. David had never done that. This did not matter because Saul was convinced that it was true and would not be confused with the facts.
3. **“Who is captain over your guard.”** We must remind ourselves that David became the captain of the guard on behalf of Saul when demoted from a more highly respected position by Saul. It would be easy for Saul to assume that David was motivated by his anger over this dismissal. Ahimelech’s point is well taken. You do not choose just anyone to be captain of your guard. This person must be chosen because of their undeniable loyalty to the king. David had proven his loyalty to the king many times. It was a valid choice that Saul made when he made David captain, leader of those who protect him from harm.
4. **“Is honored in your house.”** Ahimelech’s point was well taken. David was honored by the people, but he was also honored within the palace. Ahimelech pointed out that the things that Saul had done involving David and the response of people to his leadership and valor should tell Saul that there was no way that David was going to disgrace the honor that had been given him by the king and his household.

In this part of his forceful defense, Ahimelech did focus his attention on David for good reason. Saul believed that David was guilty of treason. Therefore, if Ahimelech had anything whatsoever to do with David, he would be guilty of treason as much as David was. The head priest of Nob clearly demonstrated that there was no foundation for the king to believe that David was an enemy, one guilty of treason.

The truth was that no matter what Ahimelech said, Saul had made up his mind before he instructed that Ahimelech, his family and the priests of Nob be brought to stand before him.

We should be aware of the fact that the killing of the entire family was a way to devastate Ahimelech as much if not more than the taking of his own life. The worst thing that could happen to a Jewish man was for his name to be terminated. When Saul killed the family along with the priest, the family lineage was ended. There would be no one left to carry on his name.

*"Did I just begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair." I Samuel 22:15*

Ahimelech acted on two assumptions. First, he did not know that David had given Saul reason, or so Saul thought, to think of him as a traitor. Ahimelech was operating in the dark. He thought of David as Saul’s strongest supporter and for the priest to pray for David was a form of support for the king himself. It is in the light of these understandings that Ahimelech continued his strongly worded defense.

It did not dawn on Ahimelech that he was digging his own grave with every word he said trying to defend himself. Everything that he said was totally true. He had prayed for both Saul and David in an ongoing fashion. It was his duty and, also, his deep desire to support these two leaders before the LORD. Ahimelech dealt with his continued prayer time for both Saul and David as a requirement that would render him unfaithful if he did not pray for them both.

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One suspects that Ahimelech was shocked that Saul would consider his family to be involved in the treason of which he accused this priest. As you read this verse, it appears that Ahimelech is slowly beginning to realize that there is an agenda of which he was not aware. It is painful to read his defense knowing what Saul was really thinking. Ahimelech did not know it, but he was wasting his breath. When Saul demanded that the whole family attend, the die was already cast. Ahimelech and his family was going to die if only to give a warning to others of the dangers of disloyalty.

*But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!"*  
*I Samuel 22:16*

Again, observe that the author begins this verse with the word "but," which indicates a contrast between the determined defense pursued by Ahimelech and the verdict already determined by Saul. The king's actions at this point are an expression of the rage of frustration. Saul wanted to kill David, but being unable to do so, he vented his murderous wrath on those whom he suspected of supporting his enemy. In our culture, the most one can do against a person is to take their life. That was not the case in that culture. You could take the person's life. You could do more; you could cause his name to cease by destroying his entire family before killing him. This was the greatest shame a man could experience.

*And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD. I Samuel 22:17*

Saul had long since abandoned his fear of God, if ever it really existed. To the devout Jew, the unthinkable would be to kill one whom God had anointed to serve Him in some capacity. This is what David would deal later with when he had the opportunity to kill Saul, but was hindered by the fact that Saul had been anointed by God. The guards who attended Saul were on the spot. If they did not obey Saul's command, he would probably have them killed for not obeying his command. If they did obey Saul's command, they feared God's retribution for touching His anointed. The guards were stuck. They would be wrong no matter what they did. Their hesitation angered Saul.

Look carefully at the explanation Saul gave as he ordered the guards to kill all these priests. He said, "Because their hand also is with David." In the kangaroo trial that Saul conducted, he never asked them if they had sided with David against him. He never opened the door for them to declare their allegiance either for him or for David. He simply assumed that they were with David, against him.

Saul's second charge against Ahimelech and the other priests was "because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." This is the very reason that David did not tell Ahimelech what was happening. He wanted the priest to be able to say, with a clear conscience, that he did not know that David was fleeing. It probably appeared to Saul as though Ahimelech and the priests knew that David was fleeing, but they did not.

*Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod.*  
*I Samuel 22:18*

This was an embarrassing situation for Saul. He was the king whose word was final. He issued an order to destroy and the guards refused to obey. This was just a little picture of how his power to rule had already eroded to the point where people did not any longer see his word as an order to obey without considering alternatives.

It would be natural for Saul to turn to Doeg. In fact, it is surprising that Saul did not turn to Doeg first. In Jewish law, the accuser must be the first to cast a stone at the accused when death was the sentence upon someone they testified against. There were a number of things about the religious customs and laws of the Jews with which Saul seemed to be unaware or at least unconcerned about.

## SAUL SLEW AHIMELECH AND THE PEOPLE OF NOB

Doeg was not afraid to do this. Observe that the author, again, carefully referred to Doeg as “the Edomite.” The people of Edom did not worship God, but rather worshipped a host of idols. Again, he was the head shepherd for Saul. Shepherds had a terrible reputation in relation to their morals. For both of these reasons, it is not surprising that this man would not think twice about the instruction to kill these priests.

Many people, when they look at this story, think in terms of this involving five or six priests. Saul brought all of the priests of Nob to the trial and Doeg slew 85 priests who had served the LORD at the place of worship in Nob. Did all of these priests do something amounting to treason against Saul? Certainly not. This is a picture of unbridled rage, not justice or reason.

*And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he struck with the edge of the sword. I Samuel 22:19*

There is the command of Saul instructing Doeg to kill all the priests from the city of Nob. There is not a report, here, that Saul instructed Doeg to completely destroy the city. Whether or not Saul instructed Doeg to do this is a conjecture, but he did it thoroughly.

Prior to this event, Doeg was a chief shepherd. Now he served Saul as a warrior carrying out the commands of his commander in chief. Apparently he was given permission to go to the city of Nob and kill everyone and everything in the city. When he finished there was only rubble.

There is one other incidental piece of information involved in this verse. If Doeg destroyed all the priests and their families, then he also successfully eliminated the public worship of God in that place and area.

### **I Samuel 22:20-23 – Ahimelech’s Son Fled to Tell David of Destruction of Nob**

*But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. I Samuel 22:20, 21*

As you read this verse, you are reminded that God always finds a way to frustrate the plans of the brutal. The author’s use of the word “but” indicates a serious contrast. The author contrasted the command of Saul which Doeg carried out – kill all the priests and their families – and what really happened – one of Ahimelech’s sons, Abiathar, was spared.

This gives us another piece of information. Ahimelech was instructed to bring all of his family with him to the trial. It appears that he left one of his sons at home so that if the family were put to death, the name would not be destroyed. This suggests that Ahimelech had at least some question about his safety when called to appear before the king. Not only did Abiathar survive the murder of the rest of his family; he also managed to escape when Doeg came to completely destroy the rest of the city.

Abiathar fled to be with David. When he arrived, he told David the entire sad story. This indicates that it was not the youngest son of Ahimelech that was hidden away, but one who was of age. He was able to hide; to flee to David and to report all that had taken place.

*Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about the death of every person in your father's household. I Samuel 22:22*

Put yourself in the place of David. He listened to Abiathar breathlessly blurt out the tragic details of the murder of the priests and the entire city of Nob. David was a man of great sensitivity concerning his own actions. It would not be possible to fully describe how deeply David felt his sorrow over what had happened to others as they helped him.

David was holding himself responsible for the destruction of the people and the city itself. The tension created by this disclosure had to be most intense. It is the kind of responsibility that no words can relieve. The problem is that David had the same tensions about himself, his relatives and his men. One wonders how David would know on that day that Doeg would tell Saul what he had seen. Did Doeg have that kind of repu-

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tation? Did he have a look on his face that revealed what he was thinking? One has to wonder what it was that made David say that he knew Doeg would tell Saul he had seen David.

*Stay with me, do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life; for you are safe with me."*  
*I Samuel 22:23*

David did the only positive thing he could do. He invited Abiathar to stay with him. He knew that Saul would kill Abimelech's son if he found out about him. He knew that the only thing he could offer the young Levite was the protection of his life as he did for the 400 who followed him. In this verse, one sees a pattern in the thinking of David. He was busy caring for others and protecting them, often at the risk of his own life.

### CONCLUSION

Chapter 22 is a study in the interrelationship between God, His followers and those who stand against them both. The lessons are found in the interplay between the three. It looks something like this.

THE OBEDIENT	THE DISOBEDIENT	ABOUT GOD'S DEALINGS
v. 1 – God protects those who trust Him. v. 2 – They do not need to be perfect for God to watch over them. v. 5 – God calls righteous to do the thing that may seem illogical. It will require greater trust. v. 12 – They can be exposed to suffering when simply being obedient. v. 23 – They have a heart of compassion and comfort for others who struggle as we do.	v. 6 – We should never be surprised at the depths of their inhumanity. v. 7 – They are often victims of motives they do not understand. Still they act on these. v. 8 – They have a penchant to shift blame away from themselves. v. 9 – They will set others up for punishment. v. 14 – They will act upon appearances rather than fact. Honest explanations will not help. v. 18 – They have no fear of God or His anointed.	v. 1 – God will protect the righteous. v. 5 – God will guide the righteous in ways that seem illogical. It will require their greater trust, but He will protect us. v. 20 – God will frustrate the evil designs of those who purpose to do evil.

We spend our entire life in the midst of this interplay. It hurts to suffer for our own misdeeds. It hurts even more to suffer for the misdeeds of others.

The learning experience, in this mix, has to do with our desire, our anticipation. When difficulty comes, we want to pray for relief, escape from pain. It is the growth that God leads us into, to be able to see the difficult come and thank God for the opportunity to stand firm rather than cry out for release. This does not happen overnight. God must lead us through more than one of these painful experiences before we can clearly see pain through His eyes. Only then will we be able to see what He saw and say with Him, "Not my will,..."

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 23

### DAVID DEFEATED PHILISTINES AT KEILAH – I SAMUEL 23:1 – 29

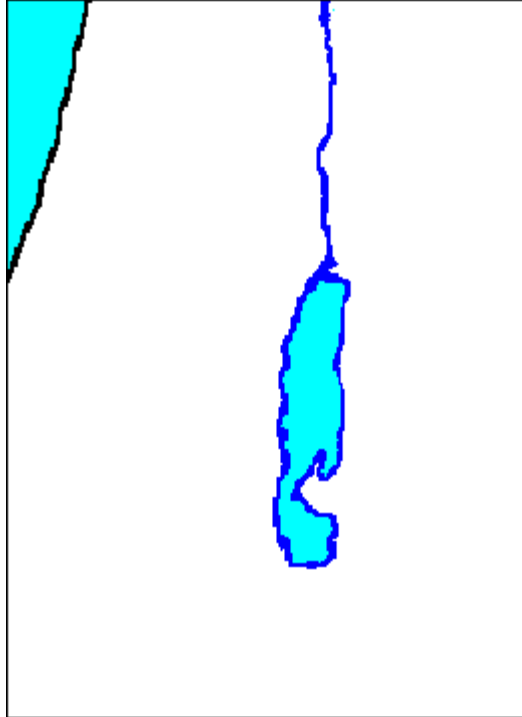
1. There are five paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 23. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each of these paragraphs.

23:1-6	
23:7-14	
23:15-18	
23:19-23	
23:24-29	

2. In I Samuel 23:1-6, David destroyed the Philistines at Keilah.
- A. In 23:1, David learned of the Philistine attack.
    - 1. Read this verse very carefully.
    - 2. What information does this report disclose?
    - 3. What are the implications of this report?
  - B. In 23:2, David, having heard the report, turned to the LORD.
    - 1. What does this tell us about David?
    - 2. What role is David fulfilling here?
    - 3. Aside from the announcement of victory, what do you see in the LORD’S response to David?
  - C. In 23:3, David’s 400 men respond to this divine announcement.
    - 1. When they responded, they gave two reasons. What are they?
    - 2. In view of the LORD’S prediction, how can we account for the reaction of David’s men?
  - D. In 23:4, David inquired again concerning this pending military action.
    - 1. Though the text does not say, what possible reasons can you find for David asking the LORD again concerning this military action?
    - 2. Look again at the LORD’S response. Compare/contrast it with His response in verse two.
  - E. In 23:5, David and his men fought the Philistines in Keilah.
    - 1. In this verse, the author said, “He led away their livestock”. To whom does the word “their” refer?
    - 2. What does the information about “livestock” add to the message of this verse?
  - F. In 23:6, Abiathar appears, again, in the text.
    - 1. Compare the teachings of 23:6 with 22:20. What did you discover?
    - 2. In 23:6, the author spoke of Abiathar arriving with the ephod in his hands. What is the significance of this remark?
3. In I Samuel 23:7-14, David fled Saul’s attempted trap at Keilah.
- A. In 23:7, Saul learned of David being in Keilah.
    - 1. Evaluate Saul’s reaction?
    - 2. Saul said, “He shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars.” What does this mean?
  - B. In 23:9-12, David dealt with the news that Saul knew of his whereabouts.
    - 1. In 23:9, what is the significance of David’s call for the ephod?
    - 2. In 23:10-12, David sought guidance from the LORD concerning this situation.
      - a. What was David’s concern in his questions to the LORD in verse 11?
      - b. Reflect upon the LORD’S answer. What does this tell you?

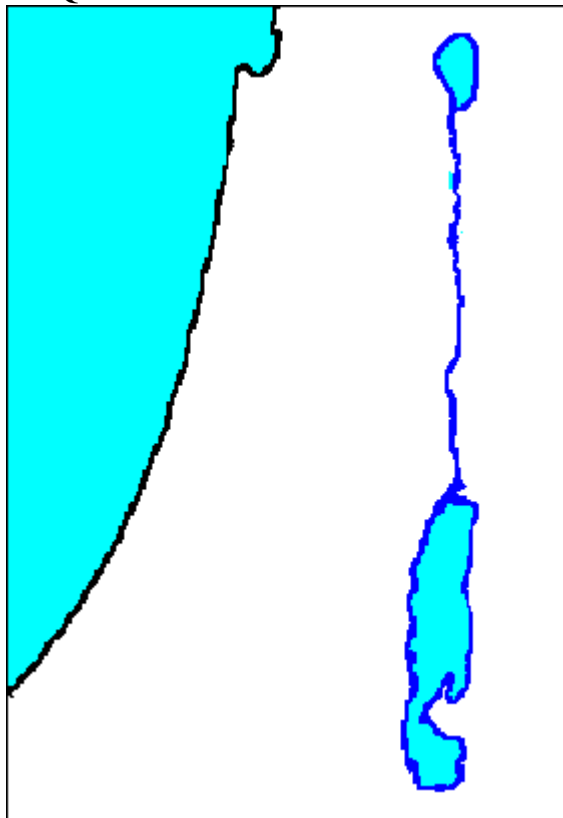
### THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- c. Read verse 11 again. What does this verse tell you about David's emotional state?
- d. In 23:12, David asked of the LORD again. How does this question differ from his question in verse 11?
- C. In 23:13, David and his men left Keilah.
  - 1. The author said, "They went wherever they could go." What did he mean by this?
  - 2. In this verse the author spoke of, "David and his men, about 600..." In 22:2, the author listed the number as "about 400 men." How can we account for this difference?
- D. In 23:14, David moved his men, again.
  - 1. On this map, locate where David and his men were now hiding.



- 2. In this verse, the author said, "But God did not deliver him into his hand." How would you explain this statement to a new believer?
- 4. In I Samuel 23:15-18, Jonathan assured David of their covenant
  - A. In 23:15, Saul was seeking David at Horesh. Locate the city on this map.

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 23



- B. In 23:16, Apparently Saul could not find David in Hebron, but Jonathan went down and found him.
1. How can we account for this?
  2. In this verse, the author said that, “Jonathan encouraged him (David) in God.” What did he mean?
- C. In 23:17, Jonathan continued talking with David.
1. What four things did he suggest in his attempt to help David deal with his fear?
  2. Jonathan said to David, “I will be next to you.” What did he mean?
- D. In 23:18, David and Jonathan made their third covenant with each other before the Lord. (See 18:3 and Chapter 20)
1. Compare and contrast the three covenants David and Jonathan made.
  2. If Jonathan wanted to encourage David, why did he make the covenant and then go home? Why didn’t he stay and support David?
5. In I Samuel 23:19-23, the men of Ziph betrayed David to Saul.
- A. In 23:19, 20, the author records the betrayal.
1. Why would the men of Ziph want to betray David to Saul?
  2. What were the men of Ziph prepared to do in this betrayal of David?
  3. What risks could they be taking in this role?
- B. In 23:21, Saul responded to the invitation by the men of Ziph.
1. Saul said to them, “May you be blessed of the LORD.” Think carefully about this response. How would you evaluate this response in view of the context?
  2. Saul said, “You have had compassion on me.” In what way was their action an expression of compassion?
- C. In 23:22, 23, Saul gave the men of Ziph another assignment.
1. What did Saul instruct the men of Ziph to do?

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2. What reason did Saul give for instructing them in this way? Can you think of any other reasons?
6. In I Samuel 23:24-29, Saul's search for David was interrupted by the Philistine attack.
  - A. In 23:24, the men of Ziph returned home.
    1. Read this verse very carefully. Did they return home alone?
    2. Consult an Encyclopedia. What was the area of Maon like?
  - B. In 23:25, 26, Saul pursued David in the wilderness of Maon.
    1. Compare Saul's search in this area with his searches elsewhere in chapter 23.
    2. How would you describe this expedition?
  - C. In 23:27, 28, Saul was informed of the Philistine attack.
    1. Reflect on 23:24-28 in view of this news of the Philistine attack. What do you conclude from this review?
    2. Describe Saul's probable feelings as he abandoned the search for David and hurried north to encounter the Philistines?
  - D. In 23:29, David moved again.
    1. Study a map in your Bible or Bible Atlas. How would you describe this move?
    2. Review the moves David made in this chapter.
      - a. In what ways were they similar?
      - b. In what ways were they different?
7. Review your study of chapter 23. See if you can find a strain of thought that runs through the entire chapter.
  - A. Were you able to find that strain of thought?
  - B. How do you compare?
  - C. As you look at this comparison, what changes does it suggest for your life?



## LESSON 23

### DAVID DEFEATED PHILISTINES AT KEILAH – I SAMUEL 23:1 – 29

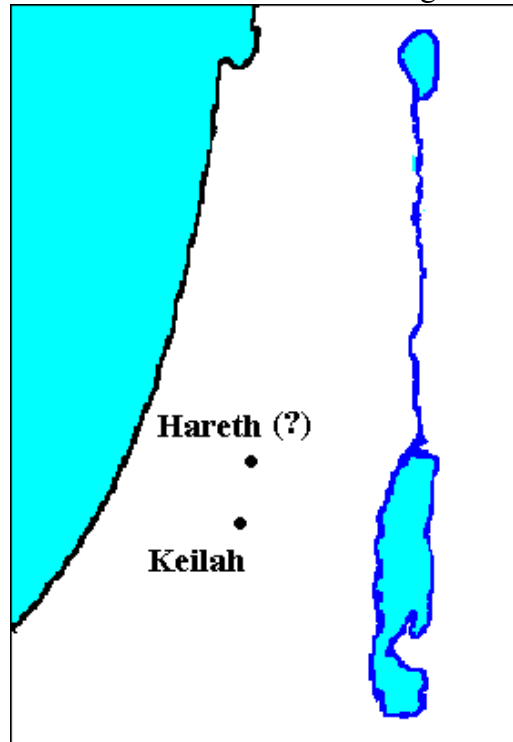
There are five paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 23. You will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs on the following table.

23:1-6	David Destroyed the Philistines at Keilah
23:7-14	David Fled Saul's Attempted Trap at Keilah
23:15-18	Jonathan Assured David of Their Covenant
23:19-23	Men of Ziph Betray David to Saul
23:24-29	Saul's Search for David Interrupted by Philistine Attack

#### I Samuel 23:1-6 – David Destroyed the Philistines at Keilah

*Then they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are plundering the threshing floors." I Samuel 23:1*

David received word that the Philistines were battling against the city of Keilah. If David and his men were hiding in the forest of Hareth, then Keilah was only about four miles to the southeast. If, however, they had still been in Adullam, then they would have been at least five miles to the northwest. As you can see on this map, being in the area of Hareth was a definite advantage when dealing with the Philistines.



At the end of the verse, the author included the statement that the Philistines were plundering the threshing floor of the people of Keilah. This is not surprising. The Philistines would rather fight than work their fields. That being said, they would regularly attack their neighbors at harvest time to steal their crops. This provided food for the Philistines, but left the people of the city they conquered without food for the winter.

David had two investments in this situation. He had a running feud with the Philistines because they hated the worship of Jehovah and because they were merciless to the people they captured. His second

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concern was that he could not be aware of the starvation of his own people and not want to do something about it. Whatever else moved the heart of David, he was a compassionate person.

*So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines, and deliver Keilah." I Samuel 23:2*

It is not a surprise that David would go to the LORD with this question. First, David had strong feelings against the Philistines and strong feelings for his countrymen. Though David had strong impulses moving him toward fighting against the Philistines, he still would not do it without consulting the LORD first.

There are those who feel that David did not ask the LORD, but rather asked the prophet Gad to speak to the LORD on their behalf. Observe the way this verse is worded. First, the author wrote, "So David inquired of the LORD." It does not say that he asked the prophet to speak to the LORD on their behalf. Also, the end of the verse is just as clear, "The LORD said to DAVID, go and attack the Philistines, and deliver Keilah." These two statements suggest to this author that David spoke to the LORD personally.

Think about this verse again. If David turns to the LORD to ask directions, how does this compare with the occasions when he, as king, asked a prophet to ask of the LORD what he should do. It appears that David is in reality performing the function of a prophet. This is not a usurped action, but one of necessity.

This was a very dangerous trip for them. As you can see on the above map, this trip is only a few miles in terms of distance. The second thing about this trip is that it was through some of the most rugged terrain in all Israel. The hills and deep valleys are among the most prohibitive in all Israel. Another concern, you can see from this map that it is not that far from the base camp of Saul and his huge army. Any mass movement of this many men would probably attract the attention of the scouts from Saul's army. Add to this the fact that with David and his men in the area of Haresh, the army of the Philistines would have to go past David's hiding place in order to attack the city of Keilah. This being the case, the possibility of his men being blind-sided by the Philistines was very real.

*But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?" I Samuel 23:3*

It is not surprising that David's men were not excited about fighting with the Philistines. First, we must keep in mind that David did not have 400 soldiers, but 400 men. Many of these men had not the slightest idea of how to fight a battle. They just knew that they were tired of the regime of Saul and wanted to be involved in trying to change the scene. These men would be much more reluctant to go up against the Philistines than seasoned soldiers like David would be.

Their logic was not all that great, but they had a point. These men were saying that they were frightened just being in Judah. They knew that they could be cornered by Saul and his men at any moment. To add to this danger the possibility of facing the Philistines in front of them and the possibility of being surprised by Saul's men from behind seemed like much more than they were able to handle at this point.

One must admit that it was highly unlikely for a group of soldiers to express resistance when their commander indicated that they should go into battle. There was something in a soldier that was aggressive to demonstrate just how skillful he was in battle. The week-end warriors who were with David were not likely to be eager for a fight, much less the frightening thought of battling the Philistines in front and the army of Saul from the rear.

*Then David inquired of the LORD once more. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand." I Samuel 23:4*

Though David was a strong warrior, he was also very sensitive to the thinking and fears of his men. On some occasions he might have simply said we are going out there and defeat the Philistines. Though he was quite comfortable that he knew the will of God for his situation, still he returned to ask the LORD again for direction in his choices.

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It is very clear that this request did not represent his needs, but those of his men who were inexperienced in battle. When David inquired a second time of the LORD, the message came through again, go up against the Philistines. In fact, God specifically said that He would give the Philistines into the hands of David. Having asked God a second time with the same reply, it was no longer a question of what they should do, but a question of whether or not they would obey the LORD in this difficult assignment.

*So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah. I Samuel 23:5*

We do not know how David convinced his men to follow him into battle or even if they were convinced. We do know that they went with David and fought against the Philistines. True to His word, the LORD delivered the Philistines into the hands of David. The author, in this verse, used a writing tool to help us understand how unusual it was for David and his men to defeat the Philistine army which was so much better armed and trained. He mentioned the fact that David's men not only defeated the Philistines, which in itself is surprising, but they also took the livestock of the Philistines which was in their camp. This is a suggestion that there was no one left in the Philistine camp to prohibit David's men from taking all of the animals the Philistines brought with them. This was more than a battle won; it was a rout.

Here we can see that both of David's purposes were served in this struggle. David would enjoy defeating the Philistines as everybody knew. What is also true is that David did not just squeak by in defeating the Philistines, but did it in such a way that the people were amazed and shocked at how thoroughly the soldiers of Israel won their cause. The amazing thing about this victory is that David had 400 men, but not 400 soldiers. Still, he won a decisive victory.

*Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand. I Samuel 23:6*

You may remember that in 22:20 it appears that Abiathar fled to David when he was in Adullam. In this verse, however, it appears that Abiathar came to David while he was in Keilah. We cannot be certain which of these is correct. It is reasonable to assume that there were not two occasions when Abiathar came to David. Though the text does not clarify this question, one is tempted to believe that Abiathar came to David in Adullam and then accompanied him to Keilah. There is no way to be certain of this question.

When Abiathar did come to David, the text says that he came "with an ephod in his hand." The ephod is a sleeveless, closefitting vest-like garment worn by the priests. It had clasps on each shoulder where two stones were attached. On these stones were carved the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. The breastplate was attached to the front with a pouch to hold the Urim and Thummim. These two stones were used to determine the will of God. This garment was worn by the priests for ceremonies in the wilderness. It was also worn at the altar in the Holy Place. It figured prominently in the sacrificial rites.

It is interesting that Abiathar came with the ephod in his hand. He was a priest, and would wear this garment when serving in the place of worship. When he was with David, he would be able to use this garment in the conduct of sacrifices for the men who were with David. One does not have to have a tabernacle or temple to make sacrifices. One does need to be pure. This is the reason that the people of Israel were unable to make sacrifices after the destruction of the temple – not because the temple was gone, but because they did not have the ashes of the Red Heifer with which to cleanse the priests. The question remains, why did he have the ephod in his hand? The text does not explain, but it would appear that this points to the possibility that he had to leave in a hurry and took the ephod with him when going to be with David.

### **I Samuel 23:7-14 – David Fled Saul's Attempted Trap at Keilah**

*When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars." I Samuel 23:7*

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The communication system of that day was amazing. Saul knew exactly where David was and what he was doing. Saul's knowledge, however, may have significantly contributed to his sense of frustration. He knew that David, without a real army had decisively defeated the Philistines. Saul would have hoped that if David did engage the Philistines in battle that he would have been killed in the fray.

The text indicates that Saul got really excited when he heard that David was in Keilah. Saul knew both the city and the area very well. It is an area that is not good for battle because it is surrounded by high hills and deep valleys. The thing that excited Saul was that he had been told that David was in the city of Keilah. This city was unusually well protected. Saul remarked that this was a city with double gates. This does not mean that there were gates at both ends of the city. It means that there were two walls around the city, one inside the other. Such a city was very well protected. An invading army is not going to breach these walls that easily. To some extent, double walls would keep the enemy out better than a single wall and a single gate. This also means that it just that much more difficult to escape if a siege is mounted. Saul was convinced that he had David trapped behind the double walls and gates of the city. He wanted to hurry down so that David would not have time to leave the city and flee to more defensible positions.

Think for a minute about the fact that David and his poorly prepared men defeated the Philistines. This was a great benefit to Saul. Nevertheless, Saul continued to try to capture David. This says something important about both men.

*So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.  
I Samuel 23:8*

Saul saw time as of the essence. He hurriedly called his army together to go and attack Keilah in order to trap David. The text does not describe Saul's feelings, but one suspects that in view of the kind of defense Keilah had, there is a plan in the mind that he was relishing. If he and his army could get down to the city of Keilah before David and his men could flee, they could lay siege to the city and starve David and his men to death. Nothing would have pleased Saul more than this.

*Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." I Samuel 23:9*

The ancient communication system worked both ways. It kept Saul informed about David. It also kept David informed about the movements of Saul. Now, David received word that Saul was plotting to come down to Keilah to trap him there. This being the case, he decided that he had to act fast.

David knew that Abiathar, the priest, had brought the ephod with him when he fled to be with David. Though the text does not so inform us, it appears that David used the Urim and Thummim, that were kept in the ephod, in order to determine what the will of the LORD was for him and his men. David also wanted to know some of the specific future events.

*Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Thy servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. I Samuel 23:10*

As we have seen repeatedly, the names for God are used with great care. In this particular instance, David spoke of God as, "O Lord God of Israel." This name highlights two particular pieces of information about God. First, the name Lord highlights the justice of God. The name God, on the other hand, highlights the mercy of God. When used together they describe God as the merciful judge. When David added the words, "of Israel," he highlighted the fact that God had a very personal relationship with Israel as His people. It is as though David was saying, "because you are the merciful judge; because you have a personal, intimate relationship with our people: guide me in this crucial moment."

David, in this prayer, speaks of himself as "thy servant." There is no sense of personal greatness. He simply saw himself as a servant of the LORD. At this point in the prayer, David had a serious concern. David had been informed that Saul and his army were coming to destroy the city of Keilah in order to catch

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David. Obviously, David did not want to see the city destroyed. It was a vital part of the Israelite defenses against the Philistines.

*Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Thy servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Thy servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." I Samuel 23:11*

In a situation like this, the army making siege of the city would prefer to have the one they pursue handed over to them rather than to have to fight to destroy the city and then take their prisoner. David's concern was an appropriate one. When the army came, it would be important to know if the people and leaders of the city would capitulate to pressure or stand firm against a radical ruler. Therefore, David asked of the LORD, will the people of Keilah give me up to Saul.

In this verse, David asked two questions which were crucial to his decisions about his strategy for the encounter. Observe, that David asked the two questions in reverse order. He first wanted to know if the people of Keilah would indeed hand him over to the forces of Saul. He then asked if Saul and his army would come down to Keilah as he had been informed.

Observe also that the LORD answered only the final question. The LORD assured David that Saul would certainly come down to Keilah in an effort to catch David and kill him. That being the case, the situation was very clear. Either the leaders of the city would have to defend their city while the forces of Saul demolished the wall and the city itself, piece by piece, or David would need to be handed over to Saul to be killed. David did not want to see either of these things happen and would be forced to make his strategy decision on the basis of this knowledge.

In his prayer, David referred both to the LORD and to himself. David again referred to God as "the LORD God of Israel." This is a way to emphasize the meaning he had previously attached to this name. David again referred to himself as "Thy servant." David had no misconceptions about his position before God. He was like a slave in God's household, nothing more.

*Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you." I Samuel 23:12*

God had not answered David's first question, so David asked the question again. Observe that David's concern was not just for himself. He asked if the men of Keilah would hand over both David and his men to the forces of Saul. The LORD assured David that he would be turned over to the forces of Saul if they came for him.

This may come as a surprise. Though it often happens, it always comes as a surprise. People who are blessed by being spared death or destruction often respond in a way that indicates ingratitude. One might expect that these people would be very grateful to David because he had spared their city from the destruction that the Philistines certainly would have wreaked on the city had they taken it. Nevertheless, the LORD made it very plain that the men of the city would look beyond the blessing David had given them and turn him over to Saul rather than to risk death and the destruction of their city.

*Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. I Samuel 23:13*

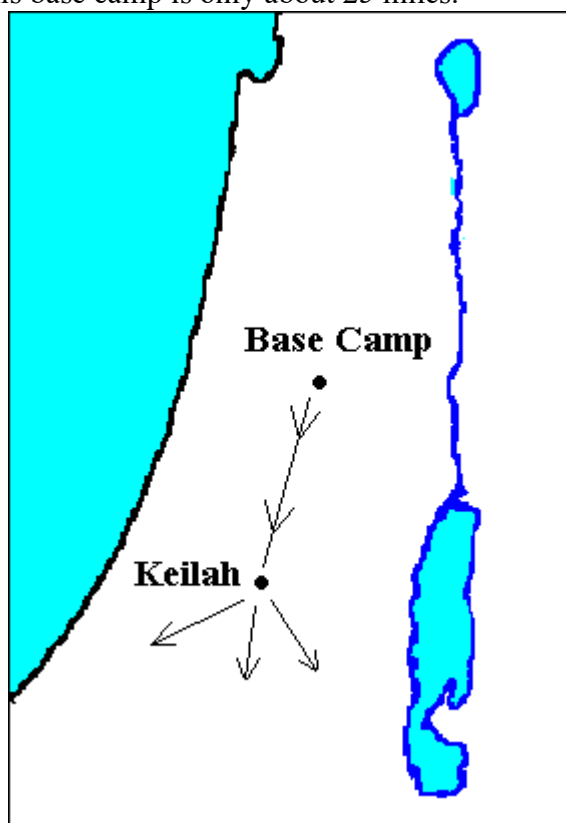
Observe that the author now reported that there were 600 men working with David. You may remember that in 22:2, the author reported that there were 400 men who had come to serve with David. In this verse, the author reported that there were now 600 men. The number of men was growing quickly. The text does not say that these additional 200 men were seasoned warriors, but they were 200 people who were willing to risk everything to serve alongside David.

Learning that Saul was coming and the people of Keilah would surrender him to the control of Saul, David decided to flee the city. He and his 600 men fled into the mountains that were all around this city.

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Notice that the text says, “They went wherever they could go.” This is a description of disorderly flight. They did not all go to the same place, but they were all in the same area and could be gathered together from there.

As you can see on this map, the distance between the place where David was hiding in the area of Keilah and the place where Saul had his base camp is only about 25 miles.



This means that Saul would get the information very quickly and could respond just as quickly. It also meant that David had only a very short time to make his decision and move his men unless he wanted to be caught by Saul and his army.

It is quite clear that Saul had spies in the area. As soon as David and his 600 men fled the city, word was sent to Saul confirming this flight. When Saul received this disappointing message, he gave up the pursuit. It should be clear what this verse is saying. It is not saying that Saul gave up his desire to kill David. It is that he simply gave up on this particular search, but we will see that he has not given up on the determination to find and kill David.

*And David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.  
I Samuel 23:14*

This text helps us to understand that Saul had a network of scouts who were directed to find David and keep Saul posted as to his whereabouts. The text does not speak to the issue, but it appears that David's intelligence gathering system worked just as well as that of Saul. David was in one of the best possible places to avoid detection by Saul and his scouts. The text indicates that David and his men were in the “wilderness strongholds.” These two words give us a total picture of the area where David and his men were hiding. The wilderness is thought of by some as a desert area. Actually, it is not. It is a mountainous area that is just barren rock. People hidden in such an area could see approaching danger a long ways off and take steps to avoid detection. The word “strongholds” is a way to identify a cave complex. In this particular area, there are enough caves to hide a force of men more than twice the size of David's warriors. They could see the forces of Saul approaching, but the forces of Saul could not see them. Even if the army

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of Saul came to the caves, Saul's army would be in more danger than David's men because of the element of surprise. If Saul's men went into one set of caves, David and his men could surprise them and trap them in those caves. Down through the centuries, these cave complexes have been a favorite hiding place for small bands of men defending themselves against forces many times their size.

If you read this verse carefully, it is clear that Saul may think he is fighting against David, but he is not. The author clearly indicated that Saul was seeking to catch David, but it was God who refused to allow Saul to find David. David did the running, but God did the protecting.

### I Samuel 23:15-18 – Jonathan Assured David of Their Covenant

*Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. I Samuel 23:15*

The wilderness of Ziph was a large area with two basic characteristics. Part of the area was like a sand desert. The other part of this wilderness was made up of low mountains with craggy hills and deep ravines. There was an abundance of cave complexes in which David and his men could hide.

We are not too sure of the meaning of the first part of this sentence. Saul had been pursuing David from place to place and David had known it. This was not the first time David became aware of it. In fact, the LORD told David that Saul would come down to Keilah seeking him. It is possible that this means that David again became aware that Saul was looking for him in this area. For some time, David and his men, while they were in Keilah and now in Ziph, had been moving from cave to cave on nearly a daily basis. Now they were in a more secluded area and could stay in a place over a longer period of time.

*And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. I Samuel 23:16*

Observe that the author reported this, "Jonathan, Saul's son..." Normally a statement such as this would be given for purposes of clarification. That would not be the case here. The author talked about Jonathan as Saul's son for many chapters. In this instance, the author included these words for purposes of emphasis. Jonathan was Saul's son, but he was not acting in concert with his father. He was rather the partner with David and Saul was painfully aware of that.

It is interesting that Jonathan could find David quite easily, but his father could not. Undoubtedly this is because the LORD was protecting David from his formidable enemy – Saul. Like his father, Jonathan learned that David was in Ziph. In the text it uses the name "Horesh" which is a place located in the wilderness of Ziph.

Notice that Jonathan went to see David to "encourage him in God." This gives us an insight into the spiritual life of Jonathan. He did not go to remind David of military might that he could use against the king. He went there to present God as all the encouragement that David would need.

*Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father shall not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also." I Samuel 23:17*

The author lets us listen in on the conversation between David and Jonathan. In this encouragement, Jonathan used the word "yare" (יָרֵא) which means "to tremble uncontrollably." This is a bit surprising. David was a warrior with a steady hand. He had seen the heat of battle and faced death many times. Now, however, it appears that the prolonged danger of being trapped and the responsibility of the lives of 600 men who were not seasoned warriors was taking its toll on David.

In one sense, the words of Jonathan are like a prophecy. Jonathan spoke with confidence saying four things:

**"The hand of Saul my father shall not find you"** – This was one of David's greatest worries. If Saul found him, he knew that there would be 601 men who died. This was a responsibility that did not rest easily on David's shoulders. In prolonged struggle, the focus increasingly becomes micro-

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scopic rather than telescopic. Jonathan wants David to be reminded that the struggle will continue, but in the end, Saul will fail to find David and his men.

**“You will be king over Israel”** – This was not so much an appeal to his pride of accomplishment as it was an affirmation of the fact that God had set him apart for that task and it would be done. In the heat of attack, one needs to be reminded that the broader picture will indeed come to pass, even though there are thorns in the meantime. There was no danger that Jonathan would change his mind and decide to obey his father and prepare to be the next king.

**“I will be next to you”** - Jonathan also tried to encourage David by telling him that he, Jonathan, would be by his side, rather than trying to take the throne away from him. One must determine what Jonathan meant by “be by your side.” It literally means “to assist,” “to be second in command.” He was promising to help when David was king. He was willing to be the assistant to do the things that David needed done in his kingdom.

**“Saul, my father, knows that also”** – It is a way of saying that this will not come to Saul as a surprise. It will not make him happy, but he will know it to be the case. Also, it will help him not to fight it too long before giving up and allowing the will of God to be done.

*So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house. I Samuel 23:18*

This is the third covenant that David and Jonathan made with each other. The other two, you may remember, are as follows:

1. I Samuel 18:3 – Jonathan gave David his royal robe and weapons
2. I Samuel 20:15 - Show lovingkindness to Jonathan’s house forever
3. I Samuel 23:18 – Promise to be second in kingdom to David

Each of these covenants is unbreakable. Only death can release them from the vow they took with each other before the LORD. It is important to remember that each of the covenants is different and that David and Jonathan are bound, for life, by all three.

One wonders why Jonathan would leave David at this point having just made a binding covenant with him. The text does not help us with this question. It could be that he felt it best not to engage in battle against his father, though they were definitely at odds over this subject. Another possibility is that he may have felt he could be of more benefit to David by being on the inside of Saul’s regime and keeping him posted concerning events before they unravel.

### **I Samuel 23:19-23 – Men of Ziph Betray David to Saul**

*Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?” I Samuel 23:19*

The allegiance of people is fickle at best. Saul had not done anything to benefit the people of the Ziph region. We mention this to remind us that these people had no debt to Saul for which they would feel pressure to cooperate with him. Saul had a much larger army than David did. This could have caused them to feel that they should side with Saul. Also, it could be that they felt that it would only be a matter of time and Saul would be able to catch David and do away with this issue for good. They would definitely want to be aligned with the winning group. It appears that the more probable reason for their coming forward with information was that they feared what would happen if they knew this information and did not provide it. They were well aware of what happened to people who withheld information from the king.

Notice how carefully these people identified the location of David. Because of their identification, we know exactly what the area was like. This was a harsh, dry area that was much more barren than the wilderness where Jesus went during the time of His temptation. This is an area where there are many steep hills and craggy ravines. There would be some vegetation in the area, but no major forms of vegetation, like big trees, are visible there. The result of this is that it would be difficult to move from place to place



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without being observed. The opposite side of this is that from the many caves in the area, David and his men could monitor the forces of Saul as they attempted to look for them there.

*"Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand." I Samuel 23:20*

We must temper our feelings about what these people did by an awareness of the area in which they lived. They were really off the beaten track on the road to anywhere in the kingdom. They did not represent a large segment of the population of Israel and the area in which they lived could not boast of providing a good living for the local people much less offering anything for the economy of the country.

They were promising to show the king where David was hiding. These are fair weather friends, at best, and if Saul were alert, he would be quite aware of this fact. Despite what they said to Saul, they were not going to take David captive and deliver him to Saul. They were going to show Saul where David was and then Saul could use his army to capture David

*And Saul said, "May you be blessed of the LORD; for you have had compassion on me. I Samuel 23:21*

Saul was most pleased, even if these people were just playing it safe with him. This is because that is much more than even his trusted advisors had been doing up to this point.

We continually monitor the use of the different names for God in this book. In this particular situation, we will observe the name used, but hasten to admit that we do not feel that it is that significant. Our reason for this is that it is our considered opinion that Saul had left all thought about God some time ago. Since that time, he had turned to murder and subterfuge. The name "LORD" is the name used to emphasize the justice of God. At this point in his life and regime, one must give him an "A" for just remembering the name of God, much less that for which it stood

Saul mentioned that these people had compassion on him. This was unfamiliar territory for Saul. Compassion was not one of the feelings with which he was most familiar. As a result, a growing number of people were increasingly taking sides against him and his regime. Saul was becoming a lonely monarch and any sign of cooperation would seem like great compassion from his perspective.

*Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. I Samuel 23:22*

Saul was tired of chasing David and returning embarrassed with nothing to show for his long marches and failed attempts to find a lone warrior. These forays into the field were increasingly becoming a danger signal to Saul's position as king. If Saul allowed anyone to know that he was going to search for David and then returned without him or his dead body, then it appeared that David had won another encounter in that battle. It made David look brilliant and made Saul look helpless. Saul's monarchy could not stand many more of these embarrassments.

*So look, and learn about all the hiding places where he hides himself, and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you; and it shall come about if he is in the land that I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah." I Samuel 23:23*

The trouble so far was that they learned about one hiding place, but by that time David and his men were in a different hiding place that they did not know about. Saul asked the people of Ziph to go back and check this out again to make sure that David was still in the place that they had identified for Saul. Saul was trying to think like David. If David was not in the place where the people of Ziph told him, then he wanted to know where else David would go when he had to leave this hideout. Saul promised the leaders of Ziph that he would definitely come to arrest David, but he wanted them to know that he was tired of this chase and wanted it to end and the quicker the better. Saul was willing to make one final push against David, but feared that his reputation could not stand any more embarrassment brought about by his failed ventures.

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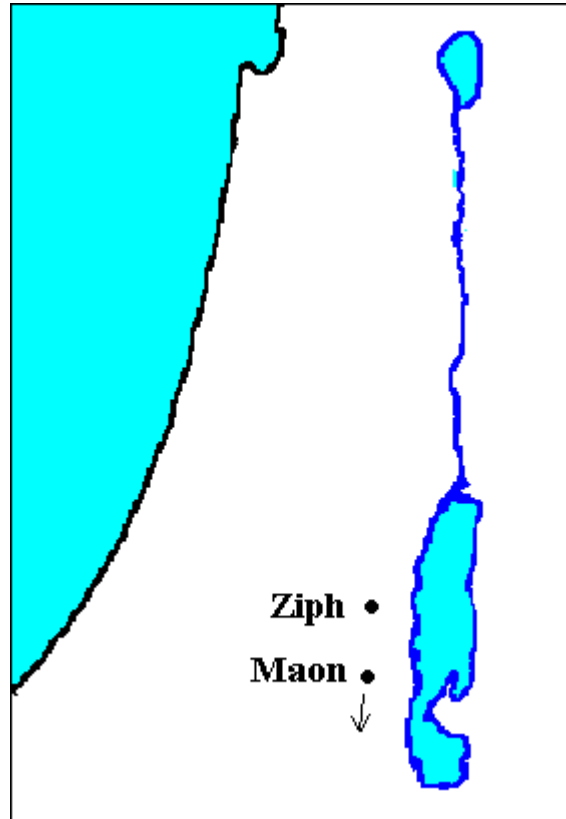
### I Samuel 23:24-29 – Saul's Search for David Interrupted by Philistine Attack

*Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. I Samuel 23:24*

The people of Ziph were prepared to carry out their agreement with Saul. They led the king's scouts to the place where David had been hiding only to discover that David and his men had anticipated their actions and had already gone to a new hiding place. This new location is the first time that the author has mentioned that David was in the Arabah. This is a very desolate area composed of mostly sand desert and rocky hills with even less vegetation than they had in their previous hiding place. In the Arabah, they not only had to look for good caves to hide in, but for good sources of water in a very desert-like location. In this new location, you can literally look for miles and see nothing but sand. In this area, it is very easy to hide a group the size of David's entourage and it would be even more difficult taking them captive.

*When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard it, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon. I Samuel 23:25*

As you can see on the map, this is only a distance of about five miles from their previous location near Ziph.



Because of the kind of terrain, it might as well have been 50 miles. This is an area where a large army is a distinct disadvantage. They can be outwitted and surprised time after time in a host of different ways. It is obvious that David is playing a game of hide-and-seek and Saul was not happy about the game.

*And Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain; and David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them. I Samuel 23:26*

This is a very dangerous game for the hunted to play. Inevitably, the hunters tend to get much closer to the ones that they are hunting and this leaves much less room for David and his men to make a miscalculation.

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tion. In this particular situation, Saul and his men were combing one side of the mountain so David and his men fled to the other side of the mountain narrowly avoiding being seen or caught. Saul and his army had not been this close to David before and both David and Saul knew it.

At this point, Saul decided to do an end-run. He sent part of his troops to the other side of the mountain to set up a pincer movement to trap David. It was clear to Saul that he nearly had David in his grip. Now, if he could only close in on him.

*But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land." I Samuel 23:27*

As happened so often, each time Saul got close to catching David, something happened so that David was able to slip away from him. Some would call it a coincidence. I am reminded that someone has said, "a coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous." Certainly God was involved in this last ditch effort to preserve David from being caught by his father-in-law.

Think of the bind in which Saul now found himself. If he stayed on in his drive to catch David, he could probably finish that task in a day or two. However, if he delayed a day or two, it may be totally too late to save his kingdom. In that case, he would win the battle and lose the war.

The late news about the attack of the Philistines would make it necessary for Saul to move his army some 30 to 50 miles north of their present location. That meant that they were much farther from David. It also meant that David and his men were much safer than they had been before the news about the Philistines had been announced.

Observe the way this news was announced. The messenger did not say, "the Philistines are going to make a raid on the land." He said, "the Philistines HAVE made a raid on the land." Now Saul was caught in the very trap he had been trying to avoid. Whenever a ruler becomes preoccupied with one facet of his rule, no matter what that may be, he is very apt to be blind-sided by another problem that his preoccupation kept him from keeping in focus. Saul's preoccupation with David allowed the Philistines to surprise him and conduct a raid on Israel that Saul was not prepared to defend against. Not only was Saul being embarrassed by his repeated failure to capture David, but now he was being embarrassed by being caught off-guard by the Philistines. People tend never to forget when a ruler fails to be vigilant and the result of it is that they are exposed to a devastating assault by an obvious enemy.

*So Saul returned from pursuing David, and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape. I Samuel 23:28*

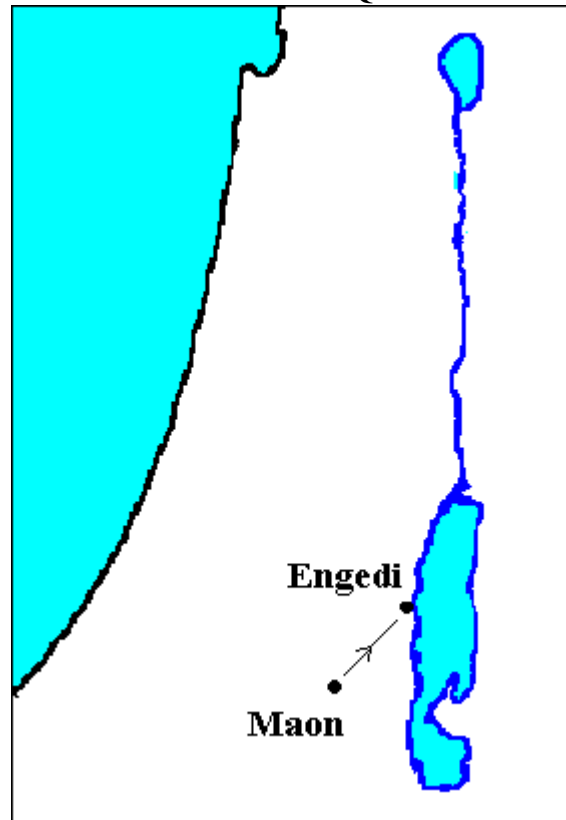
Saul had to call his forces into action and hasten to take action against the Philistines who were at least a three day march to the north of his current location. The frustration of this necessary move had to be devastating for Saul. It came at the moment when Saul could almost taste the victory of his bitter enemy – David. It is quite certain that David realized that his escape was timely and not really caused by anything that he had done. God had protected David and he should have been able to see that. The "rock of escape" was very well named. When you think of the "rock of escape" however, do not think of a huge boulder. Think, rather, of a huge exposed rock hill standing against the flat sand desert of this area.

There is another angle to this new incident. You may remember that in the first paragraph of this chapter, David and his small number of untrained men seriously defeated the Philistines. Should Saul and his huge well-trained army be unsuccessful in fighting that same force, it would be such a blow to his reputation that his regime would probably be unable to survive it. Saul had a large number of things to consider as he stumbled from one failure to the next.

*And David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi. I Samuel 23:29*

David was aware Saul had his current hiding place figured out. It was only the call to fight against the Philistines that he kept David and his men from being trapped.

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This was too close for comfort. It was very clear that he had to find a new hiding place if he wanted to avoid being captured by Saul. The king and his army were gone, but David knew that Saul would certainly be back. David took his men and moved to the area of Engedi. This was an area as riddled with caves as Maon had been.

Engedi is a place right on the west shore of the Dead Sea. It is about 15 miles northeast of Maon and about the same distance south of the place where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Like the area where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, there were hundreds of caves in this barren rocky wilderness area. This was an area that was largely unoccupied except for an occasional Bedouin family and their huge extended family tent. Today, it is a great place for swimming in the Dead Sea, but in that day it was a wilderness area that only an occasional shepherd would frequent and would not stay long. In recent years, American researchers have spent a lot of time in that area. An Episcopal Bishop and his wife went into the area, but he got lost. His wife survived, but he did not.

In this area, David and his men could be only a few feet away from the enemy and not be in any danger whatsoever. David knew that every hiding place was a temporary habitation for him and his 600 men. Nevertheless, this was as good as he was going to be able to find, at least for the present.

## CONCLUSION

Chapter 23 presents a four-part study that gave me a lot to think about.

## DAVID DEFEATED PHILISTINES AT KEILAH

DAVID	GOD	JONATHAN	SAUL
v. 1 – Compassionate for people of Keilah v. 2 – He sought God’s guidance v. 2 – He sought God’s help v. 3 – He was not deterred when people differed from him v. 5 – He was courageous – defeated Philistines with 400 men who were not soldiers v. 6 – Compassionate toward Abiathar v. 10 – He sought God’s help v. 24 – He was alert – kept moving v. 26 – He was courageous – he watched from cave in dangerous situation – did not give up v. 26 – David never gave up protecting his men.	v. 2 – He guided His servant David. v. 4 – He was patient when David needed affirmation v. 14 – God did not give the weak – 600 non-soldiers into the hands of the powerful Saul v. 16 – Enabled encouragement – Helped Jonathan find David v. 16 – He protected his servant from harm – Saul could not find David v. 27 – Quietly moved Philistines to attack – thus preserved David.	v. 16 – He risked being caught by Saul when visiting David to encourage him. v. 6-16 – He was courageous – He stuck by David v. 17 – He was humble – prepared to take second place when he could have been king. v. 18 – He was faithful – kept the covenant even when things looked dark for David.	v. 7 – He claimed God’s help, but had no relationship with God. v. 7 – He was prepared to take advantage of his adversary. v. 19 – He was willing to make a pact with betrayers. v. 20 – He pretended spirituality.

As you can see on this table, David and Jonathan followed the example set forth by the LORD. Saul, on the other hand, did everything possible to serve himself even at the expense of God and other people. As I went through the study and again when I reviewed my work, I couldn’t help wondering, Am I really like David, Jonathan and God? Or, am I a bit more like Saul? It gave me pause to think about it. What about you?



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 24

### DAVID SPARED SAUL AT ENGEDI – I SAMUEL 24:1 – 22

1. There are only three paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 24. On the following table, write a summary of eight words or less for each of these paragraphs.

24:1-7	
24:8-15	
24:16-22	

2. In I Samuel 24:1-7, David spared Saul's life in the cave
- A. In 24:1, Saul was informed that David had been discovered in the area of Engedi. How would you compare the security of David's surroundings in Engedi with his former location in Ziph? (Consult a Bible atlas or Encyclopedia.)
  - B. In 24:2, Saul took his handpicked army of 3,000 and went to the area of Engedi, which is on the east side of the mountain on the shore of the Dead Sea.
    - 1. The text talks about "the Rocks of the Wild Goats". What is the significance of this designation?
    - 2. In view of the fact that Saul knew that David had only 600 men, what does it tell us when Saul brought his entire 3,000 hand-picked warriors to catch David?
  - C. In 24:3, Saul unknowingly came into the cave where David and his men were hiding.
    - 1. If you were David, what would you be thinking?
    - 2. If you were one of David's men, what would you be thinking?
  - D. In 24:4, the 600 men pressed David sorely to kill Saul.
    - 1. Think carefully, would that have been a good idea?
    - 2. Why would David even bother to cut off the fringe from Saul's garment?
    - 3. What new information does this verse provide for us?
    - 4. If you were one of the 600 men, what would you be thinking.
  - E. In 24:5, 6, David explained his actions to the 600 men.
    - 1. Why did David feel it necessary to explain this situation to his men?
    - 2. What benefit would/did this explanation provide?
  - F. In 24:7, David persuaded his men concerning his dealings with Saul. If you were one of the 600 men, how would you feel as Saul left the cave?
3. In I Samuel 24:8-15, David showed Saul the fringe he had cut from Saul's garment.
- A. In 24:8, there is an apparent contradiction on display. In light of what is happening in this paragraph, how can we account for the way David addressed Saul and what David did when Saul looked at him?
  - B. In 24:9, 10, David tried to reason with Saul though they were a long distance apart.
    - 1. Whom has David held responsible for the conditions that exist here?
    - 2. How did David attempt to reason with Saul?
    - 3. From Saul's vantage point, to what extent was David's premise reasonable?
  - C. In 24:11, David continued his reasoning.
    - 1. Observe the way David addressed Saul. How would you evaluate this statement?
    - 2. How does the object David held in his hand prove his point?
    - 3. Why would David "cut off the edge of your robe" in the first place?
  - D. In 24:12, David continued his long-distance conversation with Saul.
    - 1. Observe the name David chose to refer to deity. What is the significance of this?

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2. There are three statements in this verse.
  - a. What are the three statements?
  - b. What, if any, progression can you find in these statements?
  - c. What was David really trying to say?
- E. In 24:13, David appealed to an ancient proverb.
  1. What is the purpose of this appeal?
  2. What was David trying to say?
  3. What was Saul's response?
- F. In 24:14, David continued his long-distance conversation with Saul. In these three questions, what is David trying to achieve?
- G. In 24:15, David finished his part of the conversation with Saul.
  1. David requested the LORD do three things. What are they?
  2. What is the purpose of these requests?
4. In I Samuel 24:16-22, Saul repented and stopped pursuing David.
  - A. In 24:16, Saul responded to David's message.
    1. What significance, if any, can we attach to Saul's choosing to call David, "my son"?
    2. What is the significance of the author's report that "Saul lifted up his voice and wept (bitterly)"?
    3. If you were one of the 3,000 men of Saul's army, how would you feel?
    4. If you were one of David's 600 men, how would you feel?
    5. If you were David, how would you feel?
  - B. In 24:17-19, the author reported Saul's confession.
    1. How did Saul word his confession? Why?
    2. In 24:18, Saul made three statements. How would you summarize these statements?
    3. What is Saul admitting in these statements, in addition to the facts he stated?
    4. In 24:19, Saul gave his reasons for his thinking. What is Saul saying that David's actions prove?
  - C. In 24:20, Saul announced his understanding of future events.
    1. From Saul's vantage point, how does the future look?
    2. In this statement, Saul said, "The kingdom shall be established in your hands." What does this imply that he has not already said?
  - D. In 24:21, Saul made a dramatic request of David concerning his own family. In view of Saul's statements in 24:17-20, why would Saul feel it necessary to make this request?
  - E. In 24:22, David responded to Saul's plea.
    1. What was David's response?
    2. What significance, if any, do you attach to the author's description of where both Saul and David went after this encounter?
5. Review your study of this chapter. Study the contrasts between David and Saul.
  - A. What did you learn?
  - B. What difference will this make in your approach to the daily problems you face?



## LESSON 24

### DAVID SPARED SAUL AT ENGEDI – I SAMUEL 24:1 – 22

There are only three paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 24. You will find a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

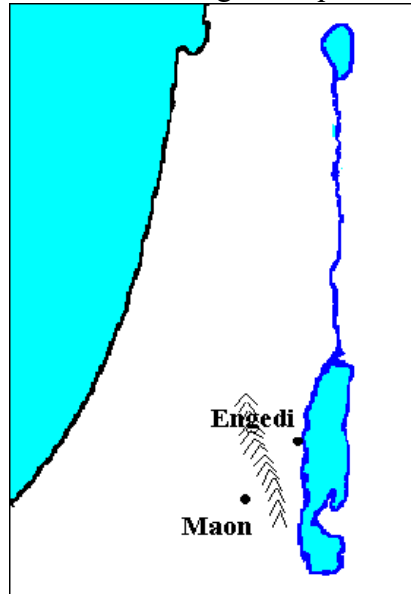
24:1-7	David Spared Saul's Life in The Cave
24:8-15	David Showed Saul The Fringe He Had Cut Off
24:16-22	Saul Repented and Stopped Pursuing David

#### I Samuel 24:1-7 – David spared Saul's life in the cave

*Now it came about when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, "Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi." I Samuel 24:1*

Neither the end of chapter 23 nor the beginning of chapter 24 indicate whether or not Saul was successful in his campaign against the Philistines. We assume that he was successful since he was still in power and he still had a large number of troops at his disposal. Had the Philistines been victors, they would have killed Saul and ravaged his army. There is also the possibility that Saul simply quit pursuing the Philistines and no one really won the battle.

If you look at this map of Israel, you will discover that Engedi is on the opposite side of a north-south mountain from the places where David had been hiding in chapter 23.



The city is located right on the Dead Sea. In that time, it was essentially an abandoned area inhabited only by wild animals and an occasional herdsman traveling through the area with his flock. There were people in the city, but not that many. Today it is a tourist area especially for swimming in the Dead Sea. This was an even better place to hide than David had found on the west side of the mountain. The east side of the mountain, even now, contains literally hundreds of deep caves. It is in this area that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Because of the deep wadi, ravines and steep hills, it is easy to be only a short distance from the modern road and be lost. In the past few years, an American Episcopal bishop and his wife went into that area. She eventually found her way out, but he never did. As we indicated earlier, the person being sought could be within a very short distance of his pursuers and be perfectly safe.

*Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. I Samuel 24:2*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

It is interesting that the author reported that Saul had 3,000 troops with him. You may remember that earlier Saul had carefully chosen 3,000 special troops. One thousand were under the direction of Jonathan and 2,000 were with him. We cannot say whether this is the same contingents or not, but it is interesting that the numbers are the same. Saul was taking no chances. He had 3,000 soldiers chasing 600 men. These 3,000 well-trained troops were chasing 600 men who were not trained soldiers and probably not any better equipped than they were trained.

The place called “the rocks of the wild goats” was located not too far from Engedi. I have seen some of these wild goats in that area. These animals tend to roam in an area where there are very few people. They tend to stay by themselves. There are some scholars who believe that the wild goats that are in that area today are descendants of the scapegoats that were driven out from the temple and abandoned in the wilderness. These may have wandered down the west side of the Dead Sea into the area around Engedi.

David and his men had found a wonderful place to hide. This was an easy place to hide. It was a very dangerous place for an army because they could be surprised in a hundred different ways and killed. It was common practice for an army never to pursue fleeing soldiers who went into an area like this. The fact that Saul took his men into this area indicates just how desperate he was to find David.

*And he came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. I Samuel 24:3*

In this verse, the author mentioned “sheepfolds.” We need to understand that this was not a fenced in area where sheep could be protected. It was simply a cave where sheep could be housed for the night and be protected from the predators, human and animal, which roamed the hills at night. The caves, particularly on this side of the mountain, are huge and very deep. Literally hundreds of sheep could be housed there for the night. Without a lamp, one cannot see the back of most of the caves.

While they were looking for David, Saul went into the front part of this cave for privacy, to relieve himself. We will see later that this may not have been his only reason for coming into this cave. As long as he was in the front part of this cave, he would not need a torch. If he ventured very far into the cave it would have been dangerous to walk without a torch. Many of the caves would have deep drop off points where a person could fall to their death if they were not aware of these drop off places. Then again, some of the caves had a flat floor and there would be no danger at all. Without a torch, one would not know which kind of cave he had entered.

Unbeknown to Saul, David and all of his men were hiding in the back part of this same cave. If Saul had known this, he could have sealed off the front of the cave and just waited. Before long all of the men would have to emerge in search of food and water. Unfortunately for him, Saul did not know how close he had come to his enemy. This is the second time this has happened.

*And the men of David said to him, "Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly. I Samuel 24:4*

It is interesting that rather than being frightened, David's men were very excited about the potential of this situation. The 600 men who were with David knew that the LORD had spoken to David about how he would eventually deal with his enemy. They quoted to David what the LORD had said to him about Saul. For them, this was validation for him to kill Saul.

The 600 saw this as an opportunity, but they had not thought it through very well. There is no doubt that they would be able to creep up on Saul and take his life. This would be what they thought of as a great victory. They did not think, however, that if Saul did not emerge from that cave, his army would very soon come in to see what was detaining the king. David's men would be trapped and die if that happened.

David saw this situation in a very different light. David crept up close to Saul and cut off the fringe from his garment. Now, if Saul had been awake, there would be no way that David could do this and not

## DAVID SPARED SAUL AT ENGEDI

be discovered. Though the text does not so indicate, one wonders if Saul did not also come into the cave to take a nap. We cannot say for sure, but it is a good possibility.

What David did was very symbolic. It might well be even more significant than taking Saul's life. The fringe on a man's garment was the sign of his authority in the home and community. Both men and women had a fringe on each side of their major covering garment. If a man had a very long fringe on his garment, it indicated that he was a very important person in the community. The Scribes and Pharisees had garments with very long fringes on them. It was the major source of their pride in position. If a man divorced his wife, he would cut off the fringe from her garment. Everyone who saw the fringe cut off would know that she was divorced. When David cut off the fringe of Saul's garment it was a symbolic way of saying his authority had been terminated.

*And it came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe. I Samuel 24:5*

David was a great warrior, but he was also a man with a tender conscience. When David had time to think over what he had done, he wished he had not done that. He was, nevertheless, glad that he had not done anything more than that. With David, this was not a silly quirk. He had some very strong reasons for his position. In the next few verses the author will describe these reasons in careful detail.

We must keep in mind that the 600 men who shared that cave with David would not have agreed with him about this. They would not only have cut off the fringe, they would have killed the king. You may remember that this is the reason that at least some of them joined up with David. They had a special hatred for the king and made no effort to hide those feelings.

*So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the Lord's anointed." I Samuel 24:6*

With all his faults, David had a heart for God. He knew that God had anointed Saul to be king. In his quieter moments, David realized that if he took a stand against Saul, as bad as the king was, he would also be taking a stand against the LORD. This had to bother David. He had to wonder, if Saul is this bad, then why would the LORD anoint him to be king of Israel? The silence surrounding that question had to be devastating.

David shared his pained conscience with his 600 soldiers. It appears that he had to do this because they were as eager to kill Saul as they were escaping from his army. If David were going to avoid killing God's anointed king, he would have to manage to keep his men from taking the life of Saul. This was a monumental task to say the least.

*And David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way. I Samuel 24:7*

Apparently, David was convincing enough to get his men to go along with him. The text does not speak to this issue at all. We do not know how he did this, but the text states that David persuaded the men that he was right in not killing Saul. One wonders, did David wake Saul up as he attempted to convince his men that it was right that they did not touch Saul at all? We do not know, but we would like to know. For whatever reason, Saul got up and went out of the cave. He probably never knew how close to death he had recently been. One might say, there was a simple discussion between Saul and his demise.

### **I Samuel 24:8-15 – David showed Saul the fringe he had cut off**

*Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself. I Samuel 24:8*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

When Saul had moved a sufficient distance from the mouth of the cave, David and his men emerged. To the surprise of the 600, David cried out after Saul. This had to be a total shock to the 600 men who were with David. They had been carefully and successfully staying out of sight and now David not only comes out into the open, but draws Saul's attention to himself. The 600 men had to think that David had cracked.

Observe the way David spoke to the king. He said, "My lord the king." It was a way of making it painfully clear that he saw himself as Saul's servant even though Saul had done grievous things to him in the past. When David called to the king, he highlighted the fact that despite the terrible things Saul had done, David still saw himself as the king's servant. The 600 men had to be dumbstruck by this announcement.

When Saul turned and looked at David, the warrior bowed with his face to the ground. This was the universal symbol of respect. The men had to be shocked again. In view of all that Saul had done and was now doing, how could David show him any respect at all? David also prostrated himself on the ground. This, too, was a symbol. This is what a slave did in the presence of his master. Again, these were not just kindly gestures for David. This is how David really felt about Saul. It was not that Saul was such a great man, but it was that Saul held a great office and David respected that office with all that was in him.

*And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, 'Behold, David seeks to harm you'? I Samuel 24:9*

David decided to do something that was extremely difficult, if not impossible. He decided to attempt to reason with the king. Kings were not accustomed to people questioning their logic or their actions. Add to this limitation, the fact that David and Saul were a long ways apart. Another concern was safety. David could not concentrate all his attention to reasoning with Saul because he had to be alert to whether or not Saul's men were trying to encircle him in order to capture him. This is the reason these soldiers were in southern Israel trying to catch David. They really wanted to be closer to home protecting their communities, fighting the Philistines.

David's question was sharp and to the point. David had spared Saul's life knowing that Saul was intent on killing him. This would cause most anyone to ponder his position if you take this into account. The contrast between what the king had been told and what happened on this hillside were two vastly different things. David was certain that if Saul considered this from every angle, he would arrive at the conclusion that he had been misled. David was right. Someone had convinced Saul that David was bent on doing him wrong. Because of this, Saul was going to kill David before David had time to do him harm.

*"Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.' I Samuel 24:10*

In these next five verses, David made his case trying to help Saul see that he had done nothing against Saul and that he had not lacked opportunity. David's case is beautifully laid out. He holds proof in his hand that he had every opportunity to kill Saul and did nothing to him at all except sully his pride a bit by not attacking him when he was in the cave and cutting the tassel from his robe.

David continued his logical presentation. Not only did David hold proof in his hands, he resisted the eager urging of some to put the king to death. That is almost impossible to refute.

Having dealt with the obvious reason for not killing Saul, David now turned to the more impelling reasons for his decision. David knew and so did Saul, that if Saul had been in the position where David was, he would have killed David in a minute. Saul, however, had been anointed by God to be king over Israel. Again, David reiterated his intentions. He would not stretch out his hand against the king of Israel because to do so would be to take a stand against the hand of God who watched over Saul. This would be a very difficult thing for Saul to refute. David had compelling proof that he could have killed Saul and this was clear to everyone. This in itself could create a serious problem for Saul. He had 3,000 men looking for David and it was clear to everyone that the purpose of this was to kill David. Now David shows that he

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could have killed Saul. This takes away any invalid purpose that Saul may have given his men for wanting to kill David.

*"Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it. I Samuel 24:11*

Now, David presented the most convincing evidence for what he was saying. He held up the fringe from Saul's garment. The absence of the fringe on Saul's garment and the piece that David was holding in his hand would convince most anyone that he was telling the truth. In doing this, David put Saul in the position of having given his troops a trumped up charge against David. This is a condition that no ruler can afford to have between his loyal forces and himself. David held in his hand the very symbol of Saul's regency. David reminded Saul that having cut the fringe from his robe is convincing proof that he could have removed Saul's head just as easily. This was an argument about which Saul could do nothing but concede.

At this point, David moved to his conclusion. He wanted Saul to observe that there was no evil or rebellion in his hands. He continued, "I have not sinned against you, AS YOU HAVE CLAIMED." David, because he was not trying to hurt Saul and was up front about it has now clearly portrayed Saul as the bully and himself as the victim.

There is another move that David made that could escape us. Observe that David referred to Saul as "my father." Obviously, Saul was not David's father. It was rather a cultural reference. In that culture, every man was at the disposal of his father. He served his father and was bound never to disobey him. This was David's way to emphasize to Saul that he had been as faithful to Saul as a son would be to his father. Saul would understand this immediately. More importantly, the 3,000 men who were with Saul would not miss David's intent with this reference. It would help them realize that they were attempting to find a man to kill him and his only fault was that he was faithful to his king.

*May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. I Samuel 24:12*

Up until now, David has spoken in very kind and gracious tones. Having made his point, David now takes a much more direct approach. It was not enough to prove to Saul that David had no evil intent. This is further emphasized by the fact that he had done this with devastating accuracy. Now, David called upon the LORD to be the judge between the two of them. Observe, again, that David used the divine name "LORD." This is the name that emphasizes the justice of God.

David was not finished. He also called upon the LORD to avenge him. David started out defending himself. He has now turned and is on the offensive. He is insisting that the LORD take revenge against Saul for the way he has hunted down David. Saul may fail in his attempt to catch David, but the LORD would not fail if He set out to avenge the wrongs that Saul had done.

The last statement in this verse is preceded by the word "but." That, of course, indicates that we are in the middle of a serious contrast. The two things being contrasted are David's request that God avenge what Saul was doing to David and David's repeated insistence that he would never bring his hand against Saul. This was done in the form of a promise, but it contrasts what God is going to do to Saul with what David is not going to do to Saul. Can you imagine how Saul must have felt at this point? How could Saul get his 3,000 man army of the best soldiers to follow him again to try to kill David? That, of course, is exactly what David was attempting to achieve.

*As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. I Samuel 24:13*

David continues his long distance conversation with the king. At this point David turned philosophic. He quoted from an ancient proverb. I am sure that the king would have liked to carry on this conversation at close range so that his army could not hear it. David was calm in a stressful situation. David quoted,

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

“Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness.” The implication David was driving home was that the wicked one was Saul and that he had already done wickedly. Saul, as you can see, made no reply whatsoever. In fact, there is no record that Saul has said anything up to this point as David continued to reprimand him for his evil actions. This is a bit surprising since Saul had 3,000 soldiers with him; David had only 600 men and the two groups could see each other.

*After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea? 1 Samuel 24:14*

David became increasingly bold. As David increased in boldness, his remarks became increasingly damaging to Saul. As you read this verse, you sense a note of playfulness, if not sarcasm. David begins this verse with the typical Hebrew form of emphasis – repetition. First David asked, “After whom has the king of Israel come out?” It is as though he is asking, “Doesn’t the king of Israel have anything better to do than to chase me?” His question is valid since Saul came with 3,000 men knowing that David had only 600 men with him. David asked a similar question when he said, “Whom are you pursuing?” Again, there is only silence with Saul. David followed these two strong questions with two others that are stronger yet. He answered his parallel questions with two more parallel questions. Did you bring 3,000 men to pursue a dead dog? Did you bring 3,000 men to pursue a single flea? This is the height of absurdity. That is exactly what David wanted to emphasize.

*"The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand." 1 Samuel 24:15*

David concluded his challenge by appealing to the LORD to be the one who decided between David and Saul. David urged that the LORD plead his cause and deliver him from the hand of Saul. In this scenario, if Saul killed David he would be taking a stand against the LORD. Saul found himself in an untenable situation. If he agreed with David, he was going to have a difficult time explaining to his 3,000 man army why he made them walk all these miles in difficult terrain for nothing. If he maintained his actions were appropriate, he would then be standing against the LORD and the 3,000 men might have something to say about that. The important thing about this is that David wanted the LORD to be his representative. If that were to happen, then David would be delivered from Saul. It was a beautiful way to insist that his cause was just and Saul was not. This is the strongest statement David has made.

### **1 Samuel 24:16-22 – Saul repented and stopped pursuing David**

*Now it came about when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 1 Samuel 24:16*

Up until this time, Saul had said not a word. There was this violent silence begging for someone to speak. The attention of over 3,600 men was fastened upon David. David had declared his position totally. Finally, it was time for Saul to speak. Saul spoke with words that his large army would not understand. Saul called David, “my son.” Obviously, David was not Saul’s son. You may remember, however, that Saul began his dealings with David when this future king of Israel was just a young lad. More to the point, Saul dealt in cultural terms. In that culture, a son was totally available to his father and did his every bidding. This was Saul’s way of acknowledging that David had obeyed him like a son.

Put yourself in the place of Saul’s 3,000 man army. What he had brought them out to do is not the way you treat your son. It was required of a king that the things he commanded must be right and just. It was not clear that Saul had brought them all this distance to accomplish something that was totally just.

Saul could not defend his actions and he knew it. To his credit, rather than to make the desperate effort to defend his indefensible conduct, Saul simply broke down and cried. The men of this army had certainly never seen their king cry before. Kings were to be strong and courageous. Crying was not one of the characteristics they expected of a king. Saul had been thoroughly defeated and that without one minute of combat.

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*And he said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. I Samuel 24:17*

There must have been a long silence as Saul collected his thoughts and the ability to speak again. His confession was appropriate. He admitted that David was more righteous than he was. Observe carefully what Saul said. He did not just say that David dealt well with him and he dealt wickedly with David. It was stronger than that. He is really saying that while Saul was dealing with David in a very wicked manner, David was returning that evil with goodness and kindness. Put yourself in Saul's place here. What would you feel? Devastating humiliation are the words that come to mind. Saul, certainly, never thought that this expedition would end in this way.

*And you have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. I Samuel 24:18*

Saul continued his confession. He admitted that David was right in affirming that he had done good to Saul. He also admitted that it was, indeed, the LORD who had delivered him into the hands of David. Think about this for a minute. Through most of his life, Saul did not have a lot to say about God and even less to think about the LORD. He did not come from a worshipping family and knew precious little about it. Saul had to deal with the fact that when the LORD delivered Saul into David's hands; David did not harm him in any way. As you read these words, it is as though Saul says them with a quizzical look on his face that shows up in his words. There seems to be surprise in Saul's voice when he said, "And yet you did not kill me." Saul was trying to find a way to say that the LORD was, indeed, with David. If he said that, he would also be saying that the LORD was no longer with him. The implications of this are astounding.

*For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day. I Samuel 24:19*

Saul continued with his quizzical look and words. He phrased his words in a conditional statement posed as a question. He did this in order to add strength to the statement. The conditional part of the question was simply this, IF a man finds his enemy. The affirmation growing out of that was the question, "will he let him go away safely?" Now, David could have ended that conditional statement by simply saying, "He will not let him go away safely." The use of the question lends a haunting quality to Saul's words. It appears that this is exactly what he was trying to convey. It is like saying, "how could you possibly allow yourself to do that knowing that your life was at stake?" In effect, Saul was really saying that you can't call David your enemy when he allows you to go free when you have done so much to try to take his life.

Saul then drew a conclusion to his musings. He stated his conclusion in the form of a blessing. He asked the LORD to reward David with good in return for the good that he had done to Saul on this day. It would have been interesting to be among David's 600 men when they heard Saul say these words. You will remember that they had tried to coerce David to kill Saul. Their words had to do with what Saul had done to David, but they were people who had as many scores to settle with Saul as David did. It suddenly became clear that David was right and they were short sighted.

*And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. I Samuel 24:20*

This is the end of the confession, but Saul is not finished. On the basis of what he had already said, there were other issues that should be pursued. Saul found the courage to be more of a man than he had ever been in relation to David.

Jonathan should have been there to hear these words. Jonathan and Saul had argued more than once about Jonathan's dealings with David. Saul wanted Jonathan to accept the mantle of being heir apparent to the throne. Jonathan would have nothing to do with that concept. Now, Saul is saying exactly what he had chided Jonathan for saying. Saul announced that David was going to be the king of Israel. In effect, Da-

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

David was really the king of Israel from this moment on. He did not go to the throne, but with this announcement, the kingdom belonged to David.

Saul also said one more thing. He said, 'The kingdom shall be established in your hand.' With few exceptions, the kingdom of Israel was never really established in the hands of Saul. There were some bright spots, but for the most part it was a period of turmoil and unsettled frustration. Now, he was saying that the time of frustration was over. The kingdom would finally be established, but in the hands of David—not Saul or his heirs.

*So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household." I Samuel 24:21*

Saul came to the southern part of his realm to destroy David as his enemy. Now, he concluded the military exercise, and for all intents and purposes his reign, pleading with the future king to preserve his name and the members of his family. Saul was being realistic. In that era, when a king took the throne, one of his first requirements was to deal with the former king and his family. The only way to be certain that they would not undercut his reign would be to kill each one. Time and again that is exactly what happened. Saul was now begging David not to do that, even though that is what he tried to do to David.

If Saul really knew David, he would have realized that the promise he desperately wanted to extract from David was totally unnecessary. Saul asked David to protect the name of his father's household. This may seem like a strange request because Saul had already destroyed the respect of that name. That however, was not what he was asking. Saul was asking that David not kill off all the male members of the family so that the family name would die out. If a family name died out, this was considered the greatest embarrassment that could possibly befall a man.

*And David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold. I Samuel 24:22*

David did exactly as Saul requested. Though he had won the day, David did not vanquish Saul or unduly humiliate him. This is a picture of the kind of man David really was. He did not refuse to accept the role as king. He did move to that destiny with grace and humility.

Saul went to his home, the palace. He went to the palace, but he was no longer really the king. It would be a while before David was crowned, but Saul was no longer the ruler of Israel. Saul was not taken captive, but he was defeated. To his embarrassment, he could not go back in honor or in celebration of victory. He returned in defeat. On the other hand, David could have gone to the palace and taken control. Instead, David and his men went back to their primitive way of life in the caves. There was no longing for the lavish way of life that kings enjoyed. As you study this verse, it is as though David won a great defeat, but was unable to celebrate it because of the dishonor that was visited upon Saul by his own evil ways.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter uses contrasts to demonstrate the difference between the righteous and the wicked; the merciful and the merciless; those who trust in God and those who trust in might. In this story of contrasts, there are a number of old lessons that are presented in vivid boldness. These are lessons we need to hear again and again. There are many, but these stand out.

The location of one's confidence is of critical importance.

The human conscience can play a major role in pointing life in the proper direction.

Contrasts can focus our thinking in right directions:

- a. One can be humble, yet victorious
- b. One can be weak, and yet overcome.
- c. One can do good to the enemy and still be blessed.
4. Motives are of ultimate importance.
5. The LORD fights on behalf of the upright.
6. Righteousness ultimately triumphs.



### **DAVID SPARED SAUL AT ENGEDI**

We know these truths, but in the pressure of the every-dayness of life, it is hard to keep them in mind and insist on their practice. I need to be reminded of these truths as I make the decisions that focus the directions of my life.



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 25

### NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES – I SAMUEL 25:1 – 43

1. There are ten paragraphs in the 43 verses of I Samuel chapter 25. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

25:1	
25:2-9	
25:10-13	
25:14-17	
25:18-22	
25:23-31	
25:32-35	
25:36-38	
25:39-42	
25:43	

2. In I Samuel 25:1, the author recorded the death of Samuel. In this one verse paragraph, the author reported two very different things – Samuel’s death and David’s flight to the wilderness.
- Read 25:1 once more. In view of the outstanding ministry of Samuel, how does it feel for you that the author dealt with his death in this manner?
  - In chapter 24, Saul apologized to David and gave him safety assurances. How do you account for the fact that David left Engedi and went south to the barren wilderness of Paran?
3. **In I Samuel 25:2-9, David’s men requested food from Nabal.**
- In 25:2, 3, the author drew a contrast between two people.
    - Who were these people?
    - What does the author say about each one.
    - On the basis of these verses, evaluate Nabal’s economic situation.
  - In 25:4, the author notes that Nabal was sheering sheep. What is the significance of this information?
  - In 25:5, David sent 10 young men to greet Nabal “in my name.” What is the significance of insisting that they greet Nabal “in the name of David?”
  - In 25:6, David sent 10 young men on the way to greet Nabal. What would be the purpose of this specific greeting?
  - In 25:7, 8, David instructed the 10 young men on how they were to approach Nabal to request the gift.
    - Why would David instruct them to emphasize the fact that they had, “Come on a festive day”?
    - Why would David instruct them to speak to Nabal of him (David) as, “Your son, David”?
    - Think about this situation. David is telling his 10 young men to ask Nabal to give them a gift. If you were one of the 10 men, how would you feel?
  - In 25:9, David’s men did exactly as he had instructed them. The text then says, “then they waited.” What does this mean?
4. **In I Samuel 25:10-13, Nabal refused the request.**
- In 25:10, Nabal responded to the request of David’s men.
    - In the statements in this verse, Nabal presented two major insults. What are they?

## **THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION**

2. How would you explain the two questions Nabal asked in this verse?
  3. In the closing statement of this verse, Nabal voiced one of the worst insults in this book. What was he really saying?
  - B. In 25:11, Nabal asked what appears to be a ridiculous question. In what way was this question ridiculous?
  - C. In 25:12, David's 10 young men returned and reported the encounter with Nabal.
    1. If you were the young men reporting to David, how would you feel as you told him of these events?
    2. If you were David, how would you feel as you listened to this report?
  - D. In 25:13, David issued a command to his 600 men.
    1. What does it suggest to you that 400 men went with David while only 200 men stayed with the baggage?
    2. What do you make of the fact that in 25:5, David sent 10 men to request the gift, but in 25:13 he led 400 men to respond to Nabal's verbal attack?
- 5. In I Samuel 25:14-17, the servant explained the situation to Abigail.**
- A. In 25:14, the servant summarized the events for Abigail.
    1. Why would he do this?
    2. How would you evaluate the accuracy of the servant's summary?
  - B. In 25:15, 16, the servant continued his report to Abigail by giving specific details.
    1. What does this part of the servant's report tell you about the relationship between the shepherds and David's men?
    2. Twice in these verses, the servant said, "while we were with them." What inference can we draw from this statement?
  - C. In 25:17, the servant continued to speak with Abigail.
    1. How would you describe his statements in this verse?
    2. On the basis of this servant's remarks, how would you describe the relationship between the people in Nabal's household?
- 6. In I Samuel 25:18-22, Abigail prepared to act on the information the servant provided.**
- A. In 25:18, 19, Abigail prepared to intervene where her husband had made a serious error.
    1. Look at the gift described in verse 18. What does this tell you?
    2. In verse 19, the author reported that Abigail did not inform Nabal of her intentions.
      - a. What does this tell you?
      - b. What risk did she take?
  - B. In 25:20, Abigail met David on the road. How would you explain this situation?
  - C. In 25:21, 22, the author reported David's response when he learned of Nabal's attack.
    1. How would you summarize David's evaluation in verse 21?
    2. How would you evaluate David's attitude, as described in 25:22?
    3. How appropriate was David's reaction?
- 7. In I Samuel 25:23-31, Abigail interceded with David.**
- A. In 25:23, Abigail approached David.
    1. What did she do?
    2. Why would Abigail do as she did?
  - B. In 25:24, Abigail began her intervention.
    1. What did she do?
    2. Were her words true when she said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame"?
    3. Why would she refer to David as "my lord"?

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 25

4. Why would she refer to herself as “your maidservant”?
- C. In 25:25, Abigail continued her appeal to David.
  1. Read the first sentence of this verse very carefully.
    - a. How would you describe what she said about Nabal?
    - b. How would you describe her attitude in this verse?
  2. Abigail said, “but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent.” Compare this statement with her words in 25:24, “On me alone, my lord, be the blame.” What did you discover?
- D. In 25:26, Abigail changed the direction of her plea.
  1. What was she trying to accomplish?
  2. Of whom was she speaking?
- E. In 25:27, Abigail presented her gift to David.
  1. What was the purpose of this gift?
  2. What was accomplished if David accepted this gift?
- F. In 25:28, Abigail made an appeal to David.
  1. What two things did she do in this verse?
  2. Were these actions appropriate?
  3. How accurate did her statement prove to be?
- G. In 25:29, 30, Abigail continued to talk about David.
  1. How would you describe the way she was speaking?
  2. Of whom was she speaking when she made the statements in 25:29?
  3. How would Abigail know “all the good that He (the LORD) has spoken concerning you.” (25:30)?
  4. If you were David, how would you feel hearing these words?
- H. In 25:31, Abigail was still talking about David. There are two sentences in this verse.
  1. What was she saying in the first sentence?
  2. What was she saying in the second sentence?
  3. What is the relationship of sentence two to sentence one?
8. In I Samuel 25:332-35, David accepted Abigail’s apology and gift.
  - A. In 25:32, David responded to Abigail’s apology.
    1. What did he really say?
    2. Specifically, how did he respond to the apology?
  - B. In 25:33, David blessed Abigail for three things:
    1. What are they?
    2. What was David really saying?
  - C. In 25:34, David continued his response to Abigail.
    1. There is an apparent contradiction between David’s statements in 25:33 and 34. What is the apparent contradiction?
    2. How can we appropriately understand this situation?
  - D. In 25:35, David made a pronouncement.
    1. What did he say?
    2. What are the implications of these statements?
9. **In I Samuel 25:36-38, Jehovah smote Nabal.**
  - A. In 25:36, Abigail encountered Nabal. Contrast the picture of Abigail, in 25:23-35, with the picture of Nabal in 25:35. What did you discover?
  - B. In 25:37, Abigail finally was able to describe the situation for Nabal.
    1. If you were Abigail, how would you feel?

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2. Compare Nabal's feelings in 25:10, 11, with his feelings in 25:37. What did you find?
- C. In 25:38, Nabal died. Study this verse carefully. What problems, if any, does this verse create for you?

### **10. In I Samuel 25:39-42, Abigail became David's wife.**

- A. In 25:39, David learned of Nabal's death.
    1. David blessed the LORD for three things. What are they?
    2. Study this list. What problems, if any, can you discern in these statements?
    3. At the end of the verse, David proposed marriage to Abigail. What two problems can you find in this?
  - B. In 25:40, 41, Abigail received the marriage proposal from David.
    1. Abigail's response seems to be immediate. Is there any problem you can sense with this response?
    2. Study Abigail's response. What did you learn?
  - C. In 25:42, Abigail followed David's men.
    1. There are a couple of illustrations of Nabal's wealth in this verse. What are they?
    2. Compare/contrast Abigail's statement in 25:41 with what happened in 25:42.
      - a. What did you learn?
      - b. How can we explain this?
11. In I Samuel 25:43, David took Ahinoam as his wife. Compare/contrast David's family with that of Abraham and Elkanah in relationship to plural wives.
12. Please review your study of I Samuel chapter 25. What impact will this study have on your relationship with God?

## LESSON 25

### NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES – I SAMUEL 25:1 – 43

There are ten paragraphs in the 43 verses of I Samuel 25. On the following table, you will find a brief summary of each of these 10 paragraphs.

25:1	Samuel Died
25:2-9	David's Men Request Food From Nabal
25:10-13	Nabal Refused the Request for Food
25:14-17	Servant Explained the Situation to Abigail – Nabal's Wife
25:18-22	Abigail Secretly Prepared a Gift for David
25:23-31	Abigail Interceded with David
25:32-35	David Accepted Abigail's Apology and Gift
25:36-38	Jehovah Smote Nabal: He Died
25:39-42	Abigail Became David's Wife
25:43	David Also Took Ahimoam As His Wife

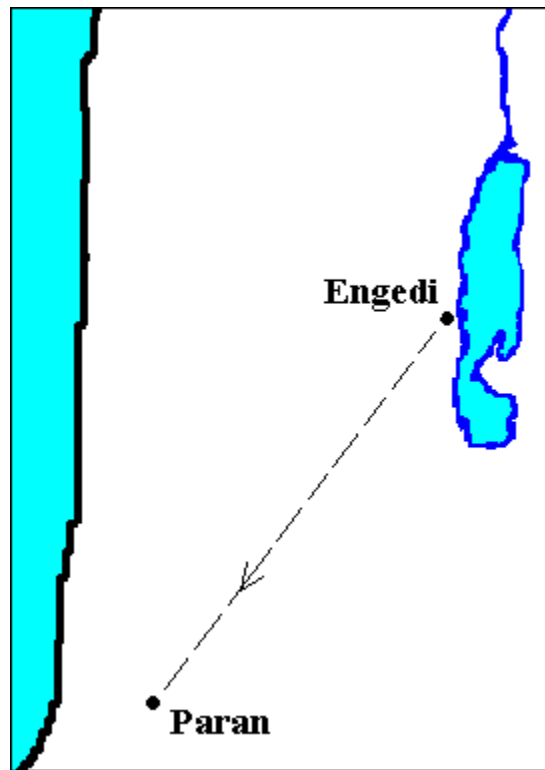
#### I Samuel 25:1 – Samuel Died

*Then Samuel died; and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and buried him at his house in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. I Samuel 25:1*

As you can see, there are only two brief sentences in this paragraph. This is the first mention of the honored prophet since chapter 19. This paragraph is a bit unusual. Samuel played a primary role in the redirection of Israel. He was upright and came from a family noted for their righteousness. He had a personal relationship with the LORD that enabled God to speak to Israel through him. He had a weakness in relationship with his sons. He also was determined to prevent Israel from having a king though God was willing to allow them to have the king and the consequences of that desire. Still he was an honored servant of God.

Now Samuel passes from the scene with only one sentence to report his passing. In this brief sentence, however, the author assures us that Samuel was held in very high esteem by the people of Israel. Observe that the author reported that “ALL Israel gathered together and mourned for him.”

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As you look at the above map, it is clear that many of these people came a very long distance to honor the prophet.

Observe also, that the author reported in the final verse of this paragraph that David left Engedi and went down to the wilderness of Paran. This is a distance of at least 90 miles. The map does not show this well, but it was a difficult trip and he was going from a place that was good for hiding because it was in the barren mountains and there were many caves in which to hide. He was going through an area of rugged mountains, steep ridges and deep ravines. He was going to an area that was a barren desert. In this barren desert, however, there were many natural caves. The bedrock beneath the sand of this area was soft limestone, and almost like soapstone. It made for a multitude of deep caves and caverns. All of this proved to be a good place for David and his men to hide.

One might wonder why David would do this. He had just been assured that Saul would not try to do him harm any more. He had been assured that he would be king and Saul would cease in that position. In fact, Saul had pleaded for the safety of his family members when David took the throne. The text does not say that David was told of Samuel's death, but it appears that he certainly did know about it. Notice that the text mentions that Samuel was buried in Ramah and then immediately states that David went to Paran. The move to go down to the wilderness of Paran, where almost no one lived, was a cautious move of a man who was alert for his life. In view of what Saul had done up to this point, it would not seem strange that David would be a bit cautious in his actions at this crucial point.

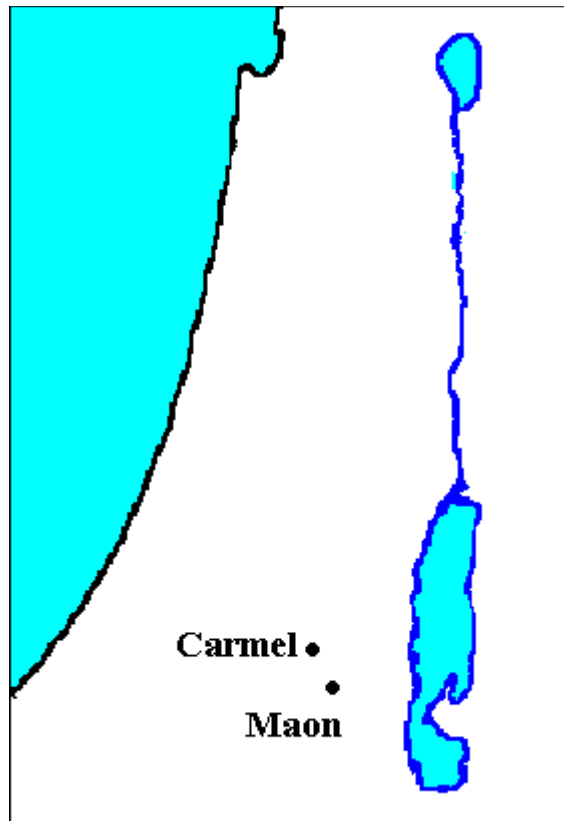
### I Samuel 25:2-9 – David's Men Request Food from Nabal

*Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. I Samuel 25:2*

The spotlight shifts in this verse and paragraph. This picture of Nabal is not the picture of a poor shepherd. Notice that the author gives us several pieces of information about this man's financial situation. This man lived in Maon, but had a business in Carmel. The location of these two villages, which are only a little over a mile apart, is highlighted on this map.



## NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES



In that day and culture, most business enterprises were operated out of one's home or tent. The very fact that he lived in one place and had a business in another town lets us know that he is a very rich man.

The author then said it plainly, "the man was very rich." Contrary to appearances, there were a number of wealthy people in that part of the world. It did not show in their clothing or non-essential possessions, but the wealth was there. This man was one of them.

The author continued, "He had 3,000 sheep." A man of some means might have 100 sheep. This man had 30 times that many. These animals were the primary level of wealth in that culture.

Again, the author continued, "and a thousand goats." This is a very significant distinction. As indicated, sheep formed the primary level of wealth. Because this is a wilderness area, there was not enough foliage to support massive numbers of sheep. He was already stretching to keep 3,000 sheep. Where the land would not support more, he would sell perhaps 500 sheep and buy 150 goats. This was the next step up on the ladder of financial levels. Then the process would begin all over again. That is where this man was financially.

Sheep in and of themselves were to them like investments are in our culture. One of the added benefits of keeping sheep was the sale of the wool. At this point, this man was sheering his sheep which would provide money to buy necessities as well as some more animals. Thus his holdings multiplied.

*(Now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings, and he was a Calebite),  
I Samuel 25:3*

In this verse, the author gave us background information about the man. His name was Nabal. He was married to a woman named Abigail. The author gave us three pieces of information about this man. He was harsh in his dealings. It means that he drove hard bargains in his dealings with people. He was very demanding in his dealings with people who worked for him.

The author also indicated that this man, Nabal, was evil in his dealings. He was not above selling an animal in poor condition for an inflated price. He might well have been one of those who kept the wages of day-laborers. This meant that they would have nothing to eat as long as he held their wages.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The last piece of information about him is the fact that he was a Calebite. This is interesting. The descendants of Caleb had a respected reputation for being kindly and faithful. Nabal was neither. As we continue with the story, there will be evidences of these traits and a number of others as well. Obviously, he was not one of the best men in the community.

The author drew a serious contrast between Nabal and his wife, Abigail. The author described Abigail as intelligent and beautiful. This is a surprising statement. That was a culture where women were suppressed and uneducated. An intelligent woman would have been ridiculed and despised. This gives us an impression of just how important it was for the author to include this information.

*That David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. I Samuel 25:4*

News in the desert traveled almost as fast as it does by telephone in our culture. Long distances do not keep people from knowing everything that everyone else is doing. News traveled from village to village with surprising accuracy. The movement of news was considered at least as important as it is in our time. Another means of the transfer of news was the many caravans that moved through the area. There were not many people who lived in the wilderness of Paran, but the caravans heading to and from Egypt would pass that way. The men who worked on the caravans were the news reporters of the day.

There was not a lot of international news to report, so everything that happened took on special importance. At the same time, sheep shearing was a very special time among these people. There were a number of festivities that were observed and enjoyed at this springtime event. The fact that Nabal had 3,000 sheep would mean that this would be a noteworthy piece of information to share among all the people along the route. Though the text does not say, it appears that this is the way this information reached David.

*So David sent ten young men, and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; I Samuel 25:5*

The fact that David sent ten men to visit Nabal indicates that he expected to receive a sizeable gift. The people of the area of Carmel like the Bedoin people of Paran, did not live close to each other, but because of the harshness of the territory, they were dependant upon each other. Whenever kindness and assistance was received, it was gratefully acknowledged and rewarded.

David instructed his men to do two things: They were to visit Nabal. It is a way of saying that they would be seeking a gift, but they would not be aggressive about it. It was acceptable to seek a gift in a gracious manner, but an aggressive request would be summarily refused.

David also instructed his 10 men to greet Nabal in his name. Actions taken "in a person's name" meant that they were authorized by him. This is the New Testament intent when Jesus instructed His disciples.

*"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:13*

This served as a protection for the person being approached, that this request was what the 10 men represented it to be.

*And thus you shall say, ' Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. I Samuel 25:6*

David coached his men on the etiquette of greeting a person properly in that culture. It was not that these men knew nothing of etiquette. It was that any failure to observe these kindnesses would be seen as an insult. Though Nabal had never seen these men before, he would know from their greeting and blessing that they came as friends.

The greeting and blessing that David asked the 10 men to convey consisted of four parts.

**They were to wish him a long life** – Life in this area was difficult. Life expectancy was very short by our standards. Add to this the fact that in that culture long life was viewed as an evidence of righteous living.

## NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES

**They were to wish him peace** – In that culture, as in our own times, peace was a rare commodity. To this day, the Jewish people greet one another not with the words “good morning” but with the prayer, “shalom” – peace. To wish a man peace was to bestow great blessing upon him.

**They were to wish “peace be to your house”** – In every generation, a man’s life is inexorably tied to his lineage after him. Sometimes that was good; sometimes that was not so good. Eli was a good example of this sentiment. To wish peace to a man’s house was to think of them as worthy of blessing and honor. To wish this upon a man’s house was a great blessing.

**They were to wish “peace to all that you have.”** – This was a great kindness. There were many who had great possessions, but because of the way it had been acquired there could be no peace, but only turmoil concerning all he possessed.

If the 10 men that David sent would do exactly as David instructed, Nabal would know that he was held in great respect and good will.

*‘And now I have heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. I Samuel 25:7*

Carrying out such a greeting was not to be hurried. To do so would suggest to the recipient that it was a necessity rather than an opportunity to express great kindness. This formality could take an hour or so and almost always did

Only after this time of greeting and the necessary inquiries had been completed could they come to the purpose of their visit. David instructed the 10 men as to the message they were to give Nabal on his behalf.

The 10 representatives of David were to say, “Now I have heard that you have shearers.” There were two very important things that went along with the celebration of shearing. When the shearing was accomplished and the wool sold, the people who had worked for the owner would be paid. The celebration of shearing was also a time when the happy owner would give gifts to friends and family. David and his men would qualify under either category. All during the time they lived in the area, they protected Nabal’s flock and his shepherds. Nabal was in David’s debt and everyone would know about it.

*‘Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.’” I Samuel 25:8*

A wealthy owner would never be present with his herd. He hired shepherds to do this for him. Thus, David instructed his men to say to Nabal, “ask your young men and they will tell you.” Only at this point could his men make their request.

David instructed his men to give Nabal two reasons to give a generous gift. First, his men had served Nabal well and had demanded nothing in return for their kindness. Second, this was a festival event and at such a time, gifts were to be given.

Having referred Nabal to his shepherds for confirmation of the way David and his men treated them, David then presented his request. David was master of their cultural understandings. He said, “Let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day.” He used two reasons why Nabal should give them a gift – 1. They had been kind and protective of his flocks and shepherds. 2. They came to him on a festival occasion when he was expected to give such gifts.

Observe the way the request was worded, “Please give whatever you find at hand...” The request was courteous and respectful. It allowed Nabal to determine what the gift should be without fear of dissatisfaction.

Observe, also, the way David referred to his men and to himself.

His men – **“Your servants”** – Now, these 10 men were not servants of Nabal. David spoke of them in these terms for a specific reason. On the festival at sheep-sheering time, the owner would give gifts to his servants, but it was a gift and it was intended to be as much as he wanted it to be. This is the second way David left the door open for this to be the gift Nabal wanted it to be.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

David – “**Your son**” – At the festival time, a man would give presents to his children as well. David was not Nabal’s son. They were not even from the same tribe of Israel. A man gave his sons gifts that he wanted them to have. To identify himself in this way gave Nabal the freedom to give the gifts he wished to give. It also presented David as dependant upon Nabal as a son would be.

*When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name; then they waited. I Samuel 25:9*

To practice what they should say is fine, but that is not the decisive moment. The decision is made when these 10 men come face to face with Nabal. It should be noted that it does not appear that David expected this to be a difficult experience. Certainly the 10 men did not anticipate that this would be a difficult or negative experience.

These young men spoke to Nabal exactly as they had been coached. When they finished saying what David told them to say, they simply waited. That had to be a very awkward silence. They probably waited, in silence, much longer than they anticipated.

### **I Samuel 25:10-13 – Nabal Refused the Request for Food**

*But Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. I Samuel 25:10*

The verse begins with the word “but.” We know that this announces a strong contrast will be introduced into the story. In this instance, the gentle approach by the ten men is presented in strong contrast with the harsh, cutting statements of Nabal. He said, “Who is David?” Now, the whole nation knew quite well who David was. This was simply a harsh way to insult the men as well as David. If Nabal really knew nothing about David, he might be proper to rise in anger and berate the people making the request. That, of course, was not the case. It is interesting that Nabal stated that he knew nothing of David. Later we will discover that his wife Abigail knew all about David. Do you think someone might not be telling the truth?

It gets much worse. Nabal also said, “Who is the son of Jesse?” If the text tells the whole story, then we have a serious question. In the text, at least, nothing is said about the “son of Jesse.” If that be the case then he knew something about both David and his lineage. It is at least possible evidence against Nabal as attempting to seriously insult David and his family.

Nabal had not satisfied his anger. He had to insult David some more. He was talking about David and his lineage. He then talked about, “Many servants today who are each breaking away from his master.” The obvious implication is that David is nothing more than an illegal, run-away slave. That, of course, was both false and insulting. We must keep in mind that this is a man whom David and his men had benefited repeatedly by providing protection for his shepherds and sheep.

*Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?" I Samuel 25:11*

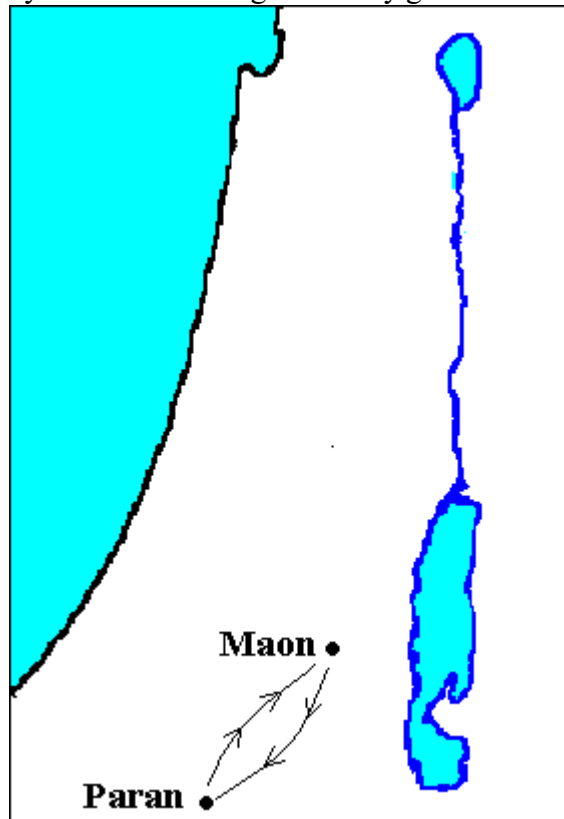
We might call this verse, the reasoning of bitterness. The answer Nabal anticipates to his question is “naturally not!” In good Jewish fashion, Nabal answered their request with a question. Observe the way Nabal phrased his question. He asked if he should take the food his servants had earned and give it to David and his men. Naturally not! This, however, though presented as the only alternative, was not really so. He could pay his servants what was due them. He could then take some from his own lucrative profit and give it to David and his men. That would be only reasonable. We must remind ourselves, however, how the author initially described Nabal – “Harsh and evil in his dealings” (25:3)

Nabal repeated his dubious assertion that he did not know David or these men who represented him. This, of course, was absurd. Because of Nabal’s miserly ways, it was convenient not to know them. It was, frankly, false and insulting. The stand off between David and Saul took place only about 15 miles away from Carmel at Engedi. You can see how close this was on the above map.

## NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES

*So David's young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words. I Samuel 25:12*

So, put yourself in the place of these 10 men whom David sent to receive the gift from Nabal. You have been humiliated by a man who was in your debt and who had violated his own responsibility to treat you, a traveler, with kindness and respect. There is no mention that Nabal sent these men away in peace. This would mean that they were further insulted by this man whose trademark was ingratitude. The silence that surrounded the final conversation they had with Nabal, had to be deafening. The 10 men had to be filled with rage and shame to be so summarily dismissed having done only good for this man.



The men returned to David, in the wilderness of Paran – some 80 miles as you can see on this map. Imagine the frustration these 10 men experienced as they traveled for at least five days to return to the hiding place where David and the rest of the 600 men were. Imagine, also, the shock and surprise that David and the others would feel as they heard this very detailed report from the 10 men who had gone to visit with Nabal.

*And David said to his men, "Each of you gird on his sword." So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage. I Samuel 25:13*

We have no idea about the passage of time in this verse. One suspects that when David heard of the indignities visited upon him and his men, there was little time that passed before he made his decision about what had to be done in response to Nabal. It should be clear that David's instructions had nothing to do with the gift, but with the ingratitude and insults that Nabal visited upon David and his men.

Kindness had not worked. David is now poised to use the only means of communication that Nabal would understand – force. He was going to make sure that this evil miser had his questions answered in a way he would never forget.

David was a seasoned warrior. As every military man knew, the number of troops committed to any mission was a crucial decision. If you have too many troops, it seriously increases the amount of supplies you must have on hand. It also would make the force unwieldy. By now, David's men had faced battle condi-

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

tions repeatedly. Nabal's servants, however, had no battle experience at all. The fact that David took 400 seasoned warriors indicates just how determined he was to teach Nabal a lesson. One thing is for sure, no one is going to escape. David will bring seasoned men to this encounter and he will outnumber the men of Nabal at least four-to-one. This gives us a glimpse of just how determined David is to teach this man a lesson. David is determined that every person they encounter is going to die.

### I Samuel 25:14-17 – Servant Explained the Situation to Abigail – Nabal's Wife

*But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. I Samuel 25:14*

Again, this verse begins with the word “but.” This indicates that there is a strong contrast in operation. Having just portrayed David's preparation for a rout, the scene quickly shifts back to the home of Nabal where a servant speaks with Abigail.

The words of the servant are a good summary of what happened. The 10 men were sent to greet Nabal. Nabal dealt with them by scorning them. In that culture, that meant certain death. This servant would give more information, but from what he had already said, the picture was clear; danger was imminent.

*Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. I Samuel 25:15*

It is interesting that the servant would dare to tell a member of the family how the father had made a very serious error in judgment and action. In most instances, this would have brought him a thrashing for his efforts. The family always was careful not to allow their servants to do anything that might incite riot because this was always a threat, especially in the homes of the very rich. It had to indicate that though the servant had no respect for his master, he knew he could trust the wife to understand what he had to say and respect his privacy as she dealt with the issue. It is clear that this was not the first time the servant had talked with Abigail about the terrible abuses of his master. He could speak frankly and fear no reprisal.

In this verse, the servant gave Abigail three pictures of how the shepherds of Nabal had been treated by David and his men.

**“The men were very good to us”** – This is a general statement that is comparative in nature. He did not identify any particular way in which David and his men had been “very good to them.” That will come later. The servant was certainly comparing their treatment at the hands of David and his men with the way other groups had treated them. One suspects that David and his men may well have protected the shepherds from other groups.

**“We were not insulted”** – The Hebrew text reads a bit differently. The word that is translated “insulted” is “kalam” (כָּלַם) and means both “to be wounded” and “to be put to shame.” They were neither taunted nor physically harmed by a group of bullies.

**“We did not miss anything”** – This was a wilderness area. There was no one around to come to the aid of the shepherds and everyone knew that. Being a wilderness area, there were not a lot of options to get food if one did not have his own supply. The servant assured Abigail that David and his men had not stolen anything from the shepherds. This would have been very surprising in such a setting.

The servant gave Abigail a piece of information that anyone who owned sheep would understand very well. When a shepherd was some distance from the owners or from any other help, they learned very quickly that there were some people that they would get away from just as quickly as possible. It would be very clear to them that these people were trouble. There were some other people who were a joy to be around. The shepherds would tend to stay near these people because they knew that if any kind of trouble arose, these folks would come to their rescue. At all other times, they were just nice people to be around. The servant was telling Abigail that they would stay close to David and his men because they were a real source of comfort and safety.

## NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES

*They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep.  
I Samuel 25:16*

This is a form of repetition for purposes of emphasis. He had just told Nabal's wife that it was good for the shepherds to be around David and his men. He now said essentially the same thing another way. He said, "They were a wall to us both by day and by night." David and his men stood between the shepherds, the sheep and anyone who might decide to do them harm. He stressed this because this was always the case. The shepherds could count on David and his men to protect them no matter who might decide to do them harm.

*Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him."  
I Samuel 25:17*

The presence of the words "Now therefore," indicate that the servant is going to offer his conclusion. The conclusion that is forthcoming is based upon the information the servant has shared with Abigail in this conversation. The fact that the servant could speak this way to a woman about her husband and survive tells us something very important about that husband. He is completely out of touch. It is so obvious that it is possible for people to talk about it with his wife without fear of reprisal. This verse indicates that the servant's purpose in this explanation was to give Abigail a warning of dire things that are about to happen.

The servant urged Abigail to do two things – 1. Know what you need to do. 2. Consider how you can accomplish this. The word "for" indicates that the servant is going to provide a reason for the instruction he has just given. The servant gave three reasons for his urging.

1. **"Evil is plotted against our master"** – Now, no one in the household would be too upset if Nabal were killed. However, it is not too likely that he would be killed and no one else in the household would be harmed along with him. The servant was absolutely certain that there would be repercussions for the way he treated the 10 men who came on behalf of David. This was a very risky thing the servant was doing. If he made accusations and they proved to be false, he would have placed himself in grave danger. The only way he could rest assured that this would not happen was if he knew that Abigail was as upset with her husband as the servants were. That fact is very clear in his statement.
2. **"And against all his household"** – The addition of these words accomplished two things. It pointed out to Abigail that she was endangered by the rude actions of Nabal. It also served to inform Abigail that every person in the household was in danger of being killed because of the foolish actions of her husband. If she cared for her children, she would have to take decisive actions. The servants were all concerned that she take action for their safety as well.
3. **"He is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him"** – It is not just that it would be useless to talk to Nabal about the issue. The situation involves a personal attitude that everyone recognized in Nabal. He apparently always knew better than anyone else. Should they speak to him about the way he dealt with the 10 men, he would dismiss the concern and feel threatened by their criticism. There would be a price for them to pay if this happened. The servant was saying to Abigail that it was not possible for him to warn Nabal about this, but that the threat was real. If she were not able to bring herself to act on this urgent need, everyone in and around the household would suffer for Nabal's arrogant ways. It is not accidental that the servant referred to his master as "ben Belieel" (בֶּן־לֵעֵל) which literally means "son of beliel". The intent of his words seems very clear.

### I Samuel 25:18-22 – Abigail Secretly Prepared a Gift for David

*Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. I Samuel 25:18*

Abigail would have been no more able to reason with her husband than the servants were. There was another avenue that she felt she could pursue. Now, Abigail would have had a lot of food in the tent because Not for sale or resale

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this was a large family with many servants. All would have to eat. She would not, however, have had 200 loaves of bread there. She knew that the only possible way to ward off a massive slaying was to take a large amount of food and bring it to David and apologize on behalf of her foolish husband. She was not thinking of bringing David a present. She was thinking of staying alive.

The author reported that Abigail hurriedly gathered a large amount of food to give to David. He described the collection of food in these terms:

**200 loaves of bread** – With as many servants as they had, there had to be a large amount of food in their tent at all times. There would not be 200 loaves of bread because they baked bread every day and prepared only the amount they would use for that day.

**Two jugs of wine** – The text indicates that it was not two pottery jugs, but rather two animal skins in which grape juice was fermented into wine.

**Five sheep already prepared** – When David sent 10 men to bring back the present they should receive from Nabal, he was prepared for them to bring back live animals that they would then kill and prepare for eating. Abigail brought five animals that were already prepared for them to cook.

**Five measures of roasted grain** – We are not sure of the exact size of this “measure.” Our best guess is that it is a little over six bushels or a total of about 31 bushels. We cannot say this with assurance.

**A hundred clusters of raisins** – Again, it is difficult to present this in modern measures. It certainly is plenty for each of the 600 men to have a goodly supply of these raisins.

**Two hundred cakes of figs** – We do not know exactly the size of this supply. We feel certain that it would take at least 20 bushel baskets to hold all these cakes of figs.

Observe that the author’s report of this supply of food ends with the statement that this food was, “Loaded them on donkeys.” It took several donkeys to carry all the food that Abigail was taking to David and his men. She realized that her husband was deeply in their debt even though he did not acknowledge it.

The fact that they had several donkeys was a definite sign of increased wealth. People were unable to afford donkeys unless they started with a large herd of sheep, which could be thinned to purchase some goats; this flock could be thinned and sold in order to buy a donkey. The fact that they had several is an indication of just how wealthy they really were.

*And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. I Samuel 25:19*

Arrogant men, because of their arrogance, made it easy for their wives to try to make up for their ridiculous breaches of their cultural mores. Certainly, this was not a new experience for Abigail. She had done this many times before. She was clever enough to do what was necessary to keep her husband from finding out and still do what was necessary in order to provide damage control and protect her husband’s life. It was much easier for her to do this because the servants knew what the master was like and were glad to help her cover up for Nabal’s ridiculous moves.

The rich and other people of high rank always had a runner go before them to announce their coming. This is what you see in the opening chapter of the gospel of Mark where he uses this image to describe the ministry and position of John the Baptist. These people also had a runner to help protect them from those persons who were out to do them harm because of their wealth. Abigail asked her servant to go ahead of her in the same way.

Some have criticized Abigail because she did this and did not let her husband know what she was doing. We need to keep in mind that it has already been reported that you could tell Nabal when he was doing something which was inappropriate or dangerous, but it would make no difference. He would never acknowledge his misdirection, much less change whatever it was he had been doing. The entire conversation with the servant was to show that it was futile to try to convince Nabal of much of anything. His life and the lives all who were around him were in danger and he was oblivious to the entire scenario.

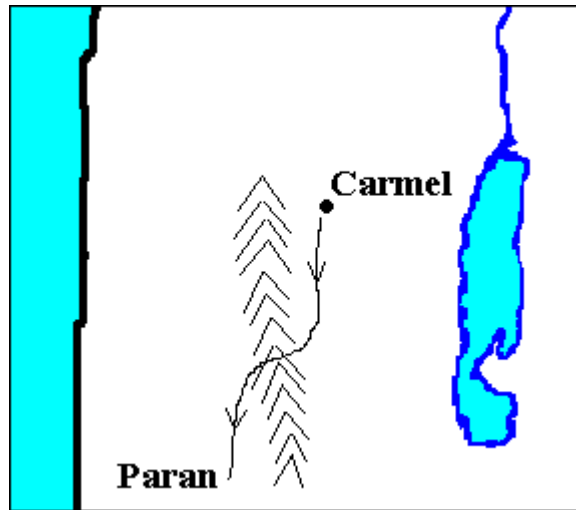


## NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES

*And it came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his men were coming down toward her; so she met them.*  
*I Samuel 25:20*

Here again, there were enough donkeys to carry the very large gift she prepared for David. There was, also, a donkey for her to ride. This is great wealth. The text sounds as though this was a chance meeting between David and Abigail. Had not David encountered Abigail, many people would have died. Though the text does not speak to the issue, this meeting was anything but chance. We must consider the other side of Abigail's trip. It was essential that she do two things: She had to avoid meeting her husband if she was going to be able to intervene in the fiasco Nabal had created. Second, she had to intercept David if she was going to be able to prevent a massacre within her family. The text does not comment, but it is highly possible that she chose the direction she thought it most likely that David would take. She was right.

The text indicates that she was "Coming down by the hidden part of the mountain." One might translate the Hebrew text, "She came down by the concealed part of the mountain. The word translated "hidden part" is "cether" (כֶּתֶר) which means "to cover," "to disguise, secret or protected." This is a bit awkward in English.



As you can see on above map, there was a route on either side of a high mountain where there was another route which was more exposed on the other side of the mountain.

*Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. I Samuel 25:21*

The scene shifted from the preparations of Abigail to the ponderings of David. To say that David was shocked by Nabal's response would be the understatement of the year. No one, but his own family and servants would have anticipated his response to David's request.

David first mentioned what his men had done. He commented that he had guarded Nabal as well as all that he possessed in the wilderness. David thought, also, that he had made sure that none of Nabal's possessions were missing.

Having described for himself what he had done for Nabal; David turned his attention to the way Nabal treated him in response – "He has returned me evil for good. In his own mind, David was evaluating what he was about to do to Nabal.

*May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him." I Samuel 25:22*

The more David pondered this situation, the angrier he became. His outburst in this verse is in the form of an oath. He was determined to kill every person in Nabal's camp. No one was going to escape his wrath. If

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David killed Nabal, what would then be accomplished by killing all his servants and hired workers? All that this could do would be to placate David's anger to some extent. The heart of David's anger left little room for reason. He was still determined to kill everyone in the camp.

### I Samuel 25:23-31 – Abigail Interceded With David

*When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David, and bowed herself to the ground. I Samuel 25:23*

The scene shifted again, from David's ponderings of the murder of Nabal to his encounter with Nabal's wife.

The Near East is an area where custom and ceremony had great significance. It would be fatal to consider these things options. There are two considerations that called for the way Abigail met David. First, her husband had seriously misused David and it was clear to all. If she had any hope of redirecting David's anger, she would have to be very subservient. Second, everyone knew that David was destined to be the king of Israel. It would be considered very bad taste to treat him in any other way except with the honor and respect due the king. Abigail knew what was required in approaching the future king and she did it well. We will see that there is one more piece to the reason she presents herself in such a subservient manner.

*And she fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. I Samuel 25:24*

One of the purposes behind her very subservient activity has to do with the situation of her husband's offenses against David. Everything must focus around this. Abigail was, apparently, a beautiful woman, but she also was very smart. Falling at the feet of the offended party was the first step in this hazardous process. It is a ceremonial way of acknowledging that the position of power now resides with the offended party.

There is, however, a problem that she must deal with before there is any hope of a more peaceful solution. Abigail has done nothing wrong. She has no personal reason to make the plea she is setting up the basis for in this verse. She dealt with this problem by taking a very serious risk. She said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame." She took full, personal responsibility for the ridiculous things her husband had done. She took a calculated risk. It was based upon what everyone in Israel knew of the character of David. A lesser foe than David would have listened to her plea and then put her to death. There was a practice that the people of stature always observed. Justice tended to be a more personal concern. If someone seriously offended you, you would normally carry out justice personally rather than going through the courts.

When the offender pleads with the offended and takes full responsibility, appropriate conduct required the offended to at least hear the confession and give it careful consideration. It does not guarantee leniency, but there is a strong likelihood the offended party will be more lenient, if not forgiving. There is, however, no guarantee. After hearing the plea and confession, the offended party is still able to carry out full retribution, whatever that may be. It should be mentioned that should the offended party act with no concern for mercy or extenuating circumstances, popular opinion would never forgive him.

Observe that Abigail did not ask outright forgiveness. She only requested that David hear her point of view. She could do nothing until David granted this request.

*Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. I Samuel 25:25*

Observe that the text does not record David's reply. The fact that she continued her presentation indicates that at least David did not refuse her request or at least grant her permission to continue.

Everyone knew that David was on his way to eliminate everyone attached to the house of Nabal. It is clear that if Abigail is to be successful in avoiding being killed, she must find a way to separate herself from her husband in the mind of David. She did this by agreeing with David against her husband. This point was

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made secure when she said, "Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal." Again, this is another serious risk. A woman was expected to stand by her husband even if it meant serious risk or death. Her position was an unusual move.

In a very gentle way, she not only distanced herself from her husband, but also denounced his guilty actions. She did this by demeaning the man in poetic fashion. The name "Nabal" means "to be foolish." She spoke very carefully. She could have simply called him a fool. She chose the gentler way of saying, "as his name is, so is he." The gentleness of this decisive move would be wasted on no one.

Notice that her next statement was just a stronger presentation of the same message. She said, "Nabal is his name and folly is with him." This repetition is a way to add strong emphasis to her previous statement.

Having agreed with David on the folly of her husband, she has now placed herself in the position of the offender. Her own fate will depend upon the way she defends herself. Observe that she continued her defense by saying, "But I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent." This was a smart move. The use of the word "but" indicates that she will now contrast herself with the foolishness of her husband. Having accepted the blame for the incident, she now distanced herself from that guilt by saying she was not even there. It would be very difficult for David to hold her responsible for this event when she was not even present. It is like saying, If I would have been there, I certainly would have dealt with your men in a very different manner.

*Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies, and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. I Samuel 25:26*

Interestingly, Abigail used two words that both indicate that a conclusion is forthcoming. She begins her conclusion by some gracious statements about David. She begins by emphasizing that David is "my lord." This is a way of saying that she is his servant. She continued by adding certainty to her statements by associating them with the life of God. To say, "As the LORD lives" is to say that this statement is as dependable as the life of God. She then added to this very dependable statement, "And as your soul lives," This identifies David with the LORD and adds personal involvement to the coming statements. This, of course, is very important to Abigail.

She continued, "Since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood." Though she carefully planned to meet David, she identifies this as something that God planned. That may be the case, but she is pushing it as though it was indisputable. If the LORD were involved in keeping him from shedding blood, then her implication is that to continue to keep from shedding blood is also a part of what the LORD is causing to happen to David.

She continued, again, "And from avenging yourself by your own hand." In this statement, she is making two statements in one. First, it is an assertion that it was the LORD who kept David from avenging himself against Nabal and his house. If that be the case, then it would follow that if David would then take vengeance for himself that he was doing this against the way the LORD would have it done. David, of course, would not want to be put in that light, no matter what.

Abigail concluded this portion of her defense by siding with David against his enemies, whoever that might be. She did this by her words, "Now then, let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal." David, and anyone who heard her words, would be keenly aware of David's fight with Saul. The whole nation followed this fight with wrapped attention. In this statement, Abigail identified Nabal with all David's enemies, especially Saul, and identified herself with David.

*And now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. I Samuel 25:27*

The words, "And now" indicate that her defense is moving to the next phase. This was masterful. By her defense, she had accepted responsibility for the wrong and then demonstrated that it was impossible for her to have done this wrong since she never met David's men. She identified Nabal with David's enemies. Only

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when this was all carefully crafted and presented would she clinch her argument. She was standing beside this huge gift of food. This was convincing evidence that she would never do what her foolish husband did. She not only offered this gift to David, but to his men as well.

In this very sweet presentation, Abigail released herself from the blame she accepted, but also moved the pressure from herself to David. If David refused the gift, then he had no basis on which to punish her. If he accepted the gift, then the source of David's anger and drive for revenge was mute. Essentially, David's hands were now tied.

*Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you all your days. I Samuel 25:28*

In our western culture, the issue would be over at this point. In the Near East, however, that would not be the case. Abigail knew she was safe, but she also knew there were some details which had not been dealt with as yet. Because she had accepted the responsibility for Nabal's tragic conduct, she had to seek David's forgiveness, even though she had personally done nothing wrong.

The basis of her request for forgiveness was that, "The LORD will make for my lord (David) an enduring house." For a Jew, this was a very special request. Continuity was ultimately important to these people. The worst tragedy that could befall a Jewish man was that he would have no son to carry on his name. The whole purpose of the Levirate law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) was to protect a man without a son from having his name die out.

Abigail continued with her blessing. She said, "Because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD." Abigail knew all about the struggle between David and Saul. The intrigue between the two men took place in their vicinity. She attributed David's mission of survival and eventually taking the throne of Israel as the mission of the LORD. Abigail's blessing was, in part, an expression of her gratitude. She asked that throughout all his life, no evil would be found in David. As we know, that blessing did not happen to be true. Abigail did all the right things to survive, but she was not finished.

*And should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling. I Samuel 25:29*

Until this experience, David had been bombarded with the false accusations of Saul. This had to be music to his ears. Abigail continued with her blessing of David. In this verse, she drew a contrast between David and his enemies.

Abigail's blessing turned prophetic. This prophetic statement was in the form of a conditional "If...then..." statement. She said, "And should (if) anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life." David knew this experience only too well. He had played hide and seek with Saul for many months. Her prophetic word would come to pass in years to come when his own son would seek his life.

The promise part of her prophetic statement was beautiful. She said, "then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God." Throughout this story, the author reported statements about "the LORD." Now in her blessing of David, Abigail speaks of the "LORD God" "Jehovah Elohim," "The Eternal Omnipotent One." This was a beautiful way to say that if people rose up against him, as surely they would, then let your life be as safe as all those who are righteous before the LORD. Interestingly, David died a natural death.

Then came the contrast. She used an image David, because of his days as a shepherd, understood only too well. She was saying, "Let the lives of your enemies be thrown out as a stone is slung out of the soft leather pouch of the sling. It is a graphic picture of destruction.

*And it shall come about when the LORD shall do for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and shall appoint you ruler over Israel, I Samuel 25:30*

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Abigail continued her prophetic message. As you read this verse, you wonder, “What has God spoken concerning David’s future? To whom did God speak this information? Did anyone else know? The thing that stands out concerning the information Abigail mentions is that it is very good. Though Nabal claimed not to know who David was, his wife, Abigail, knew that God had chosen him to be the king of Israel.

In 25:28, Abigail could be certain that the blame she assumed on behalf of her husband had been forgiven. In 25:29-31, Abigail continued to talk with David and did not give him the opportunity to release her from her assumed responsibility, but continued to attempt to impress David. One must wonder what her new agenda is now that she has been forgiven. Time will make this clear.

Abigail, in this verse spoke of two things in David’s future: First, God has spoken of a number of very good things that will happen to David in the future. Second, God will appoint David to be king over all Israel. This second thing had already taken place. Some of the good things she prophesied had already happened, but many more blessings would attend this servant of the LORD.

*That this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD shall deal well with my lord, then remember your maidservant. ” I Samuel 25:31*

Abigail, again, continued her speech with David. If you read this verse very carefully, it is clear that she is expressing great concern for David’s well being. In an unassuming way, she has taken credit for relieving David of possible grief or a troubled heart because by her bold action, she has kept David from shedding blood unnecessarily by bringing the gift she has brought. She also has prevented David from taking revenge on his own behalf through her own efforts.

She made one final request. “When the LORD shall deal with my lord (David) then remember your maidservant.” She speaks of herself as though she were a young, unmarried woman. Neither Abigail nor the author make any effort to explain what she meant by “remember your maidservant.” The word translated “remember” is “zackar” (זָכַר) and means “to bring to memory,” “to keep in mind,” “to think well upon.” It is not at all specific. One can count on it, she has more in mind than just not being forgotten. We will talk more about this shortly.

### I Samuel 25:32-35 – David Accepted Abigail’s Apology and Gift

*Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, I Samuel 25:32*

Finally, David had a chance to say a few words. David heard everything she said and understood it all. He blessed the “LORD God” (Jehovah Elohim) for sending her to him. David accepted Abigail’s presence as an intervention from God. This is exactly what she wanted him to think. The way David used these terms suggests that there is a very special significance to his use of the name “The LORD God of Israel.” It suggests that He is the God whose love is unique upon Israel, especially upon this situation. David is really affirming the things that Abigail has just said about what has happened. David has dispelled any idea that this is a chance meeting.

*And blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed, and from avenging myself by my own hand. I Samuel 25:33*

The word translated “blessed,” in 25:32, 33, is “barak” (בָּרַךְ) and means “to give praise,” or “to congratulate.” It is to give thanks. David used this word to praise Abigail and to give praise to God in this verse. David blessed Abigail twice. First, he blessed her for her discernment. The word translated “discernment” is “taam” (טָעַם) which describes intelligence or understanding. It identifies good judgment or perception. It is more than knowledge. It is the ability to look at a situation, perceive the ingredients, sense the possible problems and design a course of action to avoid the possible catastrophe. That is exactly what Abigail did.

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David also blessed Abigail because she brought the gift and took the responsibility for Nabal's tragic conduct. In so doing, she made it unnecessary for him to kill Nabal and the people of his house. This also removed the necessity of David avenging his honor and that of his 600 men. David was one of a very small number who were capable of avenging their honor, who hated to do so.

*Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male." I Samuel 25:34*

David was speaking with desperate honesty with Abigail. To say, "As the LORD lives," was a way of asserting total certainty. For David, there was absolutely no doubt that the LORD lives. There was equal certainty that David was going to carry out his design against Nabal and his house.

Observe that David identified God as "the LORD God of Israel." This name "LORD" stresses the justice of God. The name "God" stresses the mercy of God. It is a way to speak of God as the merciful judge. In a subtle way, David was saying that this would be the way God would pronounce just judgment on Nabal and his household.

Observe, also, how David assigns credit for keeping him from harming both Abigail and all those who were a part of Nabal's household. It was not Abigail who did this, but the LORD who sent her to intercept David. David places a particular emphasis on the fact that there would not be one male left of Nabal's house. There is a reason David spoke of "male" rather than "person." If David slew every male in Nabal's family, he would not only kill these people, but at the same time he would wipe out the name of Nabal which was the greatest shame that could come to a Jewish man. That is exactly what David had in mind.

*So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and he said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request." I Samuel 25:35*

It is quite certain that when David spoke, in 25:32, Abigail knew that she was not going to be punished for the tragic thing Nabal did. This was mostly because David was known for being a man of his word. Legitimately, it was not until David received her gift and she heard him say that he had granted her request that she was assured of being safe. When David told Abigail, "go up to your house in peace," he had given her his promise that no harm would come to her.

Frankly, when David received the gift, the whole purpose behind David's determination to kill Nabal and his house was eliminated. Not only could David not punish Abigail; he could no longer do anything to Nabal as detestable as his attitude and actions had been. Lesser men would have been disappointed to receive the gift from Abigail because they would desperately want to kill Nabal. David was thrilled that she had intervened and he did not have to carry out his threat.

### **I Samuel 25:36-38 – Jehovah Smote Nabal**

*Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. I Samuel 25:36*

We have already commented on the beauty of David's joy that Abigail had kept him from avenging himself of the stupidity of Nabal. This was a noble response beyond what most would have done. This paragraph comes to grips with that situation.

There is no indication of the amount of time that passed between Abigail's encounter with David and when she came to the camp of Nabal. We assume that she did not have to cover a great distance and that there was not a long length of time in between. The encounter with David had worked out well, but it had to be a taxing experience for her just the same. Put yourself in her position. She left this very tense meeting with David only to encounter her husband so drunk that she could not carry on a conversation with him. This had to wait

## NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES

until the next day. One has to suspect that she was not in much of a party mood though her husband had thrown a huge party.

Abigail now had another situation with which to deal. Her husband was so fiscally tight that he would not pay David for services rendered, but he, then, would put on a huge feast which was not all that necessary in order to finish off the work of sheering and caring for the sheep. This of course did not make sense and would not make Abigail any happier with her not too alert husband.

*But it came about in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, that his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone. I Samuel 25:37*

Strong beverages will help one forget, for a time, the pressing issues of life. Life becomes real again, however, when the wine wears off. When he had sobered up, to some extent, the following day, Abigail told him all the things that had happened while he was partying. Suddenly the celebration was over and Nabal feared for his life. When the author described Nabal's condition as, "He became as stone." This was about as drastic a description as he could make. It is interesting to compare the way Nabal behaved when approached by 10 of David's men and the way he is acting in this situation. This is one of those times when the character of a man shows through the facade.

*And about ten days later, it happened that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died. I Samuel 25:38*

In 25:29, Abigail made a prophetic announcement about David's enemies. Did she know what was going to happen after ten days? The text does not say, of course, but one wonders. The fact that Abigail brought the gift made it unnecessary for David to do physical harm to Nabal. After ten days had passed, "the LORD struck Nabal, and he died." Thus, David did not have the blood of this man on his hands.

Think for a moment about this verse. David told his men to get ready because they were going to go and kill Nabal and all his house. On the way, Abigail met David and his men, gave the gift, was forgiven and sent to her home. One wonders how David felt during these ten days when apparently nothing happened. Did he feel as if he had been sidetracked from his purpose by the careful planning of a woman? Did he wish he had gone forward with his plan to eliminate the entire family? We can only conjecture. One has to wonder if there was not at least some consternation about not having taken care of Nabal. One thing is sure; God deals with evil men in His own way.

### I Samuel 25:39-42 – Abigail Became David's Wife

*When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept back His servant from evil. The LORD has also returned the evil doing of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife. I Samuel 25:39*

David praised the LORD for punishing Nabal for three specific things:

- The LORD dealt with David's reproach at the hand of Nabal.
- The LORD kept David from doing evil by killing Nabal and all the men of his house.
- The LORD "Returned the evil deeds of Nabal on his own head" – (the LORD killed Nabal).

It is interesting that David spoke of what he had planned to do to Nabal and his house as evil. We tend to think of David as God's servant; as wanting to obey God and do righteousness at any cost. Neither David nor the author made any effort to explain this.

There is another issue here. David used the name "LORD" to identify deity, as he often did. Though David makes no comment about the use of this name, there is a note of praise evident in this choice of names. As previously indicated, the name "LORD" (יהוה) was typically used in situations where judgment and justice were involved i.e., the opening chapters of each of the prophets. In this instance, David used the name "LORD." It is a way to give thanks that the LORD judged Nabal and thus kept David from having to do it.

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It is a bit surprising that David blessed the LORD for killing Nabal and the very next words of the text are these, "Then David sent a proposal to Abigail to take her as his wife." As sometimes happens, the Hebrew text is not time-specific. In some ways, it is a bit like the Gospel of Mark, "And immediately." We know that in some instances Mark's "immediately" identifies a considerable period of time. There is no way to ascertain the timeline of the two events – 1. David's praise; 2. His proposal to marry Abigail. The best one can do is to identify the possible scenarios and cultural information.

1. Then, as now, strict Jewish people observe a full year of mourning when a family member or particularly a spouse dies. It would not be appropriate for a man to propose marriage during this period of time.
2. It is possible that the word "then" does not mean immediately, but following the periods of mourning. There is no way to verify the way it was used.
3. The mourning period and its limitations would be held no matter whom the suitor might be. At the same time, no matter the time nor the issue, it was not wise to refuse the request of the king. His requests were usually an offer one just could not afford to refuse. In this instance, however, David was not yet the king though he was being treated by many as though he were already the king. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that he would succeed Saul on the throne. One could suspect that David's request was being treated in this manner in this instance.
4. This was a time and place of arranged marriages. One needs to understand why David would make the proposal to Abigail herself when marriages had to be arranged properly. There is an explanation for this. We must remember that when a woman married, she was no longer considered a member of her birth family. She was, for all intents and purposes, a member of her husband's family. You may remember that in Genesis chapter 38, Jacob's son - Er – was killed by the LORD. His wife dealt with her situation and Jacob also dealt with it as though she were a member of his family though he sent her back to her birth family. In the case of Abigail, she was no longer a member of her birth family and could not turn to them to make the arrangements for her remarriage. If Nabal had no other remaining members of his family, then the only way David could take Abigail as his wife would be to make the proposal to her directly.

There is no available information about the condition of Abigail's family, but the fact that it was done in this way strongly suggests that she was without family to represent her; either her birth family or her husband's family. This is conjecture based on what happened. We cannot be certain of the accuracy of this.

*When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, "David has sent us to you, to take you as his wife." And she arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants." I Samuel 25:40, 41*

The bargaining ritual for a widow is not clear. One of the only instances in the Old Testament that is described is that of Ruth and Boaz. This is not helpful in that it was a case involving the Levirate law rather than the bargaining process for a widow. These verses appear to suggest that the representatives came, they informed Abigail of David's proposal, she bowed before them and vowed willingness to be a servant in the household. This is probably a bit oversimplified. David's representatives probably did not arrive one day and return home the next with Abigail following. It appears to be fair to think of this as a fairly simple discussion concerning the terms of the marriage. In all probability, Abigail conducted the talks with the men herself and there would be no dowry considered. If there were to be a dowry, then there would have to be some family members involved who would receive that gift. It would appear that Abigail was as prepared to be David's wife as he was to have her in his family.

*Then Abigail quickly arose, and rode on a donkey, with her five maidens who attended her; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. I Samuel 25:42*

Again, the timing, among the Hebrew people, was often not very specific. This is not to say that the report in this verse is inaccurate. It is to say that the Hebrew language is not time-specific. It also says that the He-



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brew people were, on occasion, quite casual in relationship to time. It is very possible that this is a totally accurate report. If so, however, it leaves several questions. What happened to the vast holdings of Nabal? What happened to all their servants? How would they care for themselves? There must have been children in this family, or else there probably would be a second wife. Were there children? If so, did Abigail just leave the inheritance to them and walk away from the family? The text is very quiet about these issues. This verse gives us another view of the wealth of Nabal and Abigail. It states that she rode on a donkey. We assume that this is the same animal she was riding when she met David's men. It is still a sign of obvious wealth.

Observe that she was not traveling alone. She had five servant girls, "Maidens who attended her." These are young girls who have been purchased for the purpose of caring for every need and wish of Abigail. These young girls also may have been the offspring of other slaves owned by Nabal. Again, this is an obvious picture of extreme wealth. Abigail may have talked about being the servant who washed the feet of everyone, but the fact is that she was not going to do any work, much less wash feet.

The last two statements in this verse are presented in a very matter-of-fact manner. These words, however, represent a drastic change in Abigail's life. In the next verse we will see her life become even more drastic than it had been before.

### I Samuel 25:43 – David Also Took Ahinoam as Wife

*David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives. I Samuel 25:43*

This points up, again, a weakness in David. He was not short of wives. He had two wives and neither of them were spoken of as being barren. To take two additional wives was anything but necessary. Some have suggested that because of David, Abigail was now a widow and would be exposed to want and poverty in a very short time. She was a widow, but a very wealthy one. She could manage the family fortune as long as she lived by using trusted servants to carry on the business affairs under her direction. This would have been no problem at all. You may remember that when her husband and sons were dead, Naomi conducted family business until she returned to the area where the rest of her family lived. Only at that point were other members of the family responsible for her welfare.

The Ten Commandments did not forbid plural wives. If you look through the Old Testament, you will see that in most cases, if a man's wife was barren the man was expected to take a second wife. You see this in the case of Abraham and Elkanah. There were others who had more than one wife, such as David and Solomon, but it was, in most cases, a desperate, tragic experience for the whole family. In most instances, plural wives were considered inappropriate. This was not the case among the pagan people. They could have as many wives as they could afford. The Muslims, to this day, do not observe the ancient tradition of their forefathers in Israel.

## CONCLUSION

DAVID	ABIGAIL	NABAL
Cautious – 1	Intelligent – 3	Very rich – 2
Courteous – 5	Beautiful – 3	HARSH – 3
SHORT TEMPERED-13	Resourceful – 18	EVIL IN DEALINGS – 4
Determined – 22	Decisive – 19	INSULTING – 10
Forgiving – 32	Courteous - 23	ABUSIVE – 11
Trusted God – 32	Brave – 25	SCORNFUL – 14
Generous – 33	BITTER – 25	PROUD – 36
Honest – 33, 34	DEVIOUS – 25-28	ADDICTED – 36
Recognized divine action – 39	Insightful – 28	COWARDLY – 37
PREOCCUPIED WITH	Generous – 30	GOD SLEW HIM - 38

### THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

WOMEN - 43		
	Humble - 41	

Note: CAPITALIZED SUMMARIES IDENTIFY UNDESIRABLE TRAITS.

None of these people were perfect. Still, God blessed the two who had some trust in Him. Observe, every trait of Nabal was negative and God slew him. God did not slay either of the other two. The measure of our conduct is tied to the measure of our trust in God. If one takes this seriously, it will have an observable affect upon both our trust in God and our treatment of others.

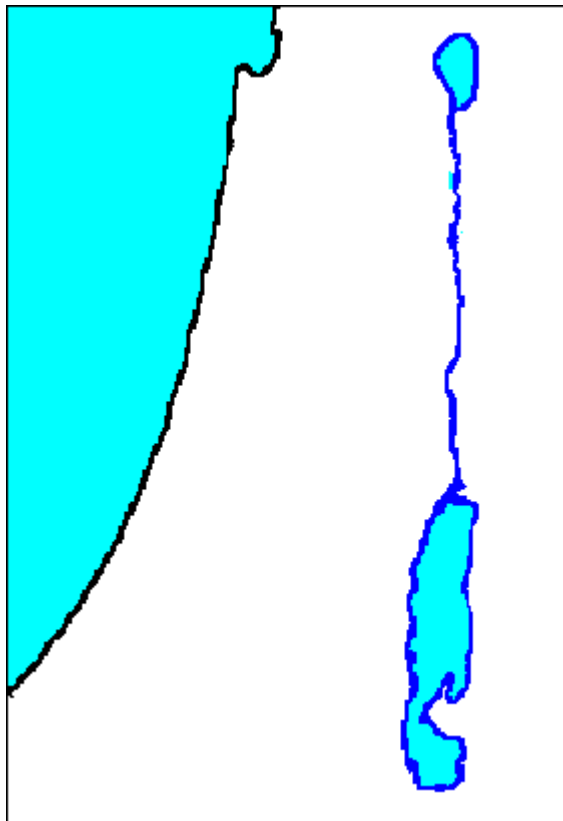
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 26

### DAVID SPARED SAUL'S LIFE AT ZIPH – I SAMUEL 26:1 – 25

1. There are five paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 26. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

26:1-5	
26:6-12	
26:13-16	
26:17-20	
26:21-25	

2. In I Samuel 26:1-5, David discovered that Saul was coming to kill him.
  - A. In 26:1, the Ziphites informed Saul about David's location.



1. On this map, locate the following:
  - a. The Wilderness of Ziph.
  - b. Gibeath
  - c. How far is it for them to go tell Saul?
  - d. What does this tell us?
- B. In 26:2, Saul took 3,000 men and went to Ziph.
  1. Study this map again. What did this mean to Israel?
  2. What does this verse tell us about Saul's thinking?
- C. In 26:3-5, the author described the scene in the Wilderness of Ziph.
  1. What does this tell us about David?
  2. What does this tell us about Saul?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

3. In I Samuel 26:6-12, David took Saul's spear and water jug.
  - A. In 26:6, David sought volunteers. What does this tell us about David?
  - B. In 26:7, 8, Abishai asked permission to kill Saul.
    1. What does this verse tell us about Abishai?
    2. In 26:8, Abishai asked permission to kill Saul. What does this tell you about Abishai?
  - C. In 26:9-11, David refused permission to kill Saul.
    1. In 26:9, what did David mean? Why would he say this?
    2. In 26:10, how does this verse fit with 26:9?
    3. In 26:11, how does David defend his position?
    4. Describe how you would feel if you were Abishai?
  - D. Study 26:11, 12 very carefully for there is an apparent inconsistency in them.
    1. How does the author explain this?
    2. How would you possibly explain this?
4. In I Samuel 26:13-16, David chided Abner.
  - A. In 26:13, what did David do? Why did he do that?
  - B. In 26:14, how would you describe the situation the author has pictured?
  - C. In 26:15, 16, David chided Abner.
    1. Why would David attack Abner so strongly?
    2. Were David's statements completely honest?
    3. Why would David say these people should die?
  4. What purpose could be served by showing the spear and jug that he had confiscated?
5. In I Samuel 26:17-20, David chided Saul for seeking his innocent life.
  - A. In 26:17, Saul didn't really recognize David's voice.
    1. In view of why Saul was in Ziph, why would he speak of David as "my son"?
    2. In view of what Saul was trying to do, why would David speak of Saul as "my lord"?
    3. What does this say about both men?
  - B. In 26:18, David asked Saul three questions.
    1. Are these really three distinct questions or one question asked three ways?
    2. What progression, if any, do you find in these questions?
  - C. In 26:19, 20, David made a final plea.
    1. In 26:19, David suggested two possible scenarios. What are they?
    2. How would the first scenario be resolved?
    3. How would the second scenario be resolved?
    4. In the last half of verse 19, David identified three consequences"
      - a. What are they?
      - b. Is there any sense of progression in these three statements?
      - c. What did he mean when he quoted them as saying, "go serve other gods"?
6. In I Samuel 26:21-25, Saul repented pursuing David.
  - A. In 26:21, Saul made six statements. Study these statements carefully.
    1. What did he mean by each one?
    2. If you were David, how would you feel?
  - B. In 26:22, David speaks again.
    1. How did David respond to Saul's confession?
    2. What was David really saying?
    3. What would be gained by David showing the spear and jug?
  - C. In 26:23, David spoke clearly to the issue at hand.

## **NABAL DIED: DAVID MARRIED TWO MORE WIVES**

1. What did he say?
2. How is this different from 26:19, 20?
- D. In 26:24, David suggested a resolution to the issue.
  1. What did he request Saul to do?
  2. What “distress” would he be speaking about?
- E. In 26:25, Saul responded.
  1. In view of the reason Saul was in Ziph, why would he call David, “my son”?
  2. Saul said, “You will both accomplish much and surely prevail.” How would you describe this?
  3. Was Saul honestly repentant?
  4. The author closed the chapter with the statement, “So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.” What does the author mean? What really happened?
7. Review your study of this chapter.
  - A. What comparisons/contrasts do you find?
  - B. What did you learn for your own walk with the LORD?



## LESSON 26

### DAVID SPARED SAUL'S LIFE AT ZIPH – I SAMUEL 26:1 – 25

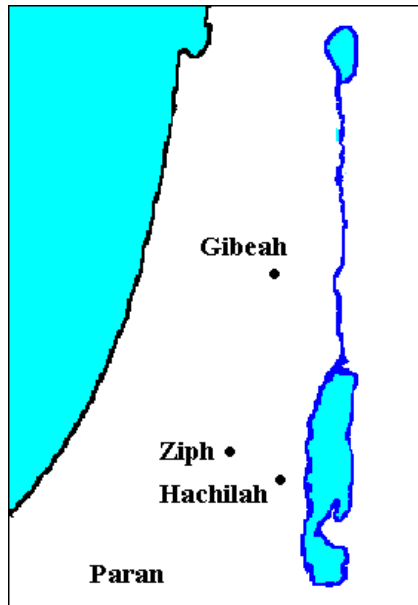
There are five paragraphs in the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter of I Samuel. The following table contains a brief summary of each paragraph.

26:1-5	David Discovered That Saul Came After Him
26:6-12	David Took Saul's Spear and Jug of Water
26:13-16	David Chided Abner For Not Watching Over Saul
26:17-20	David Chided Saul for Seeking His Innocent Life
26:21-25	Saul Repented Pursuing David

#### I Samuel 26:1-5 – David discovered that Saul came after him

*Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?" I Samuel 26:1*

We do not know why the Ziphites would want to betray David to Saul. It could have been that they were just loyal to Saul. It could just as easily be that they were afraid of the consequences of failing to tell Saul. We remember that there was one community that knew of David's presence and they were all killed because they did not inform Saul of David's presence there. This was not a new experience for David. It had happened before. Whatever the reason, it had to be compelling. As you can see on the map, it is a trip of at least 30 miles through very rugged territory.



We do not know when David and his men came into the wilderness of Ziph. At the end of chapter 25, David and the 600 men were in the Wilderness of Paran, which is nearly 100 miles to the south west of Ziph.

*So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph. I Samuel 26:2*

This is very difficult to figure out. Twice before, Saul had chased after David and twice had been humiliated when his 3,000 men could not catch David with his 600 men or less. On both occasions, Saul had been spared and in shame apologized for chasing after David and promised safety, only to violate his promise again. Each of these incidents would increasingly impress on Saul's men that his word was subject to ad-

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

justment as circumstances demanded. Nevertheless, Saul brought his 3,000 men to chase after David and his 600.

Saul marched his 3,000 man army the 25 miles to the area where he had been informed that David and his men were in hiding. Strategically, this was a very unwise move. In Gibeah, Saul's army was in an excellent position to defend Israel against the Philistines who had repeatedly attacked them. The Philistines always kept Saul's army under surveillance looking for an opportune time to attack and defeat their prime enemy. Saul knowingly left the nation of Israel exposed in order to satisfy his burning desire to kill David.

*And Saul camped in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, beside the road, and David was staying in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness, David sent out spies, and he knew that Saul was definitely coming. I Samuel 26:3, 4*

Saul had a definite strategy for staging a battle. He would set up a base camp some five miles away from where he figured the battle was going to take place. He would then send out scouts to discover the location of the enemy and establish the lay of the land so that he could choose where he wanted his army to encounter their foe. There was one other consideration. If his camp was a few miles from the battle site, it provided time for him to escape in case things turned sour on the battlefield. Saul followed that strategy here. Saul went close to the area where he had been told David was hiding. He could carry out the engagement from this base camp.

Though David had assurances that he was safe, he never depended upon the veracity of that offer. He kept close watch and moved his camp often just to make sure that he was not being encircled. The wilderness area where David and his men were hiding was a great deal like the area where Jesus went at the time of his temptation. There were many caves there and the terrain was very rugged; filled with high cliffs and deep ravines. With vigilant lookouts, David could know well in advance that an enemy was approaching. This would give him plenty of time to escape. The text does not say, but one suspects that though Saul made every effort to make this a surprise move, it was a total failure. David knew exactly where Saul's army was located.

*David then arose and came to the place where Saul had camped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying in the circle of the camp, and the people were camped around him. I Samuel 26:5*

David was a brave warrior. This was one of the reasons that his men were so glad to serve under his leadership. He would never send them where he was unwilling to go. Thus, it is not surprising that David came out of hiding and went to the place where Saul and his massive contingent were located. In effect, David was the general of his rag-tag army. No other general would ever come up to the enemy camp and observe where the enemy general was sleeping. David would. David could not only see the place where Saul was sleeping, he could identify each of the leaders. The leaders were positioned around Saul, but they were no protection for him.

### **I Samuel 26:6-12 – David took Saul's spear and jug of water**

*Then David answered and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." I Samuel 26:6*

David, armed with this important information, returned to his camp. At first, this verse may seem to indicate that the people named here were just two of David's men. They were much more than that.

The author mentioned Ahimelech the Hittite. The Hittites were pagan, idolatrous people who populated the area we know as Syria. Some people wonder why David would have a Hittite among his men. These people were fierce, loyal fighters. David trusted these Hittites. Uriah is another example of such people.

Abishai also was mentioned here. He was the nephew of David's commander in chief, Joab. Abishai was courageous, but strong willed and always loyal to David even when things turned against him.



## DAVID SPARED SAUL'S LIFE AT ZIPH

David was about to take a great risk and he knew it. Think of what would have happened to David if someone had wakened while he was in the camp of Saul's army. Saul would have delighted in providing David with the most painful death he could imagine. Nevertheless, David was going to go into Saul's camp.

It takes a man with special courage to enter the camp of the enemy, even when the guards are obviously asleep. David did not order others to do this dangerous mission on his behalf. He did not order anyone to accompany him on the mission. He asked for a volunteer. It was his admission that this was risk above and beyond the call of duty, but nevertheless important. To the surprise of no one, Abishai immediately stepped forth, "I will go down with you."

*So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him. I Samuel 26:7*

When David and Abishai came to Saul's camp, everyone, including the guards, was asleep. Had David brought the 600 men with him, they could have killed a large portion of the army and the rest would probably have fled in disarray. Remember, they were camped in dangerous terrain and the night was pitch dark.

The author does not comment on the fact that all 3,000 of Saul's men were asleep. One needs to ask how that could happen. The keeping of the night watch was absolutely important to every army. The possibilities of surprise were always huge. We do not really know how this could happen, but it could be that they thought that David and his few men were no threat to them. If that was the case, they paid the price of overconfidence. Whatever the reason, David and Abishai were able to come right to the place where Saul was sleeping unprotected.

*Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time." I Samuel 26:8*

The courageous, but impetuous Abishai, thought only as a soldier. David's enemy was his enemy. Enemies were to be killed. He sized up the situation quickly. God had made it possible for them to end this whole terrible situation by killing the king. Without the king, the army would have no reason to pursue David any longer. In true military style, he assured David he would strike Saul only once and he would be dead. This would be extremely important if they were hoping to kill Saul and leave the camp without waking the whole army. Abishai simply was thinking of serving his commander.

*But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?" I Samuel 26:9*

David and Abishai thought along different lines. The fact that God had anointed Saul to be king over Israel was primary in David's thinking. It was clear to him that should he kill Saul, it would be an affront to God. It was an open and shut case. It would be a sin to harm a man whom God had anointed to be king of Israel. The words of this verse express just how strongly he felt about harming Saul.

Put yourself in the position of Abishai. The king had repeatedly attempted to kill David. Saul may have been anointed by God, but he certainly was not acting like it. Now you have risked your life to come here; you have an excellent opportunity to kill your bitter enemy and you refuse to touch him. To say this was confusing to Abishai would be a serious understatement. Interestingly, the author makes no mention of Abishai's response.

*David also said, "As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish." I Samuel 26:10*

David continued his explanation to Abishai. Twice in this verse, David referred to deity as "LORD." In view of the content of this explanation, David was saying, "God can be trusted to bring justice to Saul." The name "LORD," of course, stresses the justice of God.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

David indicates that he does not know how the LORD will do this, but suggests three possible scenarios:

- The LORD may strike Saul dead.
- Saul may die a natural death
- Saul may be involved in battle and perish.

David really had no idea how Saul would be punished, but he was completely convinced that God would punish Saul with death and David would not have to do it.

*The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go." I Samuel 26:11*

David was concluding his explanation to Abishai. David's closing remark was exceedingly strong. He said, "The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed." There are people in this world who are fascinated with snakes and seem oblivious to the dangers involved. That is not the way David thought of Saul. David was painfully aware of Saul's potential danger for his life. David's reticence to kill Saul had nothing to do with Saul, but with the fact that God anointed Saul as king of Israel and to attack Saul would be to stand against God.

On the other hand, David wanted to reemphasize for Saul that again he could have killed the king, but had no desire to do so. Previously, he demonstrated this by cutting the fringe from Saul's garment in the cave. David intended to emphasize that message again by taking Saul's spear and water jug. When Saul realized that David had gotten close enough to take his spear and water jug without hurting Saul, it would reemphasize that David had no desire to harm the king.

It is interesting that David chose to take the spear and water jug. The author makes no effort to explain why David took these two things rather than some others. There are some good possibilities.

**The jug of water** – This was absolutely important for the soldier in the wilderness. If he lost this, he would die of thirst before long.

**The personal spear**- The spear was Saul's weapon of choice. Without this weapon, Saul would be totally dependant upon others for his defense. There was another factor. Repeatedly, Saul had used this weapon to attempt to pin David to the wall of the throne room. When Saul realized that David had this weapon, but did not use it against him, it would be a powerful message to him concerning David's innocence.

*So David took the spear and the jug of water from beside Saul's head, and they went away, but no one saw or knew it, nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them. I Samuel 26:12*

Observe that in 26:11, David instructed Abishai, "Please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go." In the beginning of this verse, however, it says, "So David took the spear and the jug of water from beside Saul's head." There is no effort in the text to explain this change. It is one more of those things we just do not understand.

It is amazing that David and Abishai were able to go all the way into the camp, take the spear and jug, and leave without waking anyone. The author clarified this situation for us. The men who should have been protecting Saul were sound asleep. The author explained that the LORD had caused a sound sleep to fall on them. This, of course, we cannot explain. It is not different, however, from the plagues on the Egyptians, but not on the Jews. It is not different from the Red Sea opening so that Israel could cross on dry ground, but drowning the Egyptian army. It is not different from the walls of Jericho crashing down and the soldiers within killing each other. These and many other such unexplainable events are demonstrations of God's protection of His people.

### I Samuel 26:13-16 – David chided Abner for not watching over Saul

*Then David crossed over to the other side, and stood on top of the mountain at a distance with a large area between them. I Samuel 26:13*

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David wanted to escape unnoticed, but he did not want to remain that way. It was important for them to know that he had been in the camp, but did no harm to Saul. David wanted to call to them, but if he was too close to them, his life could be in even more danger than it already was. When he was out of range, but not out of earshot, he called out to them. Remember, this is an area of difficult terrain – deep valleys and sharp cliffs. David climbed to the top of the cliff on the far side of the deep valley. From there, he could call out to them. They could hear him clearly, but they could not shoot him or capture him.

*And David called to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner answered and said, "Who are you who calls to the king?" I Samuel 26:14*

David called to Abner. Abner was the commander-in-chief of Saul's army. He was ultimately responsible for everything that happened in relation to the army. You may remember that it was Abner who introduced David to Saul in the first place. David had served under Abner's command. Now the tables were turned. Abner was responsible for the security of the king. David had violated that security which placed Abner in an embarrassing situation. Then as now, in time of crisis, the punishment for sleeping on watch was death. Abner, the guards and the entire army was soundly asleep when David breached the security of King Saul. Now, David wants to talk to Abner about it, but in front of the entire army. Apparently, when David called to Abner, there was no answer, for out of the painful silence, David cried out again, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Finally there came that confused response, "Who are you who calls to the king?" Now David had not called to the king, but to Abner. Why would Abner ask that? The text is not helpful.

Observe that no one has said a word about the fact that the king's weapon of choice – the spear – and his water jug is missing. Did no one notice? That is doubtful.

Imagine an encounter, at this point, between Saul and Abner. Saul went to sleep thinking he was secure. He went to sleep with his favorite weapon right at hand. Now, he discovers it was folly to feel secure. It would be hard to imagine that Saul was overflowing with joy and praise at this point. Now, put yourself in the place of Abner. The king has to be furious with him. That is dangerous. Also, David has outsmarted you and the whole world knows it. Do you think for a minute that the soldiers are not enjoying this? Now, David is holding you up to ridicule in front of the king and 3,000 of your men. How would you feel? That is the atmosphere in which David continued his friendly attack on Abner.

*So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to destroy the king your lord. I Samuel 26:15*

Having gently chided Abner in 26:14, David now attacks him in earnest. When one attacks a person's manhood, it creates some very strong feelings. The text makes no record of Abner's response, but if he didn't respond it would not be because he did not want to do so. David is publicly humiliating Abner.

Having attacked Abner's manhood, David then turned to attack his position. He said, "Who is like you in Israel?" The anticipated answer, of course, is, "No one." This is an intentional "set-up." It will be followed immediately by a humiliating attack. David followed this generous pat on the back with a stinging slap in the face. He said, "Why then have you not guarded your lord the king?" This statement was as frightening as it was infuriating. It was frightening because falling asleep on guard duty was punishable by death.

The final statement in this verse was true. That person who came to destroy the king was Abishai rather than David. This is a very real charge that David brings against Abner in the presence of all his troops.

*This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, all of you must surely die, because you did not guard your lord, the Lord's anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was at his head." I Samuel 26:16*

David continued his attack on Abner. It may appear that David was picking on Abner. We will address that issue shortly. David now turned his attention to an evaluation of Abner's performance of his duties as commander-in-chief of Israel's military. At least one of his responsibilities was the protection and security of

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the king. David is pointing out that Abner failed in this area. He said, “The thing that you have done is not good.”

David preceded his explanation with the words, “As the LORD lives.” In most languages there are phrases whose only purpose and meaning is to add serious emphasis to a statement that will follow. This is one of those.

David’s next statement may seem unnecessarily harsh. It is not. David is simply stating what the military code followed in nearly every army. Granted, that falling asleep hardly seems like a treasonable offense. Especially in a time of conflict, that is exactly what it is. When David said, “All of you must surely die,” he was simply stating the military code of their army.

David explained his position in careful terms. David said, “Because you did not guard your lord.” Granted, the guards were the only ones who actually failed to follow the military code. Nevertheless, officers who were overseers also would be held responsible because they should have trained and retrained them about how important it is to carry out this duty to the smallest detail.

David then added another layer of responsibility to what these men had not done. He added, “the LORD’S anointed.” Saul was the king of Israel and Abner failed his people by not protecting Saul. However, Saul also was anointed by God to be Israel’s king. To fail to protect Israel’s king is to fail God as well as the king and the people of Israel.

This is the first mention of the spear and water jug since David and Abishai left Saul’s camp. We mentioned earlier that it appeared that David has singled out Abner for his wrath. David focused on Abner for at least two reasons:

1. Abner was the responsible leader in charge of security that was seriously compromised.
2. The more important reason to focus on Abner was that David wanted to emphasize that though he had every opportunity to kill Saul again, he did not/would not touch the king anointed by the LORD. Though the text does not comment on it, it appears that this was David’s purpose for infiltrating the camp in the first place.

David knew that Saul was mistakenly convinced that David wanted to kill him. Having the opportunity to do harm to Saul, but refusing to do so should have told Saul that he was mistaken. It seems doubtful if that message really got through to Saul.

### **I Samuel 26:17-20 – David chided Saul for seeking his innocent life**

*Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord the king." I Samuel 26:17*

Interestingly, it was Saul, not Abner, who recognized the voice of David. Observe that Saul came all this way with the intent to capture or kill David. Now he heard David’s voice and said, “Is this your voice, my son David?”

There is a contrast of character expressed in this verse. Saul came down from the Gibeah area to kill David, but he speaks of him as “my son.” David, on the other hand, refused to kill Saul. He knew Saul was intent on killing him. Still David spoke of Saul as “my master.” The contrast between the two men and their purposes could not be greater.

*He also said, "Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?" I Samuel 26:18*

Finally, David took up the crucial issue that he could not understand. “Why does Saul want to kill me?” It is as though David said to Saul, “If you see me like your son, then why are you pursuing me?” This is the first of three questions David used to try to reason with Saul. The word translated “pursue” is “radaph” (רָדַף) and literally means “to chase after,” “to put to flight.” It sometimes was used to identify people persecuted for their faith. It was also a word they used to describe hunting wild animals. Keep in mind, David

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is asking these questions from hundreds of yards away. He has to holler at the top of his voice just to be heard.

David's second question indicates that he has made an assumption which gives Saul the benefit of the doubt. David assumed that he must have done something terrible in order for Saul to want to kill him. This, of course, was not the case, but David did not know that. Though Saul was king, he saw David winning greater acclaim than he had. This is a problem of envy. The cause of Saul's anger rested with Saul himself rather than with David. To his credit, David wanted to pursue the reason Saul turned against him to see if it could be solved. Lesser men would not care what reasons were or were not involved. If their life had been threatened, they would kill first so that they could not be killed.

David's third question may sound like a rephrasing of the second question. It is, nevertheless, a real question. The second question may or may not involve an evil deed, but the third question specifically highlights an evil that he may have done. One thing is for sure, the third question adds a great deal of emphasis to the second question. Interestingly, David was not busy denying anything. He just wanted to know the truth. This, also, must be viewed to his credit.

*"Now therefore, please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering; but if it is men, cursed are they before the LORD, for they have driven me out today that I should have no attachment with the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' I Samuel 26:19*

David now is going to make his appeal to Saul. As you read this verse, it becomes apparent that he still has some confusion about how all this tension has come into being. You can see this consternation is such that he lifts up two possibilities.

There are many contrasts between David and Saul. One of these has to do with spiritual things. Though Saul didn't even recognize Samuel, the spiritual leader of all Israel; David had great spiritual awareness and insight. Observe that David was at all times very courteous to Saul even though Saul was trying to kill him. This speaks of great spiritual depth for David. He pleaded with Saul to hear his statement. The first possibility David mentioned assumes that he had sinned and that the LORD had caused Saul to seek David's life. David made no effort to defend himself. He did say, however, that if this is the case, then the way to deal with this is to make a sacrifice that is acceptable to the LORD. He made no mention of the possibility of killing David.

Clearly, the second possibility is the one that David suspected was true. This has to do with people making false accusations against him to Saul. David placed a curse upon such people.

Rather than defend himself against such accusations, David rather described what had happened to him because of their attacks.

The first consequence of this probable cause was that "They have driven me out today that I should have no attachment with the inheritance of the LORD." This has two parts:

1. It suggests that they have driven him out of the land. Now, David was still in the land of Israel, but as the future king of Israel he has been pushed away from the parts of the land where he had lived and where he had been able to serve the king.
2. "The land" was synonymous with the LORD'S promised blessing in the covenant. This was extremely important to the Jews.

The second consequence was more damaging still. They had separated him from the promised blessing of the Covenant. David continued the report. He said that they were saying, "Go serve other gods." This is a way of saying that they had separated him from the worship of the LORD as well. If you look carefully at this report, it is clear that as far as he was concerned as a Jew, they have destroyed his whole life. Again, if you restudy David's account of what people were saying, you also can see that the attacks increase in their importance and devastation.

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*"Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."  
1 Samuel 26:20*

The use of the words, "Now then," indicates that David is coming to the essential part of his petition. His request is simple and direct, "Do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the LORD." Notice that he did not ask that his life be spared. He was concerned that he might die, away from the LORD'S presence. Now, it was as clear to David as it is to us that there was no place where he could be and God would not be there. That cannot be David's intent. Again, he knew as we know that though the LORD was present everywhere all the time, there is another sense in which the LORD was present in Jerusalem and Shiloh in a way he was not present elsewhere. The intimate presence of the LORD in worship was particularly important to David.

The second part of this verse is a report, but it is also a bit of chastisement for the way Saul came after David. From a military standpoint, it is great overkill to bring 3,000 well equipped and trained soldiers to deal with 600 men who were neither well trained nor well armed. David used an exaggerated image to show the folly of Saul's battle plan. In defense of Saul, one must admit that having been foiled and embarrassed more than once in his attempt to catch David, it is not surprising that Saul would take extra precautions.

David was not finished focusing on the overkill of Saul's military preparations. Having used the image of 3,000 soldiers going after one flea, David will embarrass Saul one more time for his approach. He likened Saul's approach to the hunt for partridge. In this second image, however, he pokes fun at the way Saul hunted him down rather than the overkill Saul employed. Hunting for partridge was a definite art. It was more than being a good shot. These birds were skittish. Hunting partridge required the ultimate stealth, quickness and skillfulness with the bow. David was saying, "You are hunting me down with the skill and expertise required to kill a partridge." This was a serious, painful attack that David leveled against Saul. The problem was that it was absolutely true. Having stated his case, David made Saul's actions seem petty at best.

### **I Samuel 26:21-25 – Saul repented pursuing David**

*Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error." I Samuel 26:21*

Saul had to be devastated by David's presentation. Keep in mind, David and Saul were quite some distance apart when David pleaded with Saul. The necessity to holler loudly meant that this message about Saul's terrible judgment was shared with the over 3,600 men present. Saul said, "I have sinned." Everyone would grant that this was a military fiasco, but was it a sin? Yes! It was considered a sin to attempt to kill a person simply because they were more popular than the perpetrator. If you reflect upon the chapters we have already studied, it is clear that David was not only more popular than Saul, he deserved to be. David fought with Goliath and killed him while Saul sat safely in his tent. David distinguished himself in battle as Saul never did. On the other hand, everyone knew of Saul's inappropriate, failed efforts to kill David. It is no wonder that David was far more popular than Saul.

Saul continued his contrite confession. He invited David, "Return my son, David." The word translated "return" is "shuwb (שׁוּב)" which means "to turn back," "to start in one direction and turn around." It is the root of the word for "apostate." One might also translate it "reconsider." David has been running from Saul for a long time. In his confession, Saul invited David to return to the more civilized and urbanized part of the country rather than hiding in the caves; return to the place of honor he had previously held in Saul's court.

Saul is doing a very necessary thing. He has threatened David's life. It is one thing to invite David to return. It is quite another to give his word, in front of 3,600 men, that he will not attempt to harm David again. This constitutes a double embarrassment for Saul. He was embarrassed that repeatedly his 3,000 man army was not able to catch David. Indeed, they still had not done so. Each time Saul looked foolish when David

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outsmarted him. Secondly, Saul humiliated and embarrassed himself by having to confess his sins of trying to kill an innocent man and then committing a serious military error by bringing 3,000 men to capture and kill one man.

Saul continued his embarrassing confession. He said, "Because my life was precious in your sight today." This is the second time that this has happened. Saul should be very grateful that David spared his life. He should be doubly grateful that David spared his life at the same time that Saul was attempting to take David's life. Three thousand six hundred men could attest to this folly on the part of Saul.

*And David answered and said, "Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it. I Samuel 26:22*

Saul had said nothing. David was not looking for an apology or confession. He just wanted Saul to realize that David was a faithful servant and that he had no interest in doing harm to Saul. David wanted Saul to see the indisputable evidence that David had the opportunity to kill Saul and refused to do so. He wanted Saul to send a young man to come over and retrieve the spear and jug that David held as evidence of his innocence. David did not want to keep the spear as a trophy of war. By the way, David did not mention the water jug that he also held at this point. We know that David took the jug when he penetrated the camp of Saul. We believe that he intended to return it along with the spear.

*And the LORD will repay each man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into my hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. I Samuel 26:23*

David made a very convincing presentation and Saul acknowledged that he had sinned. David, however was not finished. For a long time, Saul sought to kill David. Among the Jews, this could be understood as evidence of sin. You may remember that this was the argument of one of the men who came to talk with Job. Now, David is going to establish that he was not a sinner before God, but rather a righteous one whom the LORD was blessing. Observe how carefully David spoke. He began with a statement of principle that all Israel would affirm. He said, "The LORD will repay each man for his righteousness and faithfulness." Again, observe that David spoke of justice and used the name "LORD" to identify the deity who rewards this justice. David framed this as a statement of principle, but he is really saying that the LORD will repay David for his righteousness and faithfulness. There is an inference here that is very subtle and could easily be overlooked. The justice of the LORD will reward David for his righteousness and justice. With this, everyone would agree. If God is just and if the LORD rewards the righteousness and faithfulness of every man; then it follows that he will punish the unrighteous and unfaithful. David was simply pointing out that he was righteous and faithful. In so doing, he also established that Saul was unrighteous and unfaithful. This is pretty strong language to use concerning the king when he has 3,000 men at the ready within eyesight of you.

Now, David is going to be painfully specific. He had just said that the LORD would reward the righteous. He immediately followed this statement, saying, "for the LORD delivered you into my hand this day." The word "for" indicates that an explanation or reason is forthcoming. David gave the LORD credit for placing Saul in a vulnerable position before David. This he claimed as evidence for establishing him as righteous and faithful before the LORD. That is evidence of how the LORD blessed.

In the final statement of this verse, David began with the word "but." This is certain evidence that a contrast is in progress. David drew this contrast between the blessing of God and his own action which merited that blessing. David said, "but I refused to stretch out my hand against the LORD'S anointed." Many would see this as an act of unusual kindness. It is more than that. International relations, even today, would recognize this for what it is. If a king misused and abused the representative of another king, it would be understood to be, and is, an affront to the other king. It was not fear that caused David to be so careful on behalf of the one whom God anointed. It was not love or respect for the anointed one himself, it was David's reverence for the LORD that enabled him to love Saul, who had given David every possible reason to despise him.

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*Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the LORD, and may He deliver me from all distress." I Samuel 26:24*

The use of the word “now” indicates a shift of the direction of the chapter within the same thought. David is going to make another plea. He said, “Behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day.” When we see the word “as,” we know that we are in the midst of an important comparison. That is exactly what David pictures, but there is a surprise. First, David set the parameters. “The criteria that I want to establish is the way I have treated Saul.” This was the basis upon which David spoke. He was saying, I want to be treated the way I treated Saul – no better: no worse.”

The surprise is in the next thing David said. “So may my life be highly valued in the sight of the LORD.” David did not say, “in the sight of the army of Israel.” He was saying that he wanted the LORD, emphasizing God’s justice, to treat him exactly the way he had treated Saul. Think about this! Call to mind the person who appears to hate you the most. Would you honestly want the LORD, the just God, to think of you and treat you exactly as you think of that person and act toward that person – no better: no worse? I doubt it! God has drawn back the curtain and privileged us to see one reason He spoke of David as, “A man after My own heart.”

David was not finished. He also said, “may He deliver me from all distress.” Because of the way David said the previous statement, this one must be a part of it. If that is the case, and I think it is, then why would he even make the additional remark? I can think of at least two reasons:

- It adds great emphasis to the previous remark.
- It also adds phenomenal clarity. David identified his own motives in dealing with Saul. It was more than taking great care to refrain from killing the king. David cut off the fringe of Saul’s garment. David took Saul’s spear and water jug to help the king see that there was no possible way that he would do harm to the king. This was intended to help the king see David’s heart and thus remove the frightening “king’s disease,” the fear of being murdered or replaced.

*Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place. I Samuel 26:25*

David had now finished his request. The text does not describe the atmosphere that prevailed as David finished speaking in verse 24. One wonders of this was not one of those moments when the only possibility of eloquence was absolute silence.

The silence would pressure Saul to respond to David’s request. There is a mixture of three elements in Saul’s reply.

- There is a certain irony in Saul’s words. Up until this time, Saul was driven by the burning need to kill David at any cost to himself or any risk to Israel. Now, he pronounced a fatherly blessing on David in the same way that Jacob blessed each of his sons by accurately describing what their life would be like. (See Genesis 49:1-27)
- Saul, in this fatherly blessing, was absolutely prophetic. He prophesied “that David would accomplish much.” Whether Saul knew this or simply said it under divine prompting is unknown. We do know that few if any king of Israel accomplished as much as David did.
- Saul also said that David would “surely prevail.” He was right. David did prevail and became king when Saul died, even though another would have taken that away from him. David prevailed when all the foes in the nations surrounding Israel decided to conquer God’s people, Israel. David prevailed when his son Absalom sought to take his place. David prevailed as king until he successfully named Solomon as his successor and died, still being king.

The last statement in the chapter is shocking to say the least. One might think that the changed, kindly atmosphere of this last paragraph would send Saul and David off together. Not at all! The author concluded by saying two surprising things:



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- “David went on his way.” The author does not explain this any further. David’s statement in the opening sentence of chapter 27 suggests that he was not at all convinced that he was any longer safe as far as Saul was concerned. This causes one to wonder if the author meant that David returned to the wilderness of Paran or one of the other wilderness hideouts with his 600 men.
- The author concluded the chapter by saying, “And Saul returned to his place.” Again there is no further explanation. One suspects that he not only returned to Gibeah, but also returned to his previous ways of thinking and acting concerning David.

### CONCLUSION

It is easy to see that there is a major contrast, between David and Saul; a minor contrast between the Ziphites and Abishai. The contrasts ultimately look like this:

ABISHAI	ZIPHITES
6. Loyal – He risked life to obey David. 7. Always very courageous 8. Hated – Ready to kill Saul	1. Informed Saul against David for no good reason. 4. Willing to betray

DAVID	SAUL
5. He collected his own intelligence. 6. Man of courage 9-11. Reverent unwilling to touch Saul 12. Concerned for Saul to know truth 13. Cautious 14. Concerned for Saul – Chided Abner 15. Wanted Abner to know importance of protecting Saul 16. Honest- showed spear 17. Humble and respectful 18. Direct, honest 19. Reasonable-willing to see real self 22. Honest – returned spear 23. Knew God 23. Kindly when threatened 24. He trusted God 25. Always alert – went	7. Overconfident – asleep rather than alert 17. Deceptive 20. Faced his own sin, but not repentant. 24. Trusted in numbers 24. Trusted in intelligence information 25. Deceptive, headstrong

Against all appearances, David did what was right and he was victorious though outnumbered. The message that stands out in this chapter is a contrast between David and Saul; between Abishai and the Ziphites.

It never appeared that David and the righteous would conquer, but they did. It was very obvious that false motive and evil were practiced and destroyed by the good. As things become more and more difficult for the righteous, in an increasingly dishonorable world, there is a great lesson in this chapter. Never put full trust in appearances. It never served God’s chosen people well. Put full trust in doing righteousness. God did and will honor it.



## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 27

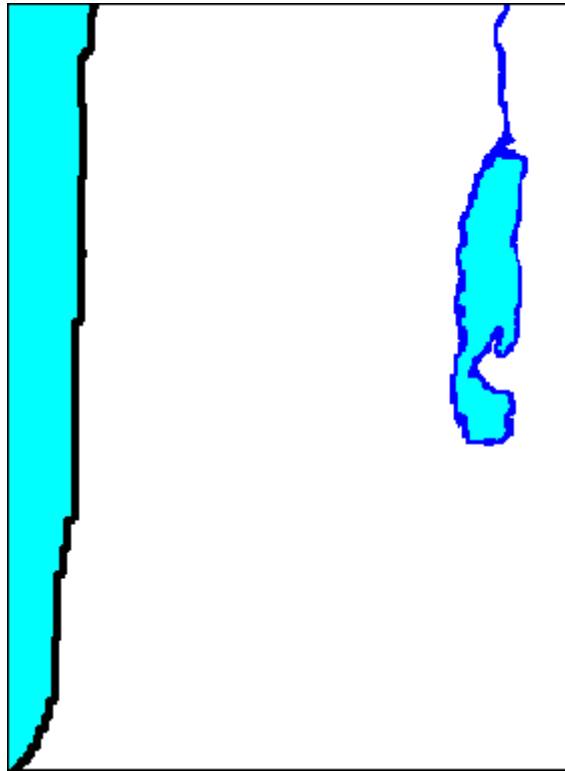
### DAVID HID 16 MONTHS IN GATH – I SAMUEL 27:1-12

1. There are three paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 27. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

27:1-4	
27:5-7	
27:8-12	

2. In I Samuel 27:1-4, David moved to Gath where he stayed for 16 months.
- A. In 27:1, David responded to Saul's apology.
    - 1. What is the essence of David's response?
    - 2. What does this tell you about David's feelings about Saul?
  - B? In 27:2, David and his 600 men moved to Gath. Think carefully about this move.
    - 1. How would you describe this move?
    - 2. What, if any, are the moral implications of this move?
  - C. In 27:3, David and his 600 men took their families with them when they fled to Gath. What does this indicate?
  - D. In 27:4, Saul learned where David and his men fled. In 26:1,2, Saul learned David and his men were in Achish and pursued them. In this passage, Saul learned of David's location and ended his pursuit. Why would he do this?
3. In I Samuel 27:5-7, David was given the area of Ziklag as a location for his followers.
- A. Read 27:5 very carefully. What observations can you make from this verse?
  - B. 27:6 is a strange comment. What observations can you appropriately assume on the basis of this statement?
  - C. In 27:7, the author pointed out that David and his followers lived in Ziklag for 16 months. Why would this be important information?
4. In I Samuel 27:8-12 David and his men devastated a number of localities in the area.
- A. In 27:8, David and his men raided three identified locations.
    - 1. Locate these three places on a map.

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2. What reason can you find for David's attack on these cities?
  3. What problems, if any, do you see with these attacks?
  - B. 27:9, the author described David's plan of attack on these locations.
    1. What is the benefit of such a plan?
    2. What are the liabilities of such a plan?
  - C. In 27:10, Achish questioned David about these raids.
    1. What does this verse tell you about David?
    2. What does this verse tell you about Achish's relationship with David?
  - D. In 27:11, the author repeated David's design of attack.
    1. What explanation does this verse offer?
    2. How would you defend such a plan?
    3. How does this design compare with David's actions before coming to Ziklag?
  - E. In 27:12, Achish identified his attitude toward what David had said and done.
    1. How would you define the attitude of Achish?
    2. How would you describe this man?
5. Review your study of chapter 27.
- A. Whom would you identify as the "good people" in this chapter?
  - B. Whom would you identify as the "bad people" in this chapter?
  - C. What is the outstanding message of this chapter?

## LESSON 27

### DAVID HID 16 MONTHS IN GATH – I SAMUEL 27:1 – 12

There are only three paragraphs in I Samuel 27. Look at the following table for a summary of each paragraph.

27:1-4	David moved to Gath
27:5-7	David Given the Area of Ziklag
27:8-12	David Destroyed Other Peoples in The Area

#### I Samuel 27:1-4 – David moved to Gath

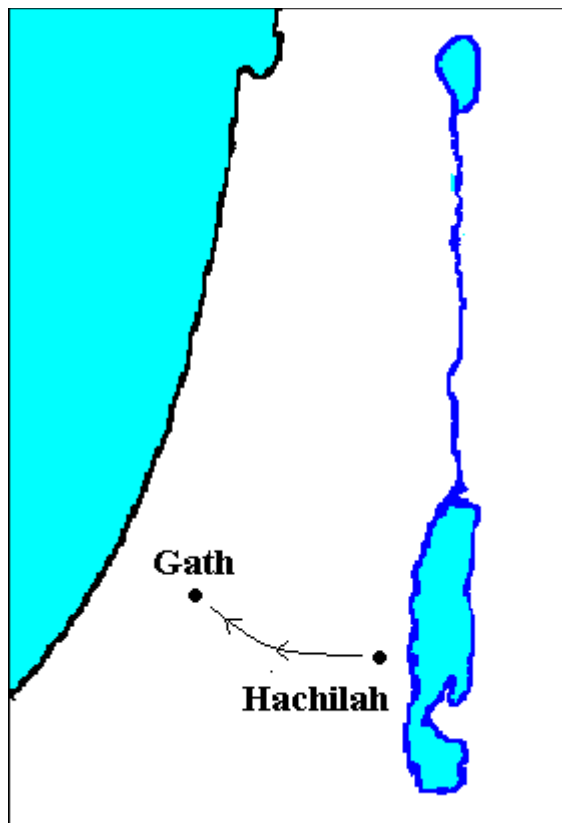
*Then David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me any more in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand." I Samuel 27:1*

This verse seems out of place. Saul had just promised not to harm David. Both had gone their separate ways without an attempt to trap David any more. Immediately following this exchange, David is fretting for his life. This suggests that David did not believe that Saul would give up on trying to take his life. David developed a plan. He was going to flee to Philistia. Saul would tire of searching for him in Judah and give up on the project. He hoped that this was a way he could escape with his life. There is a hint of desperation in this plan. David had been singularly successful in defeating the Philistines in battle. If there was any group, besides Saul, who would want to do David harm, it would be the Philistines. Nevertheless, this is the way he was thinking.

We should observe that this is singularly out of character with how David thought and acted. In the past, David had trusted that God would defend and protect him. Now he has taken it into his own hands and is not trusting in God to be his protector. We will be watching to see how this plays out.

*So David arose and crossed over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maoch, king of Gath. I Samuel 27:2*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



This was only a journey of about 25 miles, but it was through very rough terrain. Observe that there were 600 men with David. Through all of this tension and struggle, David did not lose a single man. Achish, the king of Gath, had to be a very young king when he met David. You will find him still ruling 40 years later when Solomon begins his reign. The word Gat or Gath means winepress and was probably an area where there were many grapes grown commercially. In all probability it was a highly fortified city. David and his men were well received by Achish.

*And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. I Samuel 27:3*

Achish provided exceptionally comfortable accommodations for a large group of outstanding fighters who came to him from his greatest enemy. This may have been the key to his thinking. If he welcomed David and his men, he may, by this, have been able to inflict a moral victory upon his archenemy – Saul. Imagine providing a residence for each of the soldiers and their families rather than just a garrison for the men. This would require a great deal of space and outlandish expense. Again, David had been singularly successful against the Philistines. Achish may have felt that David was going to be king and wanted to be on good terms with him. The expense would be easier to sustain than a military defeat. We need to keep in mind that Gath was a city-state, not a nation.

*Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him. I Samuel 27:4*

In Israel, news always traveled fast. Saul soon learned that David had fled to Gath. Note that the verse says, "so he no longer searched for him." This is evidence that Saul, again, had not meant the oath that he took with David. He did continue to look for David in order to put him to death. David's assessment of the situation was absolutely correct. At least for the present, David could rest more easily.

## DAVID HID 16 MONTHS IN GATH

### I Samuel 27:5-7 – David Given Area of Ziklag

*Then David said to Achish, "If now I have found favor in your sight, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" I Samuel 27:5*

This verse raises several questions: Were David and Achish having minor difficulties between themselves and/or their people? Was Ziklag an occupied city at this time? Was Achish placing Philistine people under the control of David? Was Ziklag a city or an area where his men might settle? We do know that from this point on, Ziklag was considered a part of Judah and it remained in that way for a long time after David no longer lived there. David's request was based upon whether or not he had found favor in the eyes of the king. The meaning of a statement like this is not always clear. David may have wanted to be a safe distance from Gath in order not to appear to infringe upon the power and popularity of Achish.

*So Achish gave him Ziklag that day; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. I Samuel 27:6*

Gath may have been a city-state, but still Achish controlled a place at least 30 miles to the south of the city. Notice that it says, "it has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day." This statement is evidence that this book was written a substantial number of years after David moved to Ziklag. Observe that Ziklag is not called a city at this point. This piece of information could be used in support of the idea that Ziklag was an area at this time, but that is far from convincing evidence.

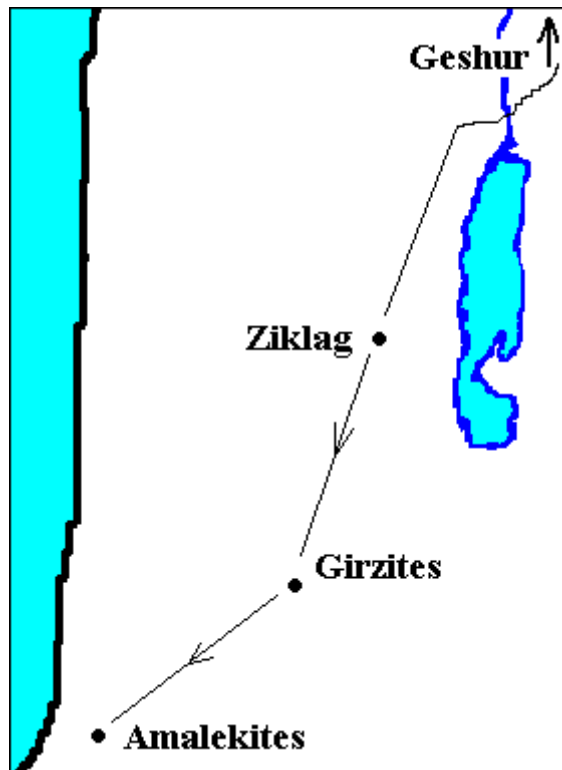
*And the number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months. I Samuel 27:7*

This may not seem like much. It is, in fact, a very long time for people to stay in an alien nation and not be there by force. It may be taken by some that David and his men were just living in Ziklag for this length of time. As we shall see, that is far from the truth.

### I Samuel 27:8-12 – David Destroyed Other Peoples in the Area

*Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt. I Samuel 27:8*

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



The Geshurites had probably moved south, but on the east side of the Jordan River. If David wanted to be a welcome guest in the mind of Achish, then he would have to maintain a low profile and maintain good relations with everyone around him. No host nation or city would want guests stirring up trouble with their neighbors. As you can see on the map, these were not short ventures. They had to cover long distances even before they reached the enemies that they wanted to conquer. Especially in the case of the Kenites, they had to travel at least 100 miles through rugged mountains and then through sand desert. Neither of these were inviting for soldiers who knew that they had a battle to face when the trip was complete. One wonders why David would engage in combat in these areas before he was made king. There are a couple of possibilities: There were a number of very wealthy cities in these areas. To have achieved these victories may have been to his advantage when it was time for him to become king. Other than this, it is hard to see why he would risk the lives of his men when he was not yet in the position of power where the greatest benefit would be.

*And David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing. Then he returned and came to Achish.*  
*I Samuel 27:9*

Observe David's battle plan for these raids. He did not leave a man or woman alive. All were killed. He took away everything that these people had had in their city. This appears to substantiate the idea that he undertook these raids to provide the needed supplies for his army. The honest answer, however, is that we do not know. Upon his return to Ziklag, he met with Achish. Though Achish had been generous with them, still he kept careful watch on David and his men. His own reputation depended upon his careful watchfulness of his guests. He had to give account of his activities to his host.

*Now Achish said, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David said, "Against the Negev of Judah and against the Negev of the Jerahmeelites and against the Negev of the Kenites."*  
*I Samuel 27:10*

The way the question was worded suggests that he knew that these raids were going on and that there were several of them. The nature of his question may also suggest that he was not too happy that David was using



## DAVID HID 16 MONTHS IN GATH

his area as a staging area for his raids on neighboring countries and cities. As you study the adjoining map you can see that they would have to cover nearly 200 miles just to get to these cities before they could conquer them.

*And David did not leave a man or a woman alive, to bring to Gath, saying, "Lest they should tell about us, saying, 'So has David done and so has been his practice all the time he has lived in the country of the Philistines.'" I Samuel 27:11*

In this verse, the author quotes David telling the reason that he destroyed all the people in these cities and areas. Had he left any alive, they could travel around the area and tell everyone what he and his army had done. Because they were all dead, no one could pass the word along concerning what he and his men had done.

*So Achish believed David, saying, "He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever." I Samuel 27:12*

Achish did not know if David was telling the truth or not. Achish had some devious ideas in mind as he accepted David's explanation. He thought that David had, by these attacks, made himself an enemy in Israel. This being the case, then Achish could pretty much control David and make him a servant as long as he lived. This is devious thinking, but it is the way leaders thought in that day.

### CONCLUSION

David and Achish are the two main characters in this chapter. We need to look carefully at the picture this chapter presents of these two men.

#### DAVID

Up to this point in the book, David placed his trust in God. Throughout this entire chapter, David placed his in his own plans and schemes. David took his future into his own hands. He did not trust God to protect him.

Until this point, David appropriately saw the Philistines as the enemies of God and Israel. Thus, they were his enemies as well. In this chapter, however, it is as though this had never been the case. Throughout the rest of Scripture, fraternizing with the enemies of God always led to destruction.

In this chapter David apparently annihilated whole communities in order that there would be no one to report what he had done. This appears at least to be calloused and unworthy of a man set apart by God to be king over His people.

#### ACHISH

The report of Achish is frightening. He allowed David to live under his protection under false pretense. David somehow trusted that their relationship with Achish and the Philistines was one of trust and honor.

Achish knew exactly the evil design of David and his men. Nevertheless, Achish made no effort to inhibit such designs and actions.

At the end of the chapter, Achish verbalized his attitude. He said, "He (David) has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore, he will become my servant forever." These are the words of a self-confessed evil man.

There is no report of the consequences of the thoughts and actions of these two men. Succeeding chapters, however, will complete the dark story.



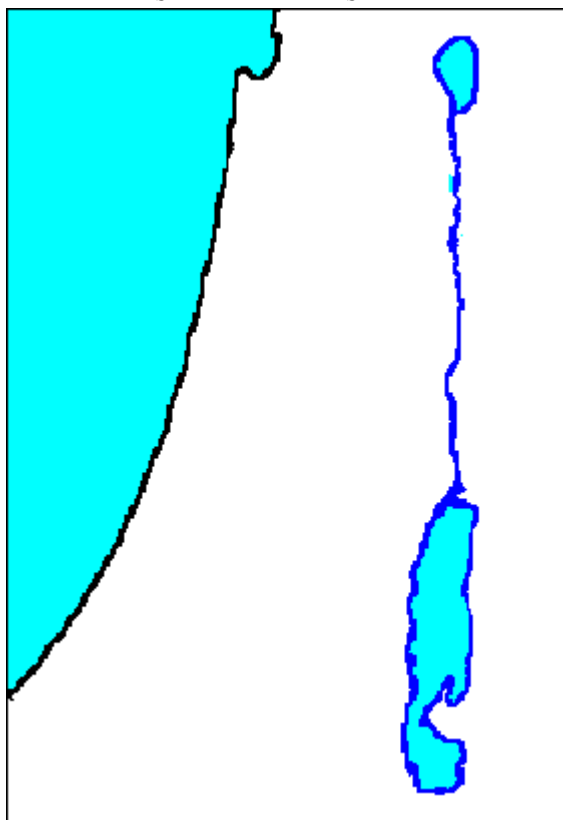
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 28

### SAUL SOUGHT A FAMILIAR SPIRIT – I SAMUEL 28:1 – 25

1. There are five paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 28. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each of these paragraphs.

28:1-2	
28:3-7	
28:8-14	
28:15-19	
28:20-25	

2. In I Samuel 28:1, 2, Achish demanded that David fight against Israel.
- A. In 28:1, war is being prepared.
    - 1. Was Achish preparing for an offensive or defensive battle?
    - 2. Describe the tone of Achish's message to David.
  - B. In 28:2, David responded to Achish.
    - 1. How did David respond to the announcement in 28:1?
    - 2. What two things did Achish announce following David's response?
    - 3. If you were David, what would you think at this point?
3. In I Samuel 28:3-7, Saul sought a woman with a familiar spirit.
- A. In 28:3, the author spoke of Samuel's death and Saul's clearing Israel of mediums. What do these two pieces of information have to do with each other?
  - B. In 28:4, the author described the initial moves toward battle.
    - 1. On this map, trace the movements of both armies.



## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

2. How does this differ from the previous engagement between the Philistines and Israel?
3. What is the advantage in this move?
- C. In 28:5, Saul viewed the enemy army on an adjacent hill. What was his reaction?
- D. In 28:6, Saul tried to communicate with God.
  1. What name for deity did the author use in describing this incident? Why?
  2. Put yourself in Saul's position. What would you think? Why?
- E. In 28:7, Saul made an unusual move.
  1. How can we explain this in view of Saul's actions in 28:3?
  2. Why would Saul ever do this?
4. In I Samuel 28:8-14, Saul asked the medium to bring up Samuel.
  - A. In 28:8, Saul went to see the medium.
    1. Why would he wear a disguise?
    2. Why would he come by night?
  - B. In 28:9, the medium demurred Saul's request.
    1. What reason did she give for refusing the request?
    2. How did she describe Saul's efforts to get her to do this?
  - C. In 28:10, Saul responded.
    1. How did Saul respond?
    2. Describe the oath Saul took at this point?
  - D. In 28:11, Saul gave the woman the name of the person he wanted to see.
    1. It is clear that the woman had agreed to violate the law. How do we know this?
    2. What is the obvious problem with the choice that Saul made?
  - E. In 28:12, the person appeared that Saul desired to see.
    1. The medium knew the name of the person she was "bringing up." Why would she be shocked and frightened when she saw him?
    2. Why would seeing this person she had "brought up" let her know that this man who made the request was Saul?
    3. What did she say to Saul when this happened? Why would she say that?
  - F. In 28:13, Saul responded to the frightened cry of the medium.
    1. Read this verse carefully.
      - a. What did Saul say to the medium?
      - b. What does this reply say about Saul?
    2. Read the medium's reply again.
      - a. What did she say?
      - b. What does this mean?
      - c. How possible is this?
  - G. In 28:14, Saul questioned the medium about her answer.
    1. Explain Saul's question.
    2. What does she mean by her reply to this question?
    3. Study Saul's response to her description. What, exactly did he do?
5. In I Samuel 28:15-19, Samuel chastised Saul and prophesied his death.
  - A. In 28:15, Samuel chastised Saul for "calling him up."
    1. Previously, Saul wanted to know how the battles would turn out. Study 28:15 with this in mind. What did you learn?
    2. In this verse, Saul admitted great distress. How did he describe the source of his distress?
  - B. In 28:16, Samuel responded to Saul's request. How would you explain what Samuel said to Saul?
  - C. In 28:17, Samuel continued his message to Saul.

## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 28

1. What did Samuel prophesy?
  2. How did he explain this message?
  - D. In 28:18, Samuel continued his message to Saul.
    1. Study this verse carefully.
    2. In view of the report in chapter 15, what was Samuel saying?
    3. How did this turn out?
  - E. In 28:19, Samuel finished his prophesy.
    1. How does the message of this verse differ from 28:18?
    2. Think carefully about this message. How are we to understand this in view of God's promise to bless and protect Israel?
6. In I Samuel 28:20-25, Saul fell faint and the medium prepared a meal for him.
- A. In 28:20, something happened to Saul.
    1. How would you describe this condition?
    2. How would you account for this?
  - B. In 28:21, the medium spoke to King Saul.
    1. What was she saying?
    2. Why did she say this?
  - C. In 28:22, the medium identified, in part, at least, the reason that Saul was faint.
    1. What was the reason?
    2. Why would this be true?
  - D. In 28:23, Saul at first refused the medium's request.
    1. Why would he first refuse the request?
    2. What change took place so that he later accepted the request?
  - E. In 28:24, the medium prepared a feast for Saul.
    1. Think about the time involved in this verse. How long might this take?
    2. In view of the medium's statement in 28:22, why would this feast now be necessary?
  - F. In 28:25, Saul and his servants ate the feast. What is the significance of the fact that the author indicated that it was night?
7. Review your study of this chapter. Read through the chapter to focus upon consequences.
- A. What actions did you observe by each person?
  - B. What consequences did you observe?
  - C. What does this say about the choices you make in your life?



## LESSON 28

### SAUL SOUGHT A FAMILIAR SPIRIT – I SAMUEL 28:1 – 25

There are five paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 28. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

28:1-2	Achish Insisted David Fight Against Israel
28:3-7	Saul Sought a Woman With a Familiar Spirit
28:8-14	Saul Asked Medium To Bring up Samuel
28:15-19	Samuel Chastized Saul and Prophetised His Death
28:20-25	Saul Faint: Medium Prepared Meal for Him

#### I Samuel 28:1-2 – Achish Insisted David fight against Israel

*Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men." I Samuel 28:1*

The use of the word “now” indicates that the author is turning in a different direction with the text. Suddenly it is quite clear why Achish was so generous as to let David and his 600 families live peacefully in his area. Observe that Achish change his tone drastically. Until now, he has been gentle and condescending with David. Suddenly that changed. He did not invite David and his men to join in the battle against Israel. He forcefully announced that David and his men would go into battle with him. The real Achish is beginning to show.

This would be a real test of how David fit into the situation with Achish. The Philistine king and his army were going to attack the forces of Israel. This is offense, not defense. This would be the real test as far as Achish was concerned. These Jews would have to go to battle against their own people. In some cases it could well be that they were going to battle against near relatives.

*And David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life." I Samuel 28:2*

To fight against Saul was one thing. To fight against Jews who might have no affiliation with Saul was another issue. David agreed, however, to take part in the battle.

By his tone, Achish asserted his control in an obvious way. David agreed to participate in the conflict. It sounds as though David was saying that he would report back to Achish what he and his men would be able to do. Achish brushed this aside as though David had not spoken. He then made another announcement. First, Achish announced that David and his men would join with his men in battle. Now he announced that David and his men would be his bodyguard. If that was not enough, he also announced that they would be his guards for life. This comes across as a form of slavery.

In one way, this announcement made sense. Achish did not know what would happen if Jews were to fight against Jews. If Achish used these men as his bodyguards, then his own soldiers would be freed up to fight at the battle line. There were two problems with the announcement by Achish. First, these men were David's soldiers, not his. They now would be taking orders from him and not from David. That was not part of their agreement. The second problem was that they had just learned that they were going to be servants for life. There were some inherent dangers in this arrangement. If the Philistines were successful in battle, they would have to endure the worship of Dagon as the victor over Jehovah. That would not bode well. Again, the Philistines literally worshipped their swords. If they were victors, they would count the captives and every one hundredth soldier would be sacrificed to their swords. It would not sit well with David and his men to stand by and watch their fellow countrymen being used as human sacrifices to an idol.

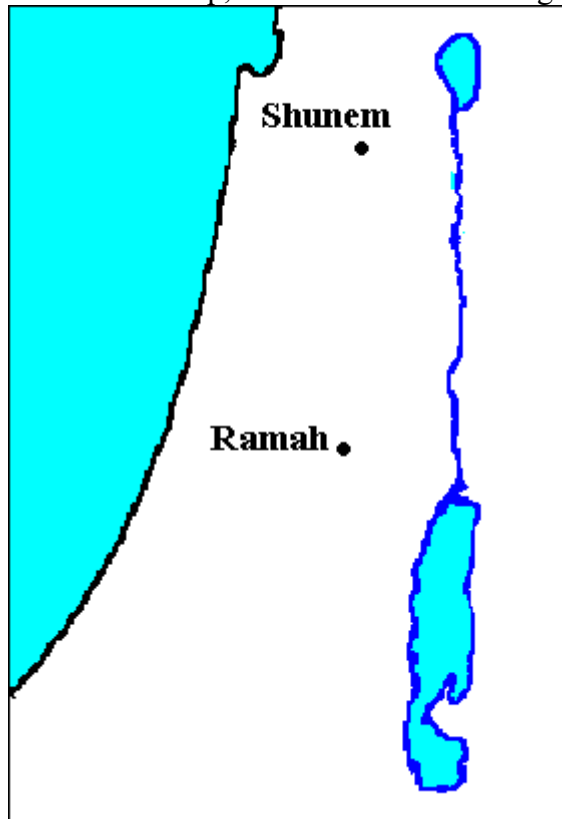
## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

There is no record that David gave any reply to Achish in any way whatsoever. It is hard to believe that David had no reply to these sudden announcements. This arrangement was not what David had in mind. He knew that he had been chosen as the next king of Israel. He would not want to be forced to serve as a slave to a Philistine king, or anyone else for that matter, for the rest of his life.

### I Samuel 28:3-7 – Saul Sought A woman with a familiar spirit

*Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were mediums and spiritists. I Samuel 28:3*

The Philistines were coming to have a final battle to defeat Saul and the army of Israel. Saul was under tremendous pressure. As you can see on this map, the Philistines had changed their battle plan.



In the previous battle, the Philistines had attacked at Gibeah. In this expedition, they chose to march 60 miles to the north and engage the Israelite army through Shunam. This gave the Philistines two serious advantages. First, when attacking through Gibeah, the terrain was rugged and anything but a good location to fight a battle. When coming through Shunam, however, they had the advantage of an excellent, flat battlefield where the enemy had no place to hide as they did in the mountains. Secondly, Saul had defended his position fighting in the hill country of Gibeah. He had not had to fight in the open country of Shunam which was quite close to Megiddo, one of the best battlefields in the world.

In the past, Saul could turn to David to defend his army and kingdom. Saul now knew that David was with the Philistines. This, in itself, could be a serious benefit for the Philistines. In the past, Saul could turn to Samuel to discover how things were going to turn out. Saul had alienated Samuel and now Samuel was dead. There was no one to whom Saul could turn to discover what was going to happen.

A king or general with great confidence had no need to know the outcome well in advance of the conflict. Saul always had to know the outcome because he had no confidence in battle at all.

We do not know why, but Saul had removed all the mediums and spiritists from Israel. It probably had something to do with his paranoia about the loss of power. It certainly would not be because of his spiritual resolve.



## SAUL SOUGHT A FAMILIAR SPIRIT

*So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa. I Samuel 28:4*

As we pointed out previously, the Philistines chose the place of battle which was greatly to their advantage. Each army was base-camped on a hill. Between the two armies stretched a broad battlefield that gave the ultimate advantage to the Philistines. Achish succeeded in setting the place of battle where it was as far from Israel's defense-base as it was for him. This deprived Saul of the only possible advantage that he had. Normally, the attacking army was separated from both supplies and fresh troops while the army under attack had these readily available. Because of the battle plan of Achish, there was no single advantage for Israel at all.

*When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. I Samuel 28:5*

When Saul could survey the battlefield and the enemy arrayed on the adjacent hill, his heart trembled within him. He was not a man of great courage anyway. He demonstrated this when Goliath threatened his army. In this instance, he discovered that not only was he at a disadvantage in terms of location and logistics, but he was surprised by the size of the army he faced. The Philistines could taste victory in advance. Their nemesis was on their side. They viewed this as the best opportunity they have had to defeat Israel. They brought every available soldier and they were eager for the conflict. All of a sudden, the kindness of Achish was beginning to make sense to David and his men. At this point, Saul would probably have given most anything to change the way he had treated David and have him at his side once more.

*When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. I Samuel 28:6*

Saul's great fear drove him to desperation to know what was going to happen. Saul inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him. That is not surprising. When all was well, Saul had no time for obedience or seeking the LORD. Only when he was now in a bind did it become important to inquire of the LORD. Besides, Saul had tried desperately, but unsuccessfully, to kill the man the LORD had anointed to succeed him as king.

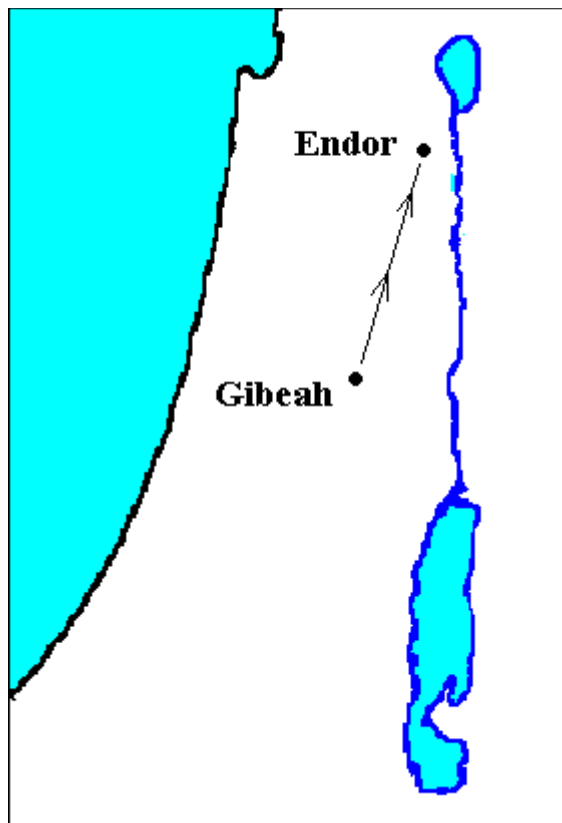
Saul then turned his frightened attention to try to find out what was going to happen through the use of Urim and Thummim, a means of telling the future through the use of a series of stones. That too was no help. Though Saul had not been faithful to God, he even tried to get a prophet to prophesy what would happen.

*Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor." I Samuel 28:7*

Saul had fallen away from Jehovah. Now he was unable to find out what was going to happen in this battle. He had exhausted every means of which he knew. When all else failed, Saul turned to the spirit world. The fact that he had outlawed these people did not matter to him because he was so desperate. There is no possible way that Saul could claim that he did not know it was wrong for him to do this. He knew, but was too frightened to care.

It is interesting that those closest to Saul knew exactly where to find an illegal medium.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



You can see on this map that when Saul chose to see the medium, he was taking an unacceptable military risk. The Philistines were in such a position that they could apprehend him on his way to En-dor or block his return quite easily.

### **I Samuel 28:8-14 – Saul asked medium to bring up Samuel**

*Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you." I Samuel 28:8*

Saul knew he was doing something he should not do. He had to disguise himself in order to avoid the Philistines as well as to try to deceive the medium in En-dor. He knew that he was going to ask her to do something illegal. That would not have been a problem for her. Look at her situation. She would be breaking the law with three witnesses present. She would, also, not realize that one of the three witnesses was the king who made the law. The other two were the leaders of his army who could carry out the judgment upon one who would violate his law.

*But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" I Samuel 28:9*

She rightly protested. She faced no punishment as long as she did not practice her spirit abilities. She also knew that the punishment for violating this law was death. She was upset and rightfully so. The medium challenged Saul asking him why he was doing this when she could be killed for doing such a thing. Observe that she was not averse to bringing someone up, she just did not want to die for her efforts. Notice that she spoke of what Saul was doing as “laying a trap for her life.” Little did she know!

*And Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, there shall no punishment come upon you for this thing." I Samuel 28:10*

## SAUL SOUGHT A FAMILIAR SPIRIT

The tension of the evening was mounting. There could be severe battle by morning. Saul felt he had to know now what was going to happen. The mounting pressure to know the battle outcome causes one to question why he was so desperate to know. One possible reason he felt he had to know could be that he was planning to flee if it turned against him.

This is sadly interesting. Saul had not been serving the LORD or worshipping Him. He was about to do something quite contrary to the will of God. Now he had to convince the medium that he was serious by taking a vow before the LORD. He based his oath on the eternal nature of God. He promised the medium that no punishment would come to her. He was not only going to break the law that he made, but he was going to compromise his own established punishment in order to do this. This gives us a hint as to just how desperate he was at this time.

*Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me."  
I Samuel 28:11*

The text does not indicate that she agreed to "bring someone up." The fact that she asked, "Who shall I bring up for you?" indicates her willingness to cooperate. It is quite shocking that Saul would ask her to bring up Samuel; anyone but Samuel. Saul and Samuel did not get along well, especially toward the end of Samuel's life. Add to this the fact that Saul was "bringing Samuel up" by means of a medium. Samuel would never be in favor of this. This is just one more piece of evidence to show just how desperate Saul was. When Saul saw the army of Achish, one suspects that he thought how great it would be if David was there to lead the battle for him and Samuel was there to predict the outcome in his favor.

*When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying,  
"Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul." I Samuel 28:12*

It is quite surprising. No one could have been more shocked than the medium was when she saw Samuel. We do not know why. It is also interesting that though this medium was supposed to have supernatural power, she did not recognize Saul until she saw Samuel. This is paralyzing fear. She had broken the law in the presence of the man who made the law. She was convinced that she would die. Notice that she said, "why have you deceived me?" One would think that she would be able to know that. She did not.

*And the king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see  
a divine being coming up out of the earth." I Samuel 28:13*

At this point the medium from En-dor was as upset as Saul was. Saul did his best to calm her. He said to her, "Do not be afraid, but what do you see?" Saul was not that concerned about her condition. He just wanted to know the information that she had seen.

Two things she saw are interesting:

She saw a divine being. Now, Samuel was a good man, a servant of God, but a divine being he was not.

It is difficult to think of Samuel as a divine being.

This divine being came up out of the earth. If he had been coming down out of the heavens, one might understand better. Nevertheless, she saw him coming up out of the earth. Granted, Samuel had been buried in the earth. Still it is difficult to comprehend.

*And he said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped  
with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did  
homage. I Samuel 28:14*

Up to this point, Saul was none the wiser for all her efforts. The confusion is mirrored in Saul's question. He said, "What is his form?" She was struggling as much as Saul was.

The medium responded with two pieces of information. She said that his form was that of an old man coming up. Now when Samuel died, he was an old man. It is not surprising that she saw this.

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“He is wrapped in a robe.” The word translated “robe” is “miyl” (מִיַּל) and literally means “to cover” as in acting in a covert way to cover up a sin. You may remember that when David brought the Ark into Jerusalem, he danced before the Ark. His wife, Michele, was greatly upset by this saying that he danced naked before the women of the city. He had danced before the LORD and had removed the robe that identified him as king. This is an outer garment, a mantle or robe. You may remember that this is what Elisha received from Elijah. Again, when the medium mentioned the robe, Saul recognized that it was Samuel. One has to wonder how this information would convince Saul that this person was Samuel. We must keep in mind that when a priest was buried he was adorned in the special outer garment that they uniquely wore. Though we cannot be sure, it seems reasonable that this would convince Saul that this was Samuel. Knowing that this was Samuel, Saul did two things:

He bowed with his face to the ground. In the East, this was the way one showed ultimate respect. This kind of respect would have been more helpful if he had shown it while Samuel was still alive and had not yet given up on the relationship with Saul

The text also indicated that Saul did “homage.” The word translated “homage” is “shachah” (שָׁחָה) and means “to prostrate oneself before royalty.” It is “to worship or show reverence.”

Both of these gestures are visual ways to express great respect and deference.

### I Samuel 28:15-19 – Samuel chastised Saul and prophesied his death

*Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and answers me no more, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do." I Samuel 28:15*

Samuel’s opening statement makes it clear that he is not in a complimentary mood to answer anything. Samuel’s statement is very strong. The word translated “disturbed” is “ragaz” (רָגַז) which means “to tremble with emotion;” “to quake with rage.” Saul was just as upset as Samuel was. The words translated greatly distressed are as follows:

Greatly – is “mehode” (מְהוּדָה) which literally means “vehemently” or “exceedingly.”

Distressed – is “tsarar” (צָרַר) which literally means “to experience strong cramps,” “to be seriously afflicted.”

The use of the word “for” indicates that a reason is about to be given. There are several pieces to Saul’s great distress.

“The Philistines are waging war against me.” This was not a new experience, but in part it was. The Philistines had waged war on him before. In one instance, Jonathan drove them off. In another instance, David slew the giant, Goliath. Now it was just Saul in charge and it was frightening to say the least.

“God has departed from me and answers me no more.” It is interesting that Saul carefully recounts what the LORD no longer does. He does not mention his own past sins and present alienation. This is, in his mind, God’s doings, not his. By the way, you do not sense this same level of distress when he was trying to kill David. Now that it involves him, it is somehow different. Saul is quite specific about his complaint.

“God does not answer him through the prophets.” The text does not identify which prophet Saul consulted and tried to get to provide the answer to his burning question. It is quite clear, however, that he had tried.

God does not answer him through dreams. He was upset that God failed to provide the information that he needed when he needed it.

In each of the ways that God communicates, He did not communicate with Saul. He is clear and forthright about what the LORD has not done, but makes no mention of his own failures. True to form, Saul wanted

## SAUL SOUGHT A FAMILIAR SPIRIT

to be free to turn his back on God and still be able to gain the benefits enjoyed by those who love and serve the LORD.

Saul's last statement in this verse is quite telling. He said, "Therefore I have called you that you may make known to me what I should do." Saul does not want to accept God's actions as final. God will not answer him so he came to Samuel to ask him to do what God has refused to do.

It is interesting that when this started, Saul wanted to know what the outcome would be. Now as the tensions increase, Saul wants to know what he should do. Saul is behaving like an incorrigible child who will not accept "No" from his parents.

*And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary? I Samuel 28:16*

Samuel's question is both logical and to the point. Saul has admitted that the LORD refused to hear his request. Saul was not well versed in the things of God, but he knew that Samuel received his information from the LORD. If the LORD would not give that information to Saul, He certainly would not give it to Samuel to give to Saul. Again, if the LORD did not want Saul to have that information, then Samuel would not want to work against the LORD's wishes to get the information for Saul. Samuel is trying to help Saul see that his request reflects desperation, not wisdom.

It is Samuel's task to help Saul see that God is no longer his helper, but his adversary. Saul does not want to see this. He wants to be able to turn his back and ignore God while at the same time receiving help from Him.

*"And the LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. I Samuel 28:17*

Now, Samuel must again help Saul to see that the LORD is doing exactly what Samuel had promised while he was still alive. Samuel must reiterate, again, that nothing can change or circumvent the LORD's will.

Samuel's message would not be comforting to Saul. There is an age-old fantasy to which people cling. The fact that God's judgment is not immediate makes them want to believe that God is changing His mind. The fact that God's promised judgment is not carried out in the immediate time frame does not mean that God has changed His mind. We are time-bound, but God is not.

Samuel finally gave Saul a prophetic word. It was graphically spoken. Samuel said, "The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David." The word translated "torn" is "kawrah" (כָּרַח) and means "to tear" or "to cut out." This is a violent action intended to express deep anger or violent disappointment. Samuel told Saul that the LORD, having ripped the kingdom of Israel out of his control has placed it in the hands of David. Samuel referred to David as "your neighbor." The word translated "neighbor" is "rawyah" (רֵאֵי) and means "an associate." Saul thought of David as his enemy. God spoke of David in terms of the way David continued to treat Saul, as an associate, one with whom he worked in the kingdom. The fact that nothing had happened as yet did not mean that God had forgotten or changed His mind. It simply meant that it has not happened as yet.

*As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day. I Samuel 28:18*

Here you can see the comparative form – "As...So..." In this verse, Samuel took something that Saul knew very well – his failure to obey God and execute God's wrath upon Amalek. Saul was to kill the king and all the animals. Saul spared the king in order to use him in an embarrassing, humiliating way to show his own pride. Saul kept the best animals for sacrifice to God, but God wanted him to kill them all. Samuel then compared this with something that Saul did not know at all – the LORD will do exactly the same thing to him on this day. That was not the prophetic word that Saul was hoping to hear.

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The LORD wanted Saul to know that he intended the king to express all the wrath that God had instructed him to perform. The LORD's commands are not subject to our review and approval prior to being executed. When instructed to obey, nothing less will suffice. As happens so often, this was only the tip of the iceberg in Saul's disobedience.

*Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!" I Samuel 28:19*

The word "moreover" suggests an additional statement in line with the previous one. Verse 18 identifies the consequences of Saul's disobedience for himself. Verse 19, however, goes even further to identify the consequences that will befall Israel as well as Saul and his family.

This situation illustrates a feature people are not anxious to recognize. God used his enemies to punish those who should be His people, but are not living that way. Some folks fantasize that God would not allow them to suffer because if He did, His enemies would claim victory over the LORD. The Philistines are a case in point. They relished the opportunity they had to defeat Israel as a victory for their god, Dagan. Several times, the LORD allowed this to happen only to later devastate His enemies and allow Israel to suffer for their disobedience. The LORD was totally willing to allow His kingdom to suffer in order to bring the consequences of a sinner's actions upon him.

### **I Samuel 28:20-25 – Saul faints: medium prepared meal for him**

*Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel; also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night. I Samuel 28:20*

Saul had to be traumatized by what Samuel revealed to him. Saul had passed the point of reasoning about the hope of victory. He hoped where there was no reason for hope. Now, Samuel destroyed that fantasy as he reported what God was going to allow Israel to experience. Every king wanted to be remembered as a strong, victorious king. Saul had discovered, for certain, that this would not be the way that he was remembered.

As you read this verse, you sense that three things are at work here:

1. Saul was so frightened that he is immobile.
2. He was exhausted by the terror, both realized and anticipated.
3. He was exhausted because he had been so terrified that he did not eat.

It is not at all surprising that he had no strength. Terror can do some strange, tragic things in our lives.

There are times when falling on one's face is a sign of submission and servitude. That was not Saul's experience here. Saul fell faint with fear and exhaustion and happened to land face down. In this instance, Saul's position was an expression of total physical and emotional collapse, nothing less.

*And the woman came to Saul and saw that he was terrified, and said to him, "Behold your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to your words which you spoke to me." I Samuel 28:21*

The last thing that any king felt they could afford was for another human being to see the evidence of terror in them. That, nevertheless, is what happened to Saul.

Look at this verse very carefully. There are two basic parts to it.

1. The medium saw that the king was terrified. The word translated "terrified" is "bahal" (בָּהַל). The word means "to tremble inwardly" or "beyond control." It is to be frightened to the point that the heart beat rhythm is destroyed.
2. She then spoke to Saul. This could be dangerous. In this instance, she had earned the right to speak. She rehearsed this fact for Saul. Observe the way she described the reasons she had a right to be heard.

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- a. She obeyed Saul. She did exactly as he instructed her.
- b. She obeyed at great risk. She literally took her life in her own hands to do as Saul had instructed.
- c. She had listened to him express the fear and terror that gripped him as he listened to Samuel.

*So now also, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you that you may eat and have strength when you go on your way." I Samuel 28:22*

In this verse, the medium continued to talk with Saul. Having explained how she had earned the right to be heard, she respectfully told Saul that he should now listen to her. This was a very delicate situation. A king is expected to be strong and resilient. To be weak and terrified can demoralize an army and the population. The truth was that Saul was both weak and terrorized. She knew that he was so weak that if he left, he would only go out and demonstrate his weakness to everyone by falling on his face in public. She was trying to help him avoid this by getting him to eat something. This would accomplish two things. It would get some food into his system and this would help to strengthen him. Secondly, it would make him relax for a little while as he ate. Both of these would help keep Saul from making an embarrassing spectacle of himself.

*But he refused and said, "I will not eat." However, his servants together with the woman urged him, and he listened to them. So he arose from the ground and sat on the bed. I Samuel 28:23*

No one would ever accuse a king of being easy to convince. Saul had to know that he was far too weak to leave her house and go on his way. He also knew, however, that it would have confirmed what these people had already seen and Saul knew it. He could not allow this to happen. Because of this, he initially refused the woman's suggestion. Again, a king would not want it to be known that he did what a woman advised him to do. Besides, he thought he had more strength than he did.

When his aides, however, joined with the medium in urging him to eat, it changed the whole situation. If he did not know before, he had to know now just how weak he had become. He got up off the floor, but sat down on a bed. He did not even have enough energy and strength to eat a meal in the regular way.

*And the woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread from it. I Samuel 28:24*

This verse could be confusing. It sounds as though the medium had a fattened calf inside her house. That was probably not the case. In that part of the world, shepherds lived in either tents or houses. Because of theft and wild animals, they needed a place to put their animals at night. If they lived in a tent, they would keep their animals in a corral type structure or a nearby cave. If, however, they lived in a house, they would dig out underneath the house and keep their animals there. It appears that this is what the author was describing here.

There seems to be a second surprise in this verse. It takes hours to kill and clean a large calf or small steer. The animal must be allowed to drip blood until it was acceptable according to rabbinical standards for human consumption. Just this part of the process would take much more time. The meat would have to be cooked. One must realize that it did not bother these people to wait all day if someone was preparing a special meal for them.

Add to this the fact that she had to make dough and bake bread as well. Remember, that though it really took a lot of time to prepare a meal for a king, this also allowed time for Saul to get some badly needed rest.

*And she brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose and went away that night. I Samuel 28:25*

After many hours, the medium presented the meal before the king and his attending officers. How long did it take? We do not really know. It had to take all day to do everything necessary to provide a meal for the king. This would take some of his apprehensions away because others were eating with him. It would not feel so much like the spotlight was on his weakness and trembling. Finally, Saul went on his way, but not before his weakness had been apparent both to the medium and to his own aides. He might forget this event,

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but none of the others would do so. Observe in the text it says, “Then they arose and went away that night.” This may have been quite intentional. Under the cover of darkness, Saul’s weakness would have been much more difficult to confirm.

### CONCLUSION

Unlike chapter 27, the name “LORD” appears at least eleven times in chapter 28. In this chapter, five people are prominent, each for a different reason:

NAME	REASON
David	He was patient when misused
Samuel	He was faithful to God and His message
The medium	(unnamed) involved in error, as helpful as possible
Achish	Subverting, taking advantage of the helpless
Saul	Fearful, weak, unable to face life

In this chapter, the inevitability of consequences comes to the surface. Saul, ever the one to try to live without God, discovered that God would allow him to do that. He also discovered that the consequences of this were more costly than he was prepared to pay.

In life, we can choose how we will live and what part we want God to play in that life. We cannot choose whether consequences will be involved or what those consequences will be. Repeatedly, the consequences of life without God are far too severe to make that our choice.



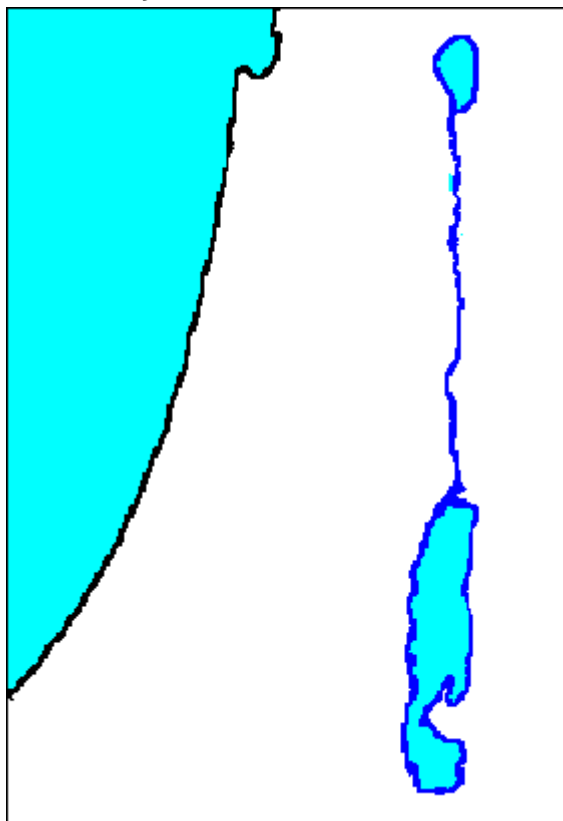
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 29

### PHILISTINES REFUSE DAVID AS AN ALLY – I SAMUEL 29:1 – 11

1. There are only two paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 29. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

29:1-5	
29:6-11	

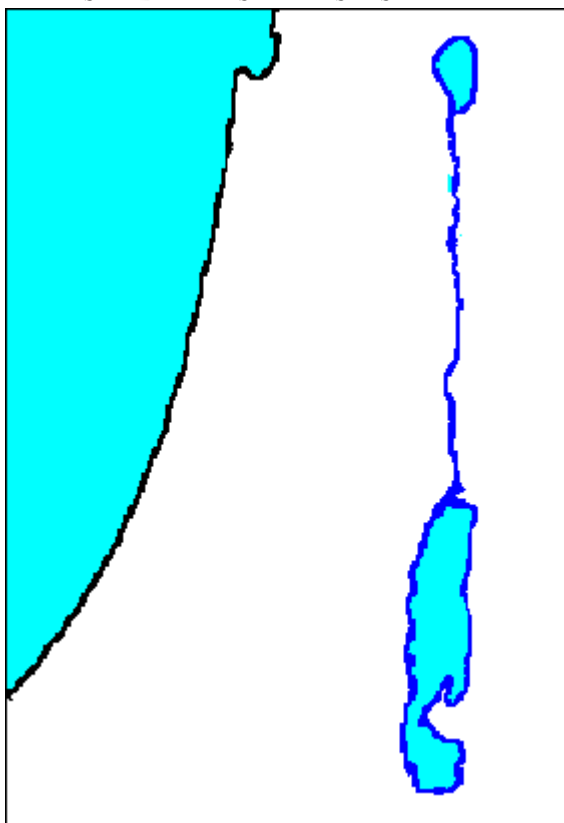
2. In I Samuel 29:1-5, the Philistine leaders refused to allow David to join battle against Israel
  - A. In 29:1, the author indicated that the Philistine armies were gathered at Aphek.
    1. On this map, show the location of the two armies as listed in 28:4. Then identify the location of the two armies as identified in 29:1.



2. In view of 28:4, how can we explain the move of the Philistine army in 29:1
3. Read this verse very carefully. What does it tell you about the makeup of the Philistine forces?
4. Study the message of Achish to David. How would you describe the tone of his words?
- B. In 29:2, the author described the way the army moved out. What did he say?
- C. In 29:3, there is some confusion among the Philistine leaders.
  1. What was their complaint?
  2. Achish answered the complaint. What answers did he give?
  3. Why did he give the answers?
- D. In 29:4, the leaders were not satisfied with the answers given by Achish.
  1. What was their complaint?
  2. What solution did they insist upon?
- E. In 29:5, the Philistine leaders offered evidence to support their concerns. What evidence did they present?

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3. In I Samuel 29:6-11, Achish asked David to return to Ziklag.
  - A. In 29:6, Achish explained the problem to David.
    1. What did he say?
    2. How did he say it?
  - B. In 29:7, Achish gave David instructions.
    1. What did he say?
    2. If you were David, how would you react to these instructions?
  - C. In 29:8, David responded to these instructions.
    1. How did David respond?
    2. Why would he respond that way?
  - D. In 29:9, Achish responded to David's question. What was he able to say?
  - E. In 29:10, Achish responded, as best he could, to the complaint of David.
    1. How did Achish respond?
    2. What else could he have done?
  - F. In 29:11, David obeyed the instruction of Achish.
    1. What did he do?
    2. On this map, trace the actions of David as well as his men.



4. Review your study of chapter 29. What have you learned that will benefit you in your spiritual journey?

## LESSON 29

### PHILISTINES REFUSE DAVID AS AN ALLY – I SAMUEL 29:1 – 11

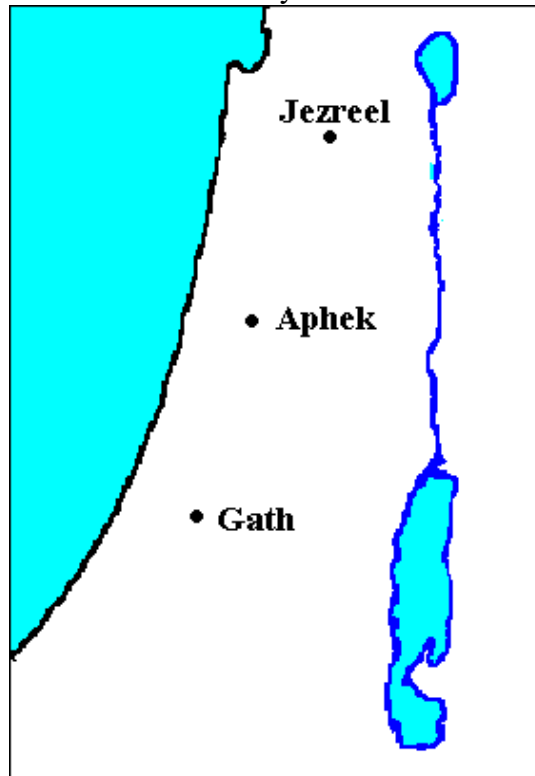
There are only two paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 29. There is a brief summary of each paragraph on the following table.

29:1-5	Philistine Leaders Refuse to Allow David to Join Against Israel
29:6-11	Achish Asked David to Return to Ziklag

#### I Samuel 29:1-5 – Philistine leaders refuse to allow David to join against Israel

*Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek, while the Israelites were camping by the spring which is in Jezreel. I Samuel 29:1*

This sounds like a simple report of the location of the army. It does that, but there are some unexplained details. If you look at 28:4, you will see that both armies are located to the north of their present locations. The question must arise, why then would they move south again? As you can see, these armies were located in the vicinity of Shunem. In this verse, however, the Philistine forces were located in the area of Aphek which is about 40 miles north of Gath from whence they first came.



Two questions surface:

1. Why would the Philistine forces march from Gath past Aphek to Shunam and then return to Aphek?
2. In the area of Shunam, they had an excellent, flat battlefield and the farther they move south the more difficult the terrain and when they get back to Gath the terrain is almost impossible to conduct a battle. There can be no good military reason for such a move, but there may be a religious one. The Philistines thought that some gods were powerful on the hill, but not on the plain. They assumed that all gods had such special preferences or limitations.

Notice that the author reported that the Israelites were located by the spring which is in Jezreel. This tells us two things.

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- 1, It places the two armies farther apart than they were at Shunam.
2. It also locates the Israelite army at a major water source in Israel. In Israel there are very few major water sources – The sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, several artesian springs one of which is located at Jezreel. If one is not located at one of these places, the only source of water is to dig to the aquifer in the area.

As you read this verse, you can see that the Philistine army is made up of far more than the troops of Achish. The contingents from the individual city-states met at Aphek and moved out as a single army from there.

*And the lords of the Philistines were proceeding on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were proceeding on in the rear with Achish. I Samuel 29:2*

As Achish had indicated to David, he and his men were to swerve as guards for King Achish. Because of this, they were located at the very back of the military column. The task Achish assigned to David and his 600 men was at least, in part, due to the fact that though Achish trusted David, the military leaders did not and they were quick to register their objection. We will deal more with this shortly.

*Then the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or rather these years, and I have found no fault in him from the day he deserted to me to this day?" I Samuel 29:3*

As we just indicated, the military generals were quick to register their distrust of David. They had done battle with him, they had heard the famous reports of his defeat of Goliath. They were not about to deal with him as a possible hazard at the battlefield.

Achish was quick to come to David's defense. He pointed to two things that raised the idea that it was reasonable for David to be there.

Though David had held a position of great respect and responsibility with Saul, that was some time in the past. He now has been with Achish for some time. The passage of time with good report is a factor in David's favor that says they do not need to worry.

Though Achish had watched David and his men for quite some time, he found nothing in them that would give them reason to distrust their loyalty. All of this aside, unless a commander can completely trust everyone under his command to do as expected, without exception, he would never be comfortable in the heat of battle.

*But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him, and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Make the man go back, that he may return to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For with what could this man make himself acceptable to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of these men?" I Samuel 29:4*

The Philistine generals were not impressed. They not only would not have David and his men at the front, they wanted them out of the battle area altogether. Now, it was no longer a discussion. The generals were angry. It was clear that the Philistine army would not move one way or another until David and his men went back to Ziklag.

In this verse, the generals explained why they wanted David off the battlefield. They described the scenario they feared.

They feared he would become their adversary from within the ranks.

They feared that because he was rejected, at this time, by Saul, David and his men would want some means to restore themselves to Saul's good graces.

The generals believed he could accomplish this by killing some of the top leadership of the Philistine army.

## PHILISTINES REFUSE DAVID AS AN ALLY

*"Is this not David, of whom they sing in the dances, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands'?" I Samuel 29:5*

The generals climaxed their exclamation/attack quoting what the women of Israel had been singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." This was a very impressive way to drive home the point about which they were uncomfortable.

### I Samuel 29:6-11 – Achish asked David to return to Ziklag

*Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army are pleasing in my sight; for I have not found evil in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, you are not pleasing in the sight of the lords. I Samuel 29:6*

Sometimes, humiliation is like twins. It brings two of everything. If it wasn't bad enough to lose the argument with the generals, then Achish had to endure the humiliation of having to break the news to David. The drama of the way Achish made the announcement does not cover up the pain he felt having to do it. Observe his opening statement, "As the LORD lives." Now the truth is that Achish was a Philistine. They worshipped Dagan and did not believe for one moment that "the LORD lives." If he thought that David would buy this ploy, he was badly mistaken. Having used this as a euphemism, Achish proceeded to describe David's reputation with him. He said three things:

1. **"You have been upright."** This is a spiritual term. It identifies activity that is right and just.
2. Achish admitted he had been pleased with the conduct of David and his men.
3. He further admitted that he had not found them guilty of any evil.

In total, Achish could find no fault with David or his men and their families. One wonders if that meant that he was not offended by the worship of Jehovah as practiced by all of these Jews. The first part of this verse was spoken in such a way that the hearer is assured that the speaker is not in agreement with what follows, but is required to say it just the same.

The word "nevertheless" indicates that what went before this word and that which follows are in opposition to each other. What Achish was saying did not make sense to Achish and he could not say it in any way that would make sense to David. He simply had to tell David that he was not pleasing to the commanders of the Philistine forces.

*Now therefore return, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines." I Samuel 29:7*

Having said this, Achish had to tell David to leave the battle staging area and return to Ziklag. In one sense, these were fighting words for a man like David. He still felt the sting of Achish's demanding remarks about going into battle in the first place. In one way, Achish was saying that for now, at least, it was more important to maintain the confidence of the Philistine generals than it was to maintain the confidence of David and his 600 men.

The other side of this announcement was that in view of David's future, this was probably a blessing in disguise. When he was about to become king, he did not have to live down the attack that he had fought against his own people in cooperation with the pagan Philistines. Despite this fact, David was seriously offended.

*And David said to Achish, "But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant from the day when I came before you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" I Samuel 29:8*

David's offense is clearly evident in his questions. David did not accept what Achish told him and now he wanted some answers. David's first question was, "But what have I done?" This question assumes that the Philistine generals did not want him around because of something that he had done. That, of course, was not

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

the issue. The issue was that he was a Jew, a Jew who had been singularly effective in defeating and killing Philistines.

David's second question was, "What have you found in your servant from the day when I came before you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" Again the question assumes that something David did or failed to do was the reason David was persona-non-grata on the battlefield. In one sense, this question ponders the question whether or not it is Achish who has found some fault in David. If you read this question carefully, there is a desire on David's part to show his loyalty to Achish.

*But Achish answered and said to David, "I know that you are pleasing in my sight, like an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He must not go up with us to the battle.' I Samuel 29:9*

Achish is again faced with the need to explain something that makes absolutely no sense to him in the first place. He did the only thing he could do; he repeated his trust in David. He made the contrast he had made before. He had absolute confidence in David. Despite this, the Philistine commanders said that David must leave and they were in a position to make good on their demands. It is like saying, "the boss may not always be right, but he is always the boss." This is politics, Philistine style.

*"Now then arise early in the morning with the servants of your lord who have come with you, and as soon as you have arisen early in the morning and have light, depart." I Samuel 29:10*

When Achish spoke in this verse, it was clear that the debate was over. The use of the word "now" makes it quite evident that there is a change in direction. The change is that they are not going to continue going over a decision they cannot change. They will change and be instructed about how they will carry out the instructions they are in the process of receiving. In essence, Achish is saying, "I want you to get up early in the morning and as soon as it is daylight, leave the camp."

The message of these instructions had different meaning for David than it did for Achish. For the king, it meant leave before anyone is awake so that we do not have to have a scene. For David, these instructions were really saying sneak out of camp so you don't have to be involved. This, of course, was not David's style. He had never done that and it could not be assumed that he was prepared to do so now.

*So David arose early, he and his men, to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel. I Samuel 29:11*

It was a bit surprising that David was able to accept this rebuff without a fight. Throughout the time he was among the Philistines, David had made every effort to remember that he was a guest in this land. He tried very hard not to create a problem. He was bending over backwards to be accommodating, even when it does not make sense to him to do so. While David and his men went south, the Philistine army went a bit north and west seeking to engage the army of Israel. Again, it is hard to imagine that David could do this without dealing very carefully with his own mind and emotions and then with those of the 600 families as well.

## CONCLUSION

The name of God does not appear in this chapter except in an almost sacrilegious way. Again in this chapter, it is difficult to see how and where the LORD is active. Still He is there. He is in control. One evidence of His control is in the fact that David did not have to go into battle; he did not have to fight as Achish had earlier commanded. It made little difference at the time, but it made a lot of difference when it came time for David to rule over Israel and he was being challenged by those who also wanted to be king. Life is a lot that way. Though God moves ever so quietly, still He moves our lives in directions that are pleasing to Him and accomplish His will for our lives. In those times when nothing seems to make sense, this serves as a good reminder that in imperceptible ways, God is accomplishing His will in the lives of His people. The story of Joseph is an excellent help for me at this point.







## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 30

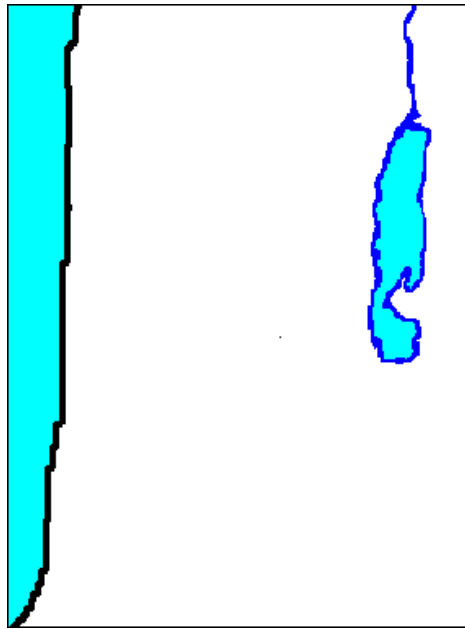
### AMALEKITES TOOK FAMILIES: DAVID DESTROYED AMALEKITES – I SAMUEL 30:1 – 31

1. There are six paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 30. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each paragraph.

30:1-6	
30:7-10	
30:11-15	
30:16-20	
30:21-25	
30:26-31	

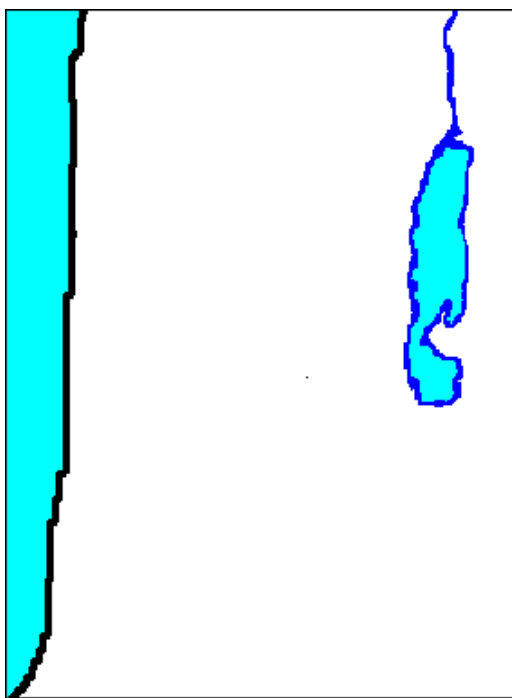
2. In I Samuel 30:1-6, the Amalekites burned Ziklag and took Jewish families.
- A. In 30:1, the author reported the attack on Ziklag. Study the wording of this report.
    - 1. What did you learn?
    - 2. Why would the Amalekites do this?
  - B. In 30:2, the author reported that the Amalekites killed no one, but took the women and children captive. Why would they do this?
  - C. Compare the contents of 30:3 with 30:2. What did you discover?
  - D. In 30:4, the author reported the reaction of David and his men to the discovery of their burned out city.
    - 1. How did the author describe it?
    - 2. What did he mean by this?
  - E. In 30:5, the author introduces an explanatory note that gives further information about 30:3, 4.
    - 1. What did the author add?
    - 2. In what way does this clarify the situation for us?
  - F. In 30:6, the author presents a very strong contrast
    - 1. What two things are being contrasted?
    - 2. Explain the details of each position.
    - 3. How could such a thing as this happen?
    - 4. What does this tell us about David?
3. In I Samuel 30:7-10, David asked the LORD if he should pursue the Amalekites.
- A. In 30:7, David asked Abiathar to bring “the ephod.”
    - 1. What is an ephod?
    - 2. Why would priest be part of such a fighting force that Saul was trying to annihilate?
  - B. In 30:8, David used the ephod to inquire of the LORD.
    - 1. Why would David ask the LORD these questions?
    - 2. David was an excellent military strategist. Why did he not just do what he knew needed to be done?
  - C. In 30:9, 10, David left 200 men with the base camp belongings while he and 400 men pursued the Amalekites.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



1. On this map trace their journey as David pursued the Amalekites.
  2. As you study this map, why would 200 men be exhausted at this point?
4. In I Samuel 30:11-15, David found an Egyptian slave.
- A. In 30:11, 12, the author described how David and his men treated this slave.
    1. What were David's options concerning the treatment of this slave?
    2. What did David choose to do?
    3. What does this tell us about David?
  - B. In 30:13, David interrogated the slave.
    1. What questions did David ask? Why?
    2. What did the Egyptian reply?
    3. What did you learn from this?
  - C. In 30:14, the Egyptian described the raids in which his owner had participated.
    1. On this map, locate the places the servant mentioned.

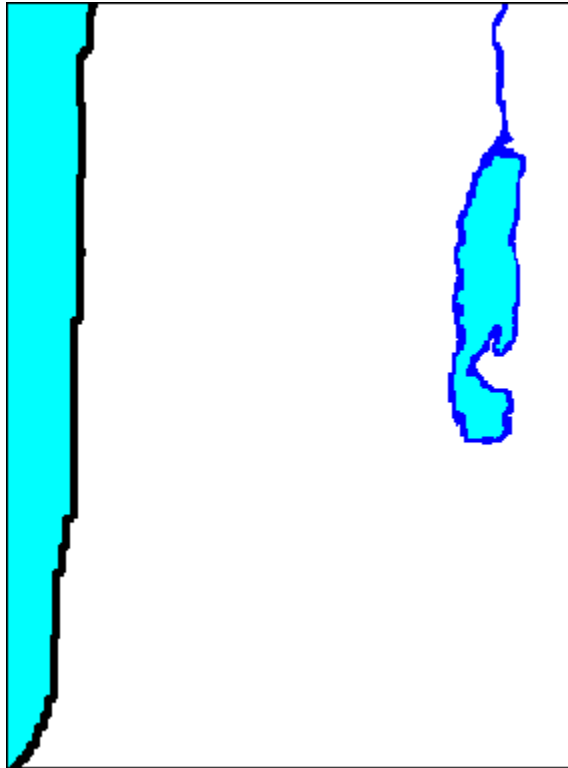
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 30



2. Study this map. What, if anything, can you discover from the servants response?
- D. In 30:15, David asked the servant to take him to the Amalekite camp.
  1. Study David's request. What did you learn?
  2. Study the servant's reply.
    - a. What conditions did he place on his compliance with David's request?
    - b. In view of his treatment by David, why would he make these conditions?
5. In I Samuel 30:16-20, David killed the Amalekites and restored the families.
  - A. In 30:16, the author described what David and his men found at the Amalekite camp.
    1. What did they find?
    2. How was this information important?
  - B. In 30:17, David and his men devastated the Amalekite camp.
    1. What did you learn from this report?
    2. What does it tell you when 400 men escaped on camels?
    3. Why was it important to kill all the Amalekites?
  - C. In 30:18, the author described the beginning of his report of the things David and his men retrieved.
    1. What does the author mean when he wrote, "David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken"?
    2. Why does the author emphasize the fact that "David rescued his two wives"?
  - D. Compare the author's report in 30:19 with his report in 30:18. How would you describe this?
  - E. In 30:20, the author reported, again, what was retrieved. The author described two groups of animals. How can we explain what he meant by this?
6. In I Samuel 30:21-25, David insisted on sharing with the weak soldiers.
  - A. In 30:21, David and the 400 soldiers, along with the families of all 600 men, were reunited with the 200 weaker men. How would you describe this reunion?
  - B. In 30:22, the author designated a contrast by the use of the word "then."
    1. Identify the two parts of this contrast.
    2. Whose decision is being announced in this verse?
    3. Read 30:22 very carefully. Now, read 30:6 just as carefully.
      - a. What did you discover?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

- b. What does this study tell us about David's job as leader of this military force?
  - C. In 30:23, 24, David responded to the announcement reported in 30:22.
    - 1. How would you evaluate the strength of this response?
    - 2. On what basis did David base this stand?
    - 3. There is at least one appeal to logic in this response. What is it?
  - D. In 30:25, the author commented on David's decision and response.
    - 1. What did the author say?
    - 2. What are the implications of this statement?
7. In I Samuel 30:26-31, David sent gifts to places where he had been. In these verses, the author mentions 10 places where David sent gifts.
- A. On this map, identify each of the ten locations.



- B. Study this map carefully. What reason(s) can you see for his sending gifts to these places?
  - C. In a Bible Encyclopedia or Bible Dictionary, find out as much as you can about each location.
  - D. In view of the rest of David's life, what other reasons can you see for these gifts?
8. Review your study of chapter 30. Much of this chapter focuses on a contrast between David and some of his men. Review the chapter to record what the author says about David. Read the chapter, also, to see what the author says about the "wicked and worthless men" among his troops. What does it say about one's character? What does it challenge you to do in relationship to your own character?

## LESSON 30

### AMALEKITES TOOK FAMILIES: DAVID DESTROYED AMALEKITES – I SAMUEL 30:1 – 31

There are six paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 30. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

30:1-6	Amalekites Burn Ziklag and Take Families
30:7-10	David Asked Jehovah if He Should Pursue Amalekites
30:11-15	David Found Slave to lead Them to Amalekites
30:16-20	David Killed Amalekites: Restored Families
30:21-25	David Insisted on Sharing With Weak Soldiers
30:26-31	David Sent Gifts to Places Where He Had Been

#### I Samuel 30:1-6 – Amalekites burn Ziklag and take families

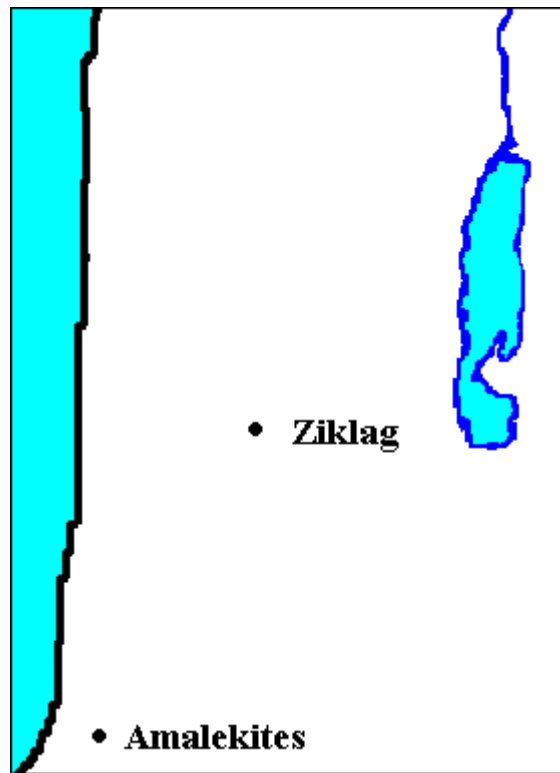
*Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; I Samuel 30:1*

This chapter begins in such a way that it is clear that there is a change in the direction of the text. You may remember that David had just been sent away from the field of battle. David and his men experienced rejection and marched needlessly for over 100 miles. The text indicates that the return home was a three-day walk. There is more than simple rejection here. The rejection came because of severe mistrust. There is something about mistrust that is devastating to the personality and one's sense of worth. David experienced this at great depth.

David and his men arrived home only to discover that the Amalekites had raided their city. There are three useful pieces of information in this verse:

1. This raid was part of a broader military move that involved the entire Negev. As you look at this map, it is highly possible that this could be the initial incursion of a much larger military advance. This would be a great concern in itself for David.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



2. This was conducted by an old enemy, the Amalekites. These people had fought with Israel and David knew a great deal about it. There was a lot of emotional baggage involved because of the devastation and physical abuse that goes with the defeat and death involved in the conduct of war.
3. The Amalekites had “overthrown the city and burned it with fire.” The burning of the city had no necessary military significance, though it could be. This usually demonstrates the hatred and pent up anger of the invader.

*And they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way. I Samuel 30:2*

It is one thing to burn a city to the ground. It is quite a different thing to take the women and children captive while the men are away at battle. The Amalekites did not kill any of the captives. Sometimes this was much worse than being killed. One can only imagine how David and his men might feel when they discovered this devastation.

*And when David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. I Samuel 30:3*

Think carefully about what has happened to these men. David and his men had experienced personal tragedy to bear up under with their collective rejection. This had to be almost more than they could bear. They left their homes with everything in good condition and their families living in safety. They returned to a burned out city with nothing left in it. We must keep in mind that this devastating process was not unique with the Amalekites. You may remember that in 27:8 David and his men made a raid on the Amalekites and a number of other groups in the area. In that battle, David and his men defeated the army of the Amalekites and killed all the people and even the animals in every city they attacked. One wonders if this ever entered their minds as they grieved over the loss of their families. As you can see as you study this paragraph, the information in this verse is all mentioned in the two previous verses. This is intentional. It is a way to place very strong emphasis on the information in the text.

*Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. I Samuel 30:4*

## AMALEKITES TOOK FAMILIES: DAVID DESTROYED AMALEKITES

We have conjectured about David's response, but in this verse, we see the first evidence. This description is one of the most devastating pictures of grief portrayed in Scripture. It is one thing to grieve. It is even worse when 600 men are involved and soldiers at that. The extent of their weeping is heart-rending. They wept until they had no more strength to weep. The author was struggling for words to express just how deeply they sorrowed.

*Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. I Samuel 30:5*

The use of the word "Now," indicates that there is a change in direction either within the information under consideration or to a totally new subject. One of the implications of this tragedy, for David, is that where most, if not all, of the men lost just their wife and children, David lost two. Now, there is no information here to say if David had any children by these two wives during the time they had been in Ziklag. It is not surprising for us to discover that David's two wives were taken captive. Every man's wife was taken. The purpose of this verse is to remind us that David understood exactly what his men experienced. He experienced the very same thing or more

*Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. I Samuel 30:6*

David also had another concern. Until now, the 600 men had given their undivided loyalty to David. This experience was almost more than they could handle. The result was that in their panic and pain, they were ready to stone David thinking that he had failed as a leader. David had been an excellent leader and they knew it. These 600 men turned against David as a vent for their wrath. It is one thing when the men of an army are devastated. It is quite another thing for them to lose confidence in the great leader whom they had been following. That is the situation in Ziklag at this time.

This part of the verse begins with the word "but." The author drew a contrast between the depth of frustration and anger of the 600 men and the way David was handling the reaction. David did not resort to argument or to pressure to deal with his angry men. David "strengthened himself in the LORD his God." Jehovah was the source of his strength. It is interesting that the author spoke of deity as "the LORD his God." The names "LORD" and "God" are the two most common names used to identify deity. The name "LORD" emphasizes the judgment or justice of God. The name "God" was used in situations where the mercy of God was being discussed.

### **I Samuel 30:7-10 – David asked Jehovah if he should pursue Amalekites**

*Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. I Samuel 30:7*

We may have forgotten, but David brought Abiathar the priest when they came to be with Achish. At that time, David asked him to bring the "ephod" with him. The ephod was a vest-like garment that was worn by the priest when he presided at the altar. This garment was made of interwoven refined gold thread mixed with fine linen. This vest-like garment was made of two pieces of material – front and back. These two pieces were fastened at the shoulders by golden clasps to which two onyx stones were attached. The names of six tribes of Israel were engraved on each stone. Over the front piece of material was placed a breastplate made of much the same material. There was a pocket or pouch in this breast piece. This is where the urim and thummim were kept. The urim and thummim were flat stones or objects that were cast, like dice, by the priest as lots. By this means the priest could determine the will of God on a given occasion. As happens so often, the future hinges on a single, seemingly insignificant event. This is a case in point. Good military strategy would demand that David and his men attack the Amalekites with deadly fury. This would accomplish two things:

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

They might well be able to recapture their family members and release them from slavery.

A quick retaliation would be that if this counter-attack was sufficiently devastating, the Amalekites would think twice before doing it again. Military strategy was not enough for David. He wanted God's guidance in what he should do.

*And David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them, and you shall surely rescue all." I Samuel 30:8*

Observe that David addressed his question to the "LORD." It is like asking, "Is this the just and righteous thing to do?" David asked two very specific questions:

**"Shall I pursue this band?"** Pursuing the abductors of their families seems like a perfectly natural thing to do. One might wonder why David would feel the need to ask such a question. He wanted to be absolutely certain that this was not just good logic, but also God's good pleasure. The two things are not always the same. God's wisdom most always goes well beyond the limitations of human logic. David was not concerned about logic, not about the collective wisdom his men might demand. Only what God would require was important to him.

**"Shall I overtake them?"** It is interesting that at this point there is no indication as to which direction the Amalekites had fled. This is important because the area around Ziklag is on the edge of the sand desert. If footprints were more than a day old, the wind would cover them up and it would be as though no one had walked through the area. David was not so much asking if he would find them, but would he be victorious over them. This would be very important information David would need in order to get his men together to go after their families.

David asked his questions by means of the ephod. We need to observe God's response very carefully. The LORD answered with three specific statements:

God instructed David to **pursue the Amalekites**. This is what David's own wisdom would have advised.

**"You will surely overtake them."** This David's logic could not assure. Only God could know and really promise.

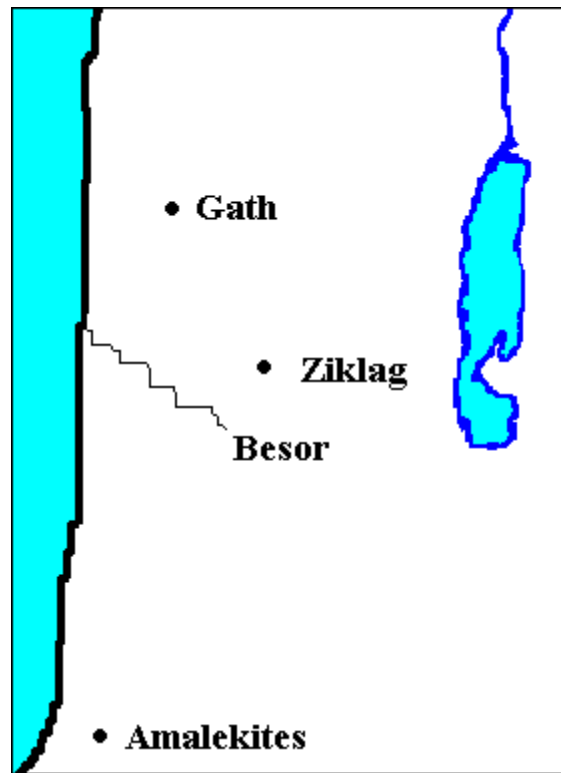
**"You shall surely rescue all."** Again, this is information their limited knowledge and logic could not guarantee. This was all good news. For David to be able to tell his men that they could find the Amalekites and defeat them would be great news. To be able to tell them that they would be able to retrieve every one of the captives would be exhilarating beyond description.

*So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those left behind remained. I Samuel 30:9*

That was all the information that David's men needed. All 600 went with him. On this map you can see where the brook of Besor is located.



## AMALEKITES TOOK FAMILIES: DAVID DESTROYED AMALEKITES



The 600 had already marched over 100 miles. This trip was an additional 20 miles. There is one additional factor. They are marching south, into the desert. It is getting increasingly hotter than it was in Ziklag where they had been living. It is also much more difficult because they were moving into desert sand where it was much more difficult to walk.

Observe that there were those who were unable to continue on the journey even though they were going to reclaim their families. This gives one an idea of just how worn out these men really were. It is not surprising that this is true. They had marched for more than 120 miles and it was getting more difficult all the time to walk. Add to this the fact that they were not on a lazy walk. This is army formation and they marched as quickly as possible. Since they discovered that their families had been taken captive, it is quite certain that their gait was much faster than it had been before.

*But David pursued, he and four hundred men, for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor, remained behind. I Samuel 30:10*

One third of David's men were too worn out to continue even though they were going to recapture their wives and families. The 200 left behind were to watch their belongings on the north side of the Brook Bezor. The basic kindness of David became evident at this point. A lesser leader would have forced his men to march anyway. With only 600 men, David was already outnumbered many times over. To now leave one third of his force behind was militarily unthinkable. God had told David to pursue his enemy and he would win. David pressed on with the men who were still able to continue to the battle.

### **I Samuel 30:11-15 – David found slave to lead them to Amalekites**

*Now they found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him bread and he ate, and they provided him water to drink. I Samuel 30:11*

As David and his men continued their journey, they met a man in a field. David had a choice as to how he would approach this man. He could threaten the man to force him to give them the information they needed. On the other hand, he could treat him kindly and gain the information by befriending him. It is not surprising that David chose to help the man.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The text indicates that they gave the man bread to eat and water to drink. This was especially important because food and water are the absolute essentials in the desert. At this point, there was no guarantee that this man even had any information that he could share with them. They could have been wasting their food supply, which was always in short supply when an army marches through the desert.

*And they gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins, and he ate; then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. I Samuel 30:12*

The text does not say so, but it was certainly evident that this man was in desperate need of food and water. It was not uncommon for people to survive on fig cakes and raisin clusters when they traveled. David and his men shared these with this man.

Only at this point did the author inform us that the man had neither food nor water for three days. To be without food and water for three days, in our climate, would be devastating to say the least, but not impossible. To be without food and especially water for three days in the desert would leave a person in dire straits. Observe how the author reported this situation. He said, “three days and three nights.” It would not represent a different amount of time if he simply said, “for three days.” By reporting “three days and three nights,” the author added very significant emphasis to his message.

*And David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man of Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind when I fell sick three days ago. I Samuel 30:13*

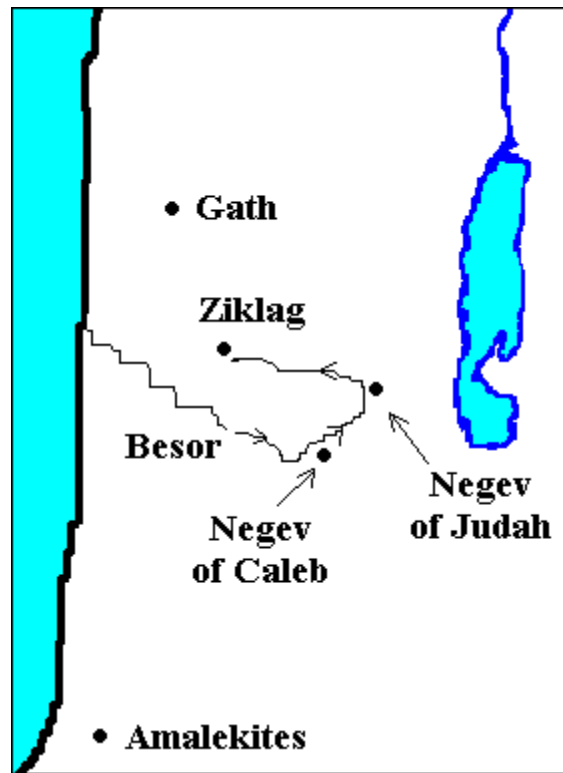
The man identified himself as an Egyptian and as a slave to a man who was an Amalekite. The man volunteered that he had been sick and three days ago his owner abandoned him to die in the desert. There were some significant pieces of information involved in this report. Because he was left behind to die in the desert, this Egyptian slave would no longer be the property of the Amalekite who left him to die. If David nourished him back to health, he could claim this Egyptian slave as his own.

This is a bit difficult for us to comprehend – just leaving a sick person to die in the desert heat without food or water. We must keep in mind that slaves were thought of much as a hand tool – if you break one, you just get a new one.

*We made a raid on the Negev of the Cherethites, and on that which belongs to Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." I Samuel 30:14*

The Egyptian slave volunteered even more information. He recounted the four places they had been and what they had done.

## AMALEKITES TOOK FAMILIES: DAVID DESTROYED AMALEKITES



**They raided the Cherithites in the Negev.** The Cherithites originally came from Crete as immigrants. They lived in the southern Negev. Later on they became a vital part of David's army and participated in raiding parties in the Negev of Caleb, the Negev of Judah and burned the city of Ziklag.

**They raided the Negev of Judah.** On this map, you can see the area called the Negev of Judah. It is located in southern central Judah and is an area that is mountainous and desolate.

**They raided in the Negev of Caleb.** You may remember that this is the territory promised to Caleb because of his faithfulness when others were uncertain whether Israel could compete with the Philistines who lived in the land.

**"We burned Ziklag with fire."** Prior to the coming of David and his men, Ziklag was not a very large town. With the coming of David and his men, Ziklag became a very large city.

*Then David said to him, "Will you bring me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this band." I Samuel 30:15*

David's treatment of this man was very gentle. He did not demand that the slave take to the Amalekites. He asked if the man would do this. I have no doubt that if the man proved reluctant to cooperate, David would have become a bit more direct. It must have been shocking to the servant to be asked to do something. It is most doubtful if he had ever been asked to do anything.

The man's response provides an insight into his deepest feelings. Notice how the servant began his offer, "Swear to me by God." Immediately the question arises, how did he know about Elohim? He certainly did not learn this from the idolatrous Amalekites. They worshipped idols thought to be most vicious. It probably was not from his Egyptian background though it may have been. The Egyptians also were idolatrous. The history of Egypt, however, contained the wonderful story of how the powerful God of Israel delivered them from the mighty power of Egypt. We cannot be sure, but this seems quite plausible.

His first request was that David would not put him to death. This man had been part of the raiding party that burned Ziklag and carried away everything and everybody. The punishment for such a terrible action was death for all involved.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

The servant's second request was that David would swear that he would not return him to his former owner. For at least two reasons, this was an understandable request. His former owner had left him to die. No one would want to be returned to such a situation. A second reason was more obvious. If David returned him to his former owner, then he, along with all the Amalekites, would be put to death for the terrible crime they had committed.

### **I Samuel 30:16-20 – David killed Amalekites: restored families**

*And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil that they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. I Samuel 30:16*

The author does not record the agreement. The fact that they found the camp of the Amalekites indicates that the agreement certainly took place and the servant led David and his men to the Amalekite camp.

When David and his 400 men arrived, they found the entire Amalekite camp engrossed in a huge victory celebration. In almost every pagan situation, such a celebration turned out to be a worship service rejoicing over what their idol had done on their behalf. It also usually meant that the victors were involved in a drunken orgy. When they were involved in their raids, the Amalekites would have been situated in a military camp. Now in the celebration of their victory, they were spread out all over this desert plain. They were rejoicing in all the spoil they had been able to accumulate on these four raids.

*And David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. I Samuel 30:17*

Having arrived at the Amalekite camp at twilight, David and his 400 men began killing the Amalekite army. There were so many drunken Amalekites that it took them more than 24 hours to kill them all. The only ones to escape were 400 young men who rode on camels. The fact that they rode on camels indicated that they represented the wealthiest families in Amalek. Riding on camels, they could easily escape. The other, however, were on foot and could not escape David's men who were quite sober.

*So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. I Samuel 30:18*

David rescued both of his wives. The men who were with him also rescued their wives and children. It does not say so specifically, but they also rescued the wives and children of the 200 men who were unable to continue with David and had to remain at the brook of Besor.

Along with their families, David and the 400 men rescued all that had been taken away from the city of Ziklag. This included all the animals, the personal belongings and the materials that had been left in the city. The only thing that was lost was the city itself. It had been burned and would have to be rebuilt.

*But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought it all back. I Samuel 30:19*

This is the second time the author has indicated that they had recovered everything that had been taken. In true Jewish fashion, when the author repeated himself, he also added some additional information. They made no distinction in terms of wealth. Everyone whether important or not; whether wealthy or not, received back everything that they had lost. This was most unusual. Once belongings had been taken, they would never anticipate that they would receive them back again.

*So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle which the people drove ahead of the other livestock, and they said, "This is David's spoil." I Samuel 30:20*

This is the third time that the author described what they had retrieved. At least in part, this was a way to emphasize that they had retrieved all that they had lost. The sheep and cattle were captured. They indicated, however, that this was the bounty that belonged to David. This raises a question. Did David take the sheep and cattle that belonged to the 600 men and their families? Not really! Notice the way the author has written

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this report. He said, “So David had captured all the sheep and cattle which the people drove ahead of the OTHER livestock...” Now, the author does not explain what he meant by this statement. We, therefore, can only conjecture what he means. It appears, however, that this identifies the fact that the 600 men recovered the animals that were theirs. If this is true, then what the author identified as “all the sheep and cattle” as the part that belonged to David. It was what the Amalekites owned. The animals identified as “the other livestock” was what belonged to the 600 men and their families. No one in their wildest dreams would ever think that they could retrieve both their family members and all that they had lost.

### I Samuel 30:21-25 – David insisted on sharing with weak soldiers

*When David came to the two hundred men who were too exhausted to follow David, who had also been left at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him, then David approached the people and greeted them. I Samuel 30:21*

In the history of warfare, there have been generals who were demanding of their men far beyond any reasonable expectation. David was not one of them. Though the text is silent, it seems reasonable that there had been a lot of conversation about the 200 men who were too worn out to continue with David and the 400 men. Not everyone would be excited to see the men who had not risked their lives to go to the battle. In reality, none of the 400 really risked their lives either. The Amalekites were too drunk to defend themselves and so the argument that the 200 had not risked their lives was not too appropriate.

These 200 men who had not been present in the battle did not know what had happened. When David and the 400 men and families approached the Brook Besor, the 200 came out to meet them. Put yourself in the place of these 200 men. They were not present to rescue their wives and children. They would be very embarrassed about this. They had not been present for the battle and they would be humiliated over this. Nevertheless, they came out to greet David and to be reunited with their families.

David went out to meet these 200 men. There was no rancor in his presence with them. He did not humiliate them. Certainly, he had heard the angry declarations of some of the men who had gone to the battle and he was determined that he would not be party to that. He greeted the 200 as though they had been as much a part of the victory as the 400 had been. There is a certain consistency in the character of David that is beautiful to follow.

*Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David answered and said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away and depart." I Samuel 30:22*

The author drew a serious contrast between David's approach and that of some of the 400 who were angry over the 200 who had not gone with them to fight the Amalekites. There must have been a sizeable number of these people among the 400 warriors. The author used two words to describe this group of men:

**They were wicked.** The word translated “wicked” is “ra” (רָעָה). This word means to be wretched and evil. It is to spoil or break in pieces. It describes something that is both useless and putrefying. This is a very strong attack against them. It is probably what David would have called them.

**They were worthless.** The word translated “worthless” is “beleyahal” (בְּלִיַּעַל). The word describes that which is without profit. It is the root of our word “Belial.” It describes something that is destructive, to be evil and ungodly. This is a serious indictment for David to make because he was as interested in the righteousness of his men as he was of their military skill.

This is not presented as a statement of opinion, but rather as a decision. These wicked and worthless men wanted to be generous and let each of the 200 men have only his wife and children. If that were the case, they would have suffered considerable loss through no fault of their own.

There is much more. Observe that the wicked and worthless men also said, “That they may lead them away and depart.” These men also were saying that these 200 men would not be allowed to return to be with David and the other men. They would be forced to leave the city of Ziklag and fend for themselves. Were

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

David to go along with this decree, then these 200 men and their families would be in grave danger of their lives in many places. Along with David, they had done a number of things that would alienate people who had suffered at the hands of David and his men.

*Then David said, "You must not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us. I Samuel 30:23*

After the “wicked and worthless men” had made their demands, David protested vigorously. David kindly called these rebels his “brothers.” These are the same men who wanted to stone David when they were rejected by the Philistines. Observe the way David spoke of the spoils that they had taken from the Amalekites. David described the material in question in three ways:

**“It is what the LORD has given us.”** This bounty is from the LORD. In the mind of David, the fact that this is “from the LORD,” affects the way they should think of this gift and the way they are going to divide it.

**“Who has kept us”** – It was the LORD who protected them during the entire engagement. With only 400 men able to make the trip and fight, they were enabled to kill all but 400 men and did not lose one of their own.

**“And delivered into our hand the band that came against us”** David recognized that it was the LORD who had done all of this. It was not the 400. It was God who did it all.

This was a very telling statement. He was saying that everything that happened was a direct result of the LORD’S intervention on their behalf. In spite of God’s kindness and generosity, they were bickering about who would receive the spoils of war when it was the LORD who had really won the battle. David has taken a very strong stand against the “wicked” and “worthless” among his men. His evaluation was absolutely precise, but would not be popular among these rebellious men.

*And who will listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike." I Samuel 30:24*

David is making a very forceful presentation. In effect, David was saying that their position was so ridiculous that no one would even listen to them. He gave his men a decree. It was his prerogative to do so, but there were some attending risks to doing this. His position was that everyone, no matter what their task, was to be treated equally. One can see where the rogue soldiers were coming from. They had gone for the battle, the 200 had done nothing of the sort. David added one thing to that. He had already reminded them that it was God who really fought and won the battle on their behalf. The risk, for David, was that he did not know how these men would respond to his declaration. He did know that these men were rogues. He knew that they had been ready to stone him because they considered his leadership inept when they were sent home. This is one more situation where David was prepared to take a risk on behalf of those who were being mistreated, at least as far as he was concerned.

*And so it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day. I Samuel 30:25*

The author departed from the story long enough to indicate that this became standard operating procedure in Israel and continued to be so even after he was no longer king in Israel. It became a royal decree that no one could contradict and feel safe. There is no doubt that David risked his position to establish this procedure. He certainly felt it was a worthy place to take a stand and did not hesitate to do so.

### **I Samuel 30:26-31 – David sent gifts to places where he had been**

*Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Behold, a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD: I Samuel 30:26*

In every army, there were strict rules governing the dissemination of the booty that was taken in war. If a leader would fail to follow these strict rules, there would be an uprising that he could not handle and every

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leader knew that. There was a definite portion that was earmarked for the leader. He could do with it as he wished. In most instances, this was just an accumulation of wealth that fell to the leader. It was shared with no one. David approached this differently. He came back to Ziklag and decided that he would not use his portion to grow rich, but would use it to share with people who had been helpful to him and his men on different occasions.

Observe that David referred to these gifts as "spoils of the enemies of the LORD." One must ask, in what way are these people the enemies of the LORD? The author does not explain this statement. David would say it this way. They are enemies of the LORD in at least these ways:

They were Philistines and as such were worshippers of Dagan and a host of other pagan deities.

They were the enemies of God's people and would do anything possible to destroy them.

They ascribed their victories over Israel to Dagan and proclaimed him victor over Jehovah.

There is a long list of people and places to whom David sent these gifts. We will need to ascertain, as best we can, why David would do this. Before we can discuss this, it will be necessary for us to identify each of the places where gifts were sent.

*To those who were in Bethel, and to those who were in Ramoth of the Negev, and to those who were in Jattir, I Samuel 30:27*

The city of Bethel was prominent in the history of Israel. Only Jerusalem is mentioned more times in the Bible than Bethel. This is the place where Abraham pitched his tent when he arrived in the land of promise. Bethel also is the place where Jacob had his vision of the staircase reaching to heaven. Bethel, which means "house of God," also was the place where the Canaanites had an important sacrificial center. Through the years, this city was involved repeatedly in idolatrous practices.

Another place where David sent a gift was Ramoth of the Negev. This city was also known as Ramoth of the south. It is located in the territory of Simeon and an exact location is not available. There is little doubt but what David and his men had been there and had received kindness of these people.

David also sent gifts to "those who were in Jattir." This city was located in the hill-country of Judah. It is located about 13 miles south and west of the city of Hebron. One of the outstanding things about this city is that it was a Levitical town.

*And to those who were in Aroer, and to those who were in Siphmoth, and to those who were in Eshtemoa, I Samuel 30:28*

At the close of this chapter there is a map on which each of these cities is located. We will study that significance at that time.

The author records, in this verse, that David sent gifts to those in Aroer. This city is located in a very hilly, desolate area. The part of this area that is not mountainous is sand desert.

Siphmoth was located in the wilderness. It is located on a line between the wilderness of Zin and the Wilderness of Paran. The text does not so indicate, but there is good reason to believe that David and his men hid in this area for some period of time and the people there were apparently kindly disposed toward them.

Eshtemoa is one of the more northerly areas to which David sent gifts. This particular place is more wilderness than desert. There is no desert in this part of Israel. It would be an excellent place to hide and was probably used for that purpose by David, perhaps when he was alone and fleeing from Saul.

*And to those who were in Racal, and to those who were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to those who were in the cities of the Kenites, I Samuel 30:29*

David sent gifts to Racal. Some scholars believe that the text should read "Carmel" and this may well be true. If this is the case, and it appears to be, you can see that it is located near Eshtemoa and has many of the same characteristics.

David also sent gifts to the Jerahmeelites. This is one of the more southerly locations to which David sent gifts. It, too, was in a wilderness area. People would try to avoid this location if at all possible. This may

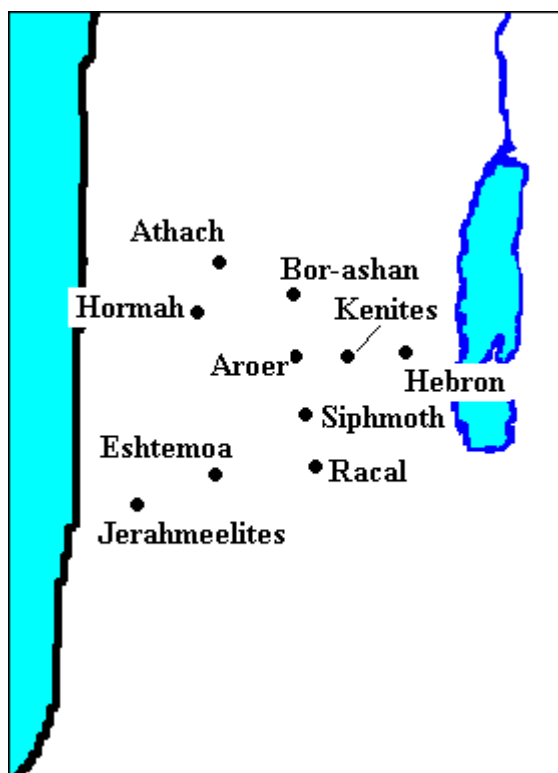
## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

well be the reason that David remembered them. It is highly possible that David hid his men in this area and the people there were very helpful to David and the 600.

The Kenites were another group to whom David sent gifts from the spoils of war. These people were a nomadic tribe. One of their major industries was metal smithing. The Kenites were also skillful musicians. This may, in part, explain David's closeness with them at this time. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, was a descendant of these people. Eventually these nomadic people gave up their nomadic ways and settled in southern Israel. They were in this area when Saul attacked the Amalekites as recorded in I Samuel 15:6. There may be more than one reason David sent them gifts. For instance, they may have helped provide weapons for David and his men when they were hiding from Saul. The text does not help us at this point.

*And to those who were in Hormah, and to those who were in Bor-ashan, and to those who were in Athach, I Samuel 30:30*

The author continued to identify the peoples to whom David sent gifts from the booty taken in battle. One of these was the people of Hormah. On the map that follows you will notice that Hormah is located very close to the Kenites.



They were in the same area, but lived in a very different set of surroundings. The Kenites lived in the craggy hills and deep valleys. The people of Hormah, on the other hand, though they lived in the same general area as the Kenites, lived in a very different climate. Hormah was located in a huge flat valley. There is little doubt that David and his men had visited in Hormah and had been dealt with kindly by the people there. Add to this the fact that because this was a broad plain, they could keep a close eye on any intruding enemy long before they came near.

Again, David sent gifts to the people of Bor-ashan. This city is located not too far from the wilderness people – the Kenites and Herahmeelites. Because of the area in which it was located, it gave David and his men a definite advantage over the huge force headed by Saul. We know that this city was located near the Kenites, but the exact location of these people is unknown at this time.

In this verse, the author also indicated that David sent gifts to the people in Athach. This city is very close to the city of Ziklag where David and his men had been living. It is located in an area where there are more



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plains than there are hills and valleys. It is an excellent place to gather forces, but also to observe forces that gather against you.

*And to those who were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go. " I Samuel 30:31*

As you look at this map, you can see that this city is located quite near to Eshtemoa. It is a rocky wilderness area. It was a center of distress and disturbance in that time as it is today. There is a good deal of rain in this area because it is a low mountain range against which the Mediterranean winds deposit their content of water. We know that David had been there. He did not get turned over to Saul and this would have endeared them to David. Also, David would later live in this area.

We need to ask what this map tells us about the reason David was so generous to so many different places that were not involved in the battle with the Amalekites. These places, as you can see, are mostly located in the southern part of Israel. Most of them are located in the wilderness mountains and sand desert. You will also notice that a number of these places had been very helpful to David and his men, though some places in the area had turned against David and told Saul where to find his enemy. Observe the way the author concluded this chapter. He said, "Where David himself and his men were accustomed to go." That does not mean that they were accustomed to go to all of the cities that we have mentioned, but it is clear that they had gone, at least, to this city.

Looking at the map again, you will notice that these cities are located in an arc shape just to the west of the Dead Sea and the mountain wilderness to the west of the Sea. On the other hand, these cities form somewhat of a shield between Israel and the Philistines who lived along the coast. David knew that he was going to be king of Israel at some point. At least in part, it appears that he was looking ahead to the time when he would be ruling and would need the support of these areas against their constant foe, the Philistines.

David was in an awkward position. He had been anointed to be king of Israel. Now, however, he was living in the area of the Philistines and was there while the Philistines were at war with Saul, the current king of Israel. David would have to do something to let the people of Israel know that he had not abandoned them. Though the text does not mention it, there appears to be reason to believe that in part, David was choosing the gifts to let the people in Israel know that he had not abandoned them and sided with the Philistines. He had chosen sides against Saul, but not against Israel.

### CONCLUSION

There is a primary focus on the character of David in this chapter. There is also a minor focus on the people the author identified as, "wicked and worthless men." It appears that these are some of the same men mentioned in 30:6, though the text does not say so.

### "THE WICKED AND WORTHLESS MEN"

We do not know how many of the 600 men fall into this category. From what the text does say, there are some assertions that one can make legitimately.

David has brilliantly and safely led these 600 men out of one attempted ambush after another. This fact does not seem to account for anything in the minds of these men. When decisions do not go according to their desires, they assumed it was David's fault and were prepared to stone him to death. First, this is unfair and unjust. Second, the reason David was not trusted was because he had served his country brilliantly against these very people. This is evidence of people allowing their anger to formulate decisions rather than basing their decisions on fact. Had they sorted out the facts, their anger would have been focused upon the untrusting Philistine generals rather than on David.

In 30:6, the author reported, "All the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters." Here, again, these people allowed their anger to be the basis of their judgment rather than the fact at hand. Indeed, this was a Philistine error in not preparing for their homeland defense while they were in combat with Israel. Nevertheless, they were ready to stone David for a strategic error in which he had neither input nor control of any kind.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

### A LOOK AT DAVID IN CHAPTER 30

There are number of situations in this chapter that give us a glimpse into the character of David.

#### 1. DAVID PLACED HIS TRUST IN GOD – 30:6

When the men learned that their families had been taken captive, they were bitter. They were about to stone David. He did not defend himself or attack them. He rather turned to the LORD in his grief and time of trouble.

#### 2. HE SOUGHT THE LORD'S GUIDANCE – 30:7

David was a brilliant military strategist. He did not place his trust in his great skill. He sought the LORD'S guidance and then followed the LORD'S instructions.

#### 3. HE WAS SYMPATHETIC WITH THE WEAK – 30:10

A lesser leader would have demanded that the weak troops try harder and move on to the battle. David understood their plight and made allowances for them even though he was not weak; even though it worked a hardship for him and angered the 400.

#### 4. HE WAS KIND TO THE SLAVE – 30:11

The slave was absolutely helpless before David. David was in a position to make heavy demands and most commanders would have done so. David gave him a little food and water – too much at first would have been dangerous for the slave who had been dehydrated and out in the sun for days.

#### 5. HE HAD COMPASSION FOR THE SLAVE – 30:12

The slave had given no assurance that he was going to be cooperative. The future of over 600 families rested upon this fragile slave. In the midst of this kind of pressure, David had compassion on the slave's needs rather than pressing his own needs.

#### 6. DAVID WAS GENTLE IN HIS INTERROGATION – 30:13

In that day and time, interrogation almost always took on painful torturous tactics. The wording of the text tends to indicate that there was a surprising gentleness in the way David approached the questioning. It is not at all surprising that the slave was very forthcoming. As he answered David's gentle questions, it became obvious that the man was greatly in need of this kindness.

#### 7. DAVID WAS EXTRA KIND – 30:14

As the slave shared the information David requested and more, it became evident that the man had been present and probably participated in the burning of their homes and carrying away their families. There is nothing in the words of David that spoke of hate, rancor or revenge. This is an ultimate test of kindness.

#### 8. DAVID SHOWED A GENTLE SPIRIT – 30:15

This slave had participated in the horrendous tragedy that had come upon 600 families. I suspect most of David's men would gladly have strangled the slave. David did not even demand the servant to lead them to the Amalekites. He simply asked the slave to lead them.

#### 9. DAVID WAS SLOW TO ANGER – 30:16

When David so gently requested the slave's help, he responded with two conditions that David was under no pressure to grant. In the presence of most any other commander, this slave would have been tortured until he cooperated. Apparently, David met the conditions when lesser men would never have done so.

#### 10. DAVID WAS GENEROUS AND GRATEFUL – 30:26-31.

Victorious generals notoriously held tightly to the prizes of war they received. David certainly received a goodly reward when his men killed almost all of the Amalekites. David could have kept it all for himself. Every commander was expected to do so. David shared the bounty with 10 places that had shown him kindness an escape. Did he give it all away? We do not know. We only know that gratitude welled up in generosity as he shared the great spoils of war.

What an example! In this chapter, David demonstrated a great trust in the LORD and then expressed the godlike character in his dealings with the friendly and unfriendly; the joyful and the angry. The example for us is clear. If we would be godly, there must be a deep, close relationship with God. That godlike relationship must express itself in a gentle, kindness toward the people whom God has created and whom He loves.

## **AMALEKITES TOOK FAMILIES: DAVID DESTROYED AMALEKITES**



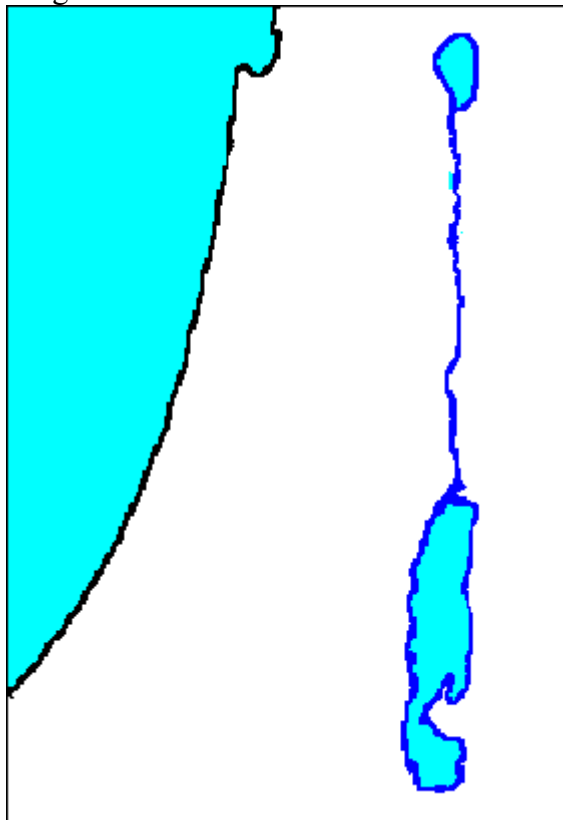
## QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 31

### SAUL KILLED HIMSELF: PHILISTINES HONORED ASHTEROTH – I SAMUEL 31:1 – 13

1. There are only two paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 31. On the following table, write a brief summary of eight words or less for each of these paragraphs.

31:1-6	
31:7-13	

2. In I Samuel 31:1-6, the Philistines killed Jonathan; Saul killed himself.  
A. In 31:1, 2, Israel fled before the Philistines from Jezreel to Gilboa.  
1. On this map trace that flight.



2. How far did they flee?  
3. If you were Saul, how would you feel at this point?  
B. In 31:3, the author recorded Saul's wounding. Think carefully about this verse. What special information does this verse contain?  
C. In 31:4, Saul reacted to his wounding.  
1. Why would Saul say such a thing?  
2. Why would his armor-bearer refuse to do the bidding of the king?  
D. In 31:5, the armor bearer also died. Why would he do this?  
E. In 31:6, the author summarized the battle.  
1. Why was this necessary?  
2. What new information does this verse contain?

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

3. In I Samuel 31:7-13, the Philistines praised Ashteroth for Israel's defeat.
  - A. In 31:7, other Israelites watched the battle.
    1. Why would these people be watching instead of helping defend their homes?
    2. Where would they flee?
  - B. In 31:8, the Philistine soldiers came to strip the bodies of dead soldiers.
    1. Why would they do this?
    2. This verse gives us information about the death of Saul and his sons. What is that information?
  - C. in 31:9, the scavengers cut off Saul's head.
    1. Why would they send Saul's head and weapons throughout the land of the Philistines?
    2. The verse mentions the places of Philistine idol worship. What do these places have to do with the battle just finished?
  - D. In 31:10, Saul's armor was placed in the temple of Ashteroth.
    1. Who was Ashteroth?
    2. Why would Saul's weapons be displayed there?
    3. Why would they fasten Saul's body to the walls of Beth-shan?
  - E. In 31:11, 12, men from Jabesh-gilead retrieved the four bodies.
    1. Why would they do this at night?
    2. Why would they burn the four bodies?
  - F. In 31:13, they buried the bones of Saul and his sons.
    1. What does this tell us?
    2. Why would they fast seven days?
4. Review your study of chapter 31.
  - A. What element stands out in this chapter?
  - B. What truth do these facts emphasize?
  - C. How can we apply this to our day? To our country?

## LESSON 31

### SAUL KILLED HIMSELF: PHILISTINES HONORED ASHTEROOTH – I SAMUEL 31:1 – 13

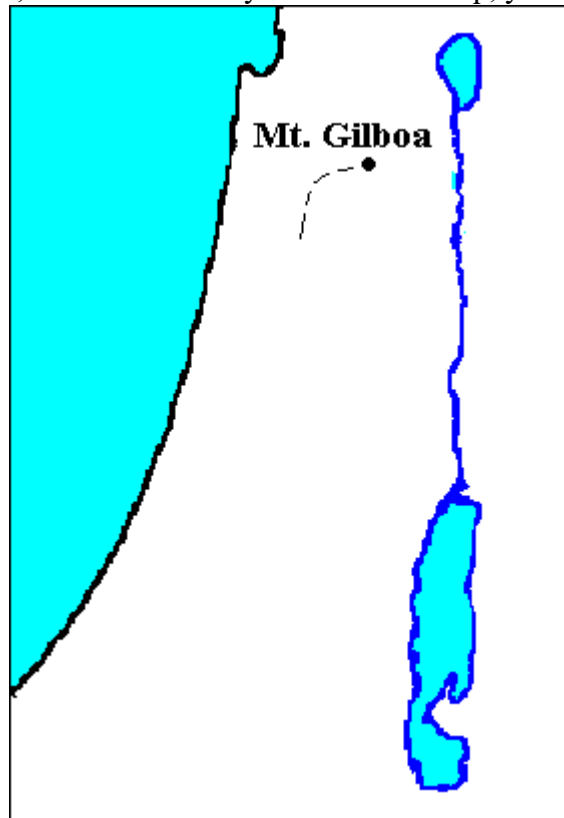
There are only two paragraphs in I Samuel chapter 31. On the following table you will find a brief summary of each of these paragraphs.

31:1-6	Philistines Killed Jonathan: Saul Killed Himself
31:7-13	Philistines Paused Ashteroth for Dfeat of Israel

#### **I Samuel 31:1-6 – Philistines killed Jonathan: Saul killed himself**

*Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. I Samuel 31:1*

We last encountered the standoff between the Philistines and Israel in 28:4, where the Philistines were encamped at Shunam and Israel was base-camped in Gilboa. For some unexplained reason, in 29:1, the Philistines moved south to Aphek and Israel base-camped in Jezreel. Earlier, we explained that such a move did not make sense for the Philistines, but it is what they did. On this map, you can see how this developed.



In this verse, the Philistines attacked Israel and chased them the 15 miles to Mt. Gilboa. This is a devastating flight in full armor and the attackers always have a huge advantage in such a situation. By the time the forces of Israel reached Gilboa, most of the army had been slain.

*And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul. I Samuel 31:2*

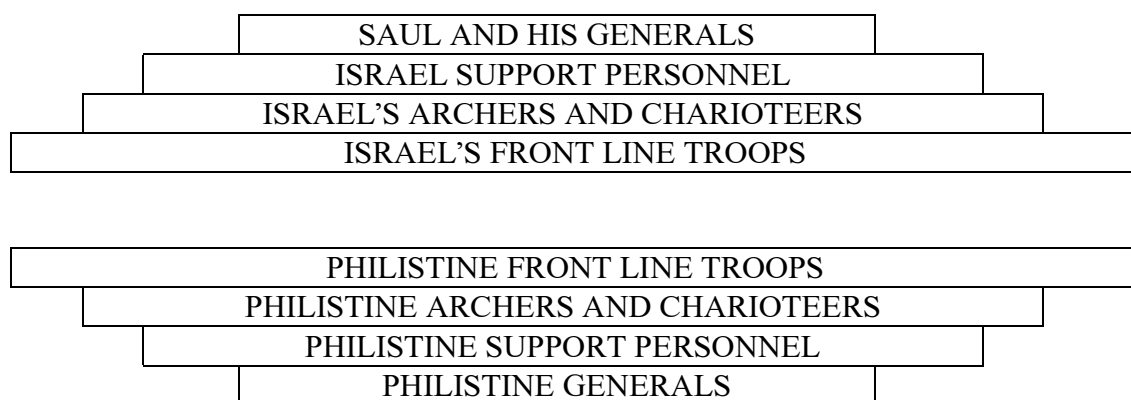
## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION

At this point, Saul was desperate, but still alive. Three of his sons, who probably served as platoon leaders, had been caught and killed. It is obvious that Jonathan was the first of the sons to be mentioned. This had to make life even more devastating for the king.

*And the battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was badly wounded by the archers. I Samuel 31:3*

As you read verses one through three, it appears as though the Philistines killed the army of Israel and then Saul's three sons and then wounded him. All three things happened, but not necessarily in that sequence.

The text does not indicate when Saul was wounded. He was hit by an arrow and wounded badly. This gives us some insight into the battle situation. In any battle design, the archers were always located some distance behind the line of battle. They would project their arrows into the enemy battle line and into the support lines from that location. A battle array would look something like this:



This would only change if the army had their enemy on the run to avoid capture and death. At this point, the archers moved up to the front line to strike the fleeing soldiers in a way that the front line troops were unable to do because the enemy troops were literally running away from the fray. In an army being routed, the formations would decimate. In such circumstances, the archers would move back into the administrative ranks. At the same time, the king and his military staff, usually moving by chariots or on horseback, would be fleeing before the archers were allowed to retreat. The fact that Saul was badly wounded indicates that the enemy archers were quite close to be able to inflict such a wound, given his armor. The fact that the king was wounded suggests that the Israelite battle plan and formation was in disarray. Before the king could move back to a safe position, he was wounded. An advancing army always has an advantage and moves faster than a retreating army can move. It means that long before Saul was wounded, he knew that the battle was lost and life was in serious jeopardy.

*Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and pierce me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. I Samuel 31:4*

Saul knew it was only a matter of time before he was killed or captured. He had at least three problems. No Jewish king wanted to be killed by a Gentile. No king wanted to be killed by the enemy or worse yet captured by them. Armies took unusual joy and pride in the knowledge that they had killed or captured the enemy king and generals. The lifelong ridicule of being tortured and humiliated would be almost beyond one's ability to sustain. You may remember that in chapter 15, Saul had been told to kill every one of the Amalekites, but he kept King Agag alive. This was done for sport and pride. The conquered king would eat at the victor's table for life. They would make fun of him every day. They would chop off his big toes so that he had no balance and they would trip him up and laugh at his inability to maintain his balance. Saul had in-



## SAUL KILLED HIMSELF: PHILISTINES HONORED ASHTEROTH

flicted this on others, but could not face it himself. In such a case, the armor bearer was called upon to kill the king to avoid capture and torture.

Saul had a third problem. For a Jew, suicide was an unpardonable sin. Saul could not take his own life. The armor bearer also was faced with two problems. If he killed the king, he would be guilty of murder. This also was unpardonable. This would be punished by a tortured death. Secondly, on occasion, it appeared that they would be killed, but suddenly the fortunes of war changed and if he had killed the king his own troubles would be beyond description.

Saul solved the problem in a way that was technically valid, but not really. Technically, if you fall on your sword it is not suicide. The general or king would brace his sword handle on the ground so that it would not move and then impale himself upon the sword. Saul did this. It was a wound that Saul intentionally inflicted upon himself. No one even helped him. This was suicide no matter what they called it.

*And when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.  
I Samuel 31:5*

The armor bearer faced the same situation that Saul faced. He did not want to survive with the king dead. He did not want to be captured or killed by the Philistines. At the same time, he did not want to commit suicide. He took the same technicality Saul used – he fell on his sword rather than kill himself. In fact, he too committed suicide.

*Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together.  
I Samuel 31:6*

This is a tragic summary. The Philistine army won on the field of battle. Saul's dream of his lineage ruling Israel came to an abrupt end. The worst thing that could happen to a Jewish man was for his name to die out. Saul and his sons died on that day and his name ceased to exist because there was no heir to continue the name. Saul's name and kingdom came to an end at the same time. He died in disgrace. Worse than this, the army of Israel perished with Saul. This was a total rout.

Still worse, the Philistines would claim this victory for their gods – Dagan and their swords, which they worshipped.

### **I Samuel 31:7-13 – Philistines praised Ashteroth for defeat of Israel**

*And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, with those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled; then the Philistines came and lived in them. I Samuel 31:7*

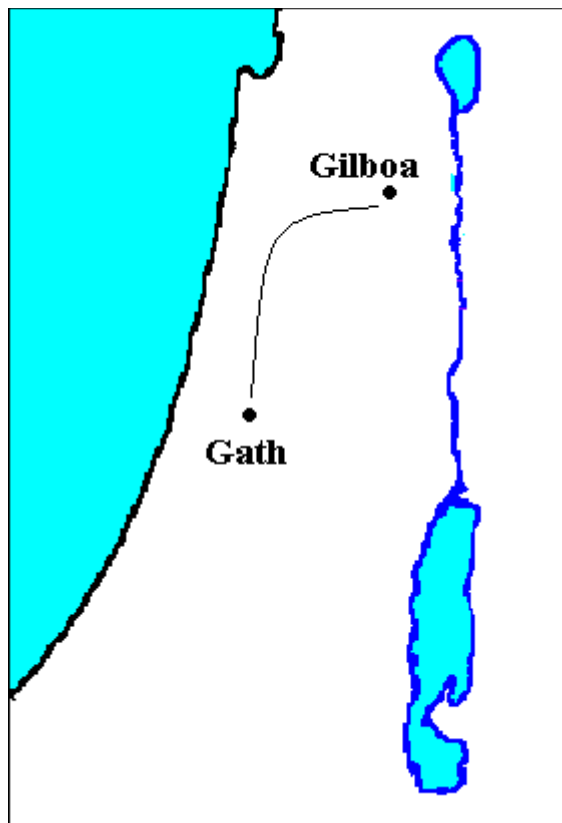
There were two groups of Jewish men who were not on the battlefield. One wonders why. One group was made up of those who lived just east of the battlefield itself. These men were watching to see who would win the battle. They were not on the battlefield, but were close enough to know exactly what was happening. The other group of Jewish men were from the east side of the Jordan river. They had come to the west side of the Jordan to see how the battle fared.

They learned that the king was dead and the battle lost. They all fled leaving their homes and possessions. They did not want to become slaves to the Philistines. The Philistines came and lived in the homes of the Jews. Philistines were excellent fighters, but not great builders. They preferred the nice homes of the Jews to the tents and poorly built houses in which they had lived.

*And it came about on the next day when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. I Samuel 31:8*

In every army, there was a common dictum – to the victor belongs the spoils. The day after the fighting ceased, the Philistines returned to the battlefield to kill the severely wounded and loot everything from every dead soldier. That was part of their pay. As they were checking each dead body for possessions, they discovered the bodies of Saul and his sons.

## THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION



*And they cut off his head, and stripped off his weapons, and sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. I Samuel 31:9*

This find called for a different kind of celebration. In true military fashion, they cut off the head of Saul and took his weapons. Saul's head and weapons were paraded through all the towns and cities of the Philistines, as you can see on this map. This was a source of great pride and joy in their military prowess. They had not only defeated the army of Israel, but had also taken credit for killing Saul and his sons.

As indicated earlier, the idols of every nation were deeply involved in every battle. If they won the war, it was because of the help of their god. If they lost the war, it was because the God of their enemy was considered greater than their god. In this case, the Philistines praised Dagan for overcoming the god of Israel.

*And they put his weapons in the temple of Ashteroth, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. I Samuel 31:10*

This is a totally different idea than we just described. Ashteroth was the female consort of the Philistine god of war – Baal. The worship of Ashteroth was little more than a sexual orgy. When they hung Saul's weapons on the wall of the Ashteroth temple it became a source of great joy and pride as they took part in the worship orgy. It was one more way to praise the Philistine gods and ridicule Jehovah.

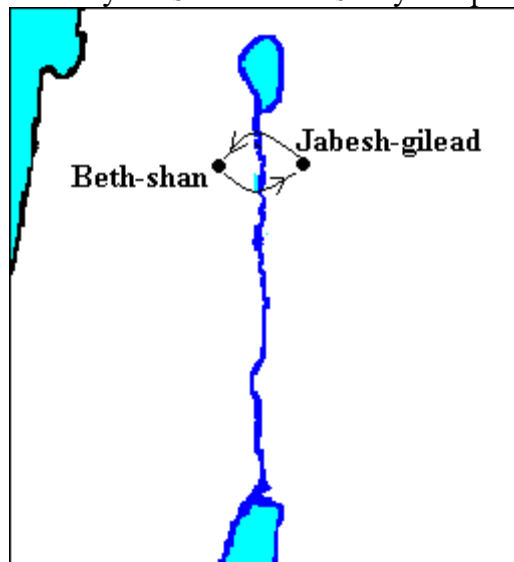
The Philistines also took the decapitated body of Saul and nailed it to the wall of the city of Beth-Shan. The Philistines now lived in the more beautiful cities of Israel. Beth-shan was one of these. Each time the Philistines entered or exited the city, they rejoiced in their deity and ridiculed Saul and the God of Israel.

*Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, All the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh, and burned them there. I Samuel 31:11, 12*

It is not surprising that the men of Jebesh-gilead had heard of the events concerning Saul. Jebesh-gilead is only about 10 miles from Beth-shan. This had to be both a source of surprise and humiliation for them. Is-

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Israel had been winning wars against their enemies, especially the Philistines. Now they had the king they wanted and suddenly they were defeated by the same enemies they had previously routed.



The men of Jabesh-gilead walked all night. This would not be too difficult to do because this part of the country is quite flat and easy to make your way even in the darkness. They would have to do this under the cover of darkness lest they be seen and severely punished for what they did. It appears that they carried the four bodies all night to get them back to Jabesh-gilead by morning before anyone knew what they were doing. They did this to stop the shame of having the bodies of these four hanging on the walls and the enemy people making a mockery of them.

Hanging the bodies on the wall is not the way that royal family members were buried. When a king was well respected, he was buried either in the cemetery of kings near Jerusalem or in his hometown. The fact that Saul was not buried in this way is a clear indication that he did not receive a hero's burial.

One needs to ask why they burned the bodies. There could be a couple of reasons. We do not know how long the bodies had been hanging on the wall of the city. It could be that the bodies were too far decomposed to do much else. Again, it could be that this was a way to deal with the fact that they were unclean. Whatever the reason, it had something to do with the fact that Saul was not being held in respect in this act. When they finished burning the bodies, they could have taken the bones to the king's cemetery or to the town where Saul was born.

*And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.*  
*1 Samuel 31:13*

We know more about the burial place of Rachel than we do of Saul and his sons, even though he was the king of Israel. Having burned the bodies of Saul and his sons, the men of Jabesh buried their bones under a tree in the area. This, for us, is an inadequate identification of the place of burial. It would not have been for them. They knew exactly where this tree was. The fact that they buried the bodies near a tree suggests that this was the only tree of that kind in the area.

The men of Jabesh-gilead fasted for seven days. This was a sign of mourning. It is doubtful if they were mourning the death of Saul. He was not that well liked in Israel. They would mourn for Jonathan. They also would mourn the victory of the pagan Philistines over their land. It meant that the Philistines were now even closer neighbors than they had been before.

## CONCLUSION

This book is about God's people Israel and the king God chose. Saul never really took Jehovah seriously. This chapter is the final picture of the book; the final picture of Saul's life. Most of the 13 verses in this climactic chapter report a tragic experience in the life of Saul and Israel. Here is a summary of the tragedies.

## **THERE WAS NO FREQUENT VISION**

- Whole army was killed – verse 1
- Saul's three sons killed – verse 2
- Saul was wounded – verse 3
- Saul killed himself – verse 4
- The armor-bearer killed himself – verse 5
- Other Israelites fled to the east – verse 7
- Saul beheaded – head and weapons in idol temple – verse 9
- Saul's weapons displayed in temple of Ashteroth – verse 10
- Four bodies fastened to walls of Beth-shan – verse 10
- Four bodies burned – verse 12
- The bones were buried – verse 13
- The people fasted – verse 13

The message of the chapter focuses upon the fact the person, the nation that ignores and rebels against the LORD does so at great risk. The consequences of our disobedience are huge and unavoidable.

## THE CONCLUSION OF I SAMUEL

Everywhere in I Samuel there is an ongoing contrast between obedience and disobedience, between good and evil. The contrasts appear in the actions as well as the character of the people involved.

CONTRASTS	
Hannah	Peninnah
Samuel	Eli's sons
Samuel	Saul
David	Saul
Servant	Saul
Jonathan	Saul
David	Achish
David	Wicked, worthless men
David	Nabal
Samuel	Hophni. Phinehas
Israel	Philistines
David and men	Philistine Generals
Samuel	Israel
David	Doeg
Moabite King	Saul
David	Goliath

COMPARISONS	
David	Jonathan (+)
David	Abigail (+)
Hannah	Elkanah (+)
Eli	Samuel (-)
David	Egyptian slave (+)
Doeg	Saul (-)

In each of these situations, right triumphs and evil is destroyed. It is interesting that in each situation, the good and the evil, the obedient and the disobedient were all doing what seemed to be natural for them.

In the midst of these displays, God is involved. He abundantly blessed the obedient person in each contrast. He punished and destroyed those who in their disobedience are unholy. On the other hand, God blessed all who were obedient, those who were holy. This, of course, is a major message of the Old Testament.

We should observe that the obedient are not always flawless or perfect. David went to live in Ziklag; he led his men to eradicate whole cities; he got involved with far too many women. Nevertheless, God was patient with him and drew him to Himself.

A recurring Old Testament picture is that God does not change. This is an important message for us. If God was holy and unwilling to countenance evil in the time of Samuel and David, then He is still as holy as He was. Again, if God insisted that His people be holy before Israel's kings, then because He is changeless, He continues to insist today that His people be holy because He is holy.