

Chapter Seventeen

Vs. 1: Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah and encamped between Socoh and Azekah in Ephes-dammim.

ʿAsaph is the verb for “gathered” noted last in 15.6 with a different meaning, but the one at hand is more common where it is used twice, first as a general mustering and second as in a specific place. This re-introduction of the Philistines since the end of Chapter Fourteen is indicative that the threat never went away nor was it in any way likely despite Jonathan’s victory at Michmash. The concluding verse of that chapter sums it up well: “There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul.”

Vs. 2: And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered and encamped in the valley of Elah and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines.

The same verb *ʿasaph* is used here as it is with regard to the Philistines in the previous verse. Such gathering of troops means each nation constantly had its eye on the other waiting for an appropriate time to make a move. Saul takes up his position in response to the Philistines and does so without any mention of the recent encounter with Samuel. That must have weighed him down considerably, let alone the “evil spirit from the Lord” that tormented him.

Harak is the verb for “drew up” mentioned last in 4.2, again with the Philistines.

Vs. 3: And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side with a valley between them.

This drawing up of two forces ready to do battle sets the scene for the drama to come, namely, the contest between David and Goliath. The very act of standing opposite each other like this implies such a contest. While both armies had their attention fixed directly upon each other, all were aware that the valley separating them would prove decisive for what was to come. It would be the scene of the contest between David and Goliath.

Vs. 4: And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath whose height was six cubits and a span.

So with two armies staring down each other across the valley, Goliath steps forth from among the Philistine ranks and takes a position at the edge of the slope of the valley, clearly in sight of the Israelites. His height is singled out which makes him even more formidable. Many Israelites recognized Goliath from previous battles though he isn’t mentioned until now. He seemed set aside for one-on-one combat more than joining his fellow soldiers in battle. Reports of these displays of valor preceded Goliath, if you will, and when the Israelites saw him they had all they could do to maintain their position. As soon as this warrior stood out there for all to see, the Israelites knew he was demanding one-on-one combat in the valley below.

The Hebrew word for “champion” is *ʿysh-habenyam*, literally a middle man, one who stands in the middle. Given the situation, the idea seems to be that Goliath was the best Philistine warrior and hence stood at the center or was a rallying point among his fellow soldiers.

Vs. 5: He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze.

In this verse and the next we have a detailed description of Goliath’s armament. The bronze helmet and coat of mail must have made him stand out all the more in the sunlight. Goliath took advantage of this, slowing walking up and down at the edge of the slope as he gleamed like some oversized jewel.

Vs. 6: And he had greaves of bronze upon his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders.

The greaves and javelin, both of bronze, added to the drama. Bronze is a deep yellowish color tinged with orange which reflected brilliantly in the sunlight. Surely Goliath made the most of his display to the cheers of his fellow soldiers.

Vs. 7: And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him.

Although the Israelites were captivated by this imposing sight, all eyes were upon Goliath's spear, his primary weapon. It was up to his shield-bearer to lay out the path on which Goliath would parade, being instructed by his commanders to walk slowly in this direction and then in another, all along the valley's edge.

Vs. 8: He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me.

Qara' (cf. 16.5) is the verb for "shouted" and has the fundamental meaning of calling or summoning. Until now Goliath hadn't uttered a word, figuring that the magnificent display he put on would be a prelude to what the Israelites knew he wanted, a one-on-one fight to the death. Then Goliath taunts the ranks of Israel as being Saul's "servants," *heved* (cf. 15.16) which could be taken as his slaves, an alternate meaning of this word. Saul was present and listened intently. Probably he felt the men whom Goliath just named as slaves glowering at him. Although deeply concerned at the potential battle, Saul had plenty of experience with the Philistines, but this group of soldiers under his command?

Goliath continues his taunt, asking an Israelite champion like himself to a fight. He says "come down to me." He uttered these words as he made his way slowly yet deliberately down the slope to the valley where he was all alone, this time literally as a *'ysh-habenyam* or man who is in the middle ('champion,' vs. 4).

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

Goliath uttered these words in full confidence that he would prevail over any warrior the Israelites would send against him. Note the use of the word "servants" (*heved*, twice and noted last in vs. 8) and the verb "serve" from which it is derived, *havad* (cf. 12.20). The reality is more servitude or slavery. Goliath is not uttering this taunt on his own but had been instructed by his commander. No doubt the Israelites were aware of this.

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

Charaph is the verb for "defy" which means to reproach or to scorn. It is found next in vs. 26 by David: "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" Goliath concludes his taunt as he stood exposed in the valley with the Israelites in front yet above him. Of course, he was aware that the Philistines were right behind him on the other ridge ready to attack should the Israelites attempt anything foolish.

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

Surely this verse is the biggest understatement of First Samuel. The two verbs "dismayed" and "afraid" are *chatat* and *yare'*, the former being noted in 1.10 as "broken to pieces," and apt description for the situation at hand. The latter is found last in 12.24 and here had the adverb *me'od* (cf. 14.31) which connotes anything done to the excess.

Vs. 12: Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah named Jesse who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years.

Here the conjunctive *w-* as “now” serves to make the transition from the display and taunts uttered by Goliath to David. The verse at hand describes David as an Ephrathite, Ephratha being the ancient name of Bethlehem.

The Hebrew for “advanced in years” is *ba’anashym* or literally “among men.”

Vs. 13: The three eldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle; and the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the first-born and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

The three oldest of Jesse’s eleven sons may have been conscripted or went off to the battle on their own as volunteers to counter the Philistine threat. Chances are it was the latter because every able-bodied man didn’t need to be forced into arms in order to defend his home. Furthermore, they knew that Saul had taken their youngest brother David into service as an armor bearer and were concerned about his fate. En route they must have discussed the way Samuel had each of them pass before him and rejected all but the youngest. From the reports of David’s success in the court of Saul it became clear to them why David was anointed and taken into formal service. It meant he would never return home. At least the battle offered an opportunity to see David in action, as it were, as the king’s armor bearer.

Vs. 14: David was the youngest; the three eldest followed Saul,

A short verse which forms part of a larger sentence, vs. 15. *Qatan* (cf. 9.21) means “youngest” as well as the smallest. As for Jesse and the seven other brothers, they were left at home but full of anxiety as to the impending battle. Jesse feared the very real possibility he could lose four of his oldest sons, a devastating loss.

Vs. 15: but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

An interesting little insert, if you will, which shows the freedom David had in his service as the king’s armor bearer and musician-in-residence. Saul wished to maintain good relations with Jesse and his large family of sons because the youngest who didn’t go out to battle remained at home and could be summoned up to military service later on. At first it may seem that the youngest brothers were lazy or good-for-nothing, that is, not tending the sheep. However, David may have had a special relationship with the herd, being able to sooth them and lead them from pasture to pasture due to his skill at playing the lyre.

As for the back and forth itself, it concurs with the protracted stand-off with the Philistines, the forty days mentioned in the next verse.

Vs. 16: For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

The words “forty days” can be taken as an expression to convey a long period of time or an indefinite one. *Yatsav* (cf. 12.16) means “took his stand,” that is, first at the edge of the slope and later in the valley below. In the meanwhile the two armies hunkered down for the long haul, seeing who would cave in the first. It looked as though Israel would since no warrior imitated Goliath by going out in front to taunt the Philistines.

Vs. 17: And Jesse said to David his son, “Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers;

This must have taken place during one of David’s trips from the battle array to back home. Given the tight-knit society of the time, it must have been common for family members to provide for their own men who were at

arms. Jesse wanted his three eldest sons to get sufficient nourishment and used David's apparently fairly frequent trips home to load them up.

Vs. 18: also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See how your brothers fare, and bring some token from them."

Jesse saves something as a treat for the commander which borders on a bribe of sorts that he may keep his three sons safe from harm as much as possible.

The Hebrew "see (how your brothers) fare" consists of the verb *paqad* which connotes a mustering in the military sense (cf. 15.4) and is used with the noun *shalom* (peace, cf. 16.4).

Harubah means "token" and derived from the verb *harav* which means to be surety. There is one other biblical reference, Pro 17.18: "A man without sense gives a pledge and becomes surety in the presence of his neighbor." Jesse simply requests a modest keepsake from Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah to make sure they are well. If battle with the Philistines had been engaged, Jesse would have known it by now. Despite the stand-off, the longer it dragged on, the more violent it would become.

Vs. 19: Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

The Hebrew for "men" is singular (*'ysh*) which intimates that Saul and all men who comprised the nation of Israel were engaged in combat as a single entity with the Philistines, that is, in the valley of Elah (cf. vs. 2). This verse intimates that the situation was rather fluid and many soldiers were half-hearted. Perhaps an engagement took place here and there over the span of forty days (cf. vs. 16) while Goliath continued his strutting about on top of the valley's slope. He wanted to join in the battle, but his commanders held him back for an opportunity to do single combat. Watching the various struggles below was an excellent opportunity to weed out the incompetent Israelite soldiers.

Vs. 20: And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the encampment as the host was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry.

The previous verse seems to be an interlude of sorts with David now at home. The word "provisions" is lacking in the Hebrew text but has the verb "took" referring to vs. 17-18. Apparently the distance between Bethlehem and Elah wasn't far for David to be going back and forth with some frequency.

Mahgal means "encampment" which applies to a fortification constructed of wagons brought together or piled together, these vehicles probably having no further use once at the site of battle. "My steps have held fast to your fathers, my feet have not slipped" [Ps 17.5]. From this fortified area on top of the slope facing the Philistines Israel went as a "host" or *chayl* (cf. 16.18) which connotes the valiant nature of the troops.

The Hebrew for "shouting the war cry" reads literally as "shouting in war," the verb being *ruah* noted last in 4.5. Apparently it was simply another engagement as intimated in vs. 19.

Vs. 21: And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army.

Harak is the verb for "drew up for battle" (cf. vs. 2) from which "army" is derived, *maharakah* (cf. 4.16), and refers more to a line of battle. Most likely after a series of minor engagements both sides decided they weren't getting anywhere. Thus the Israelites and Philistines drew up for battle with the intent of having Goliath and someone from Israel's side engage him in one-on-one combat. Hopefully that would resolve the on-again, off-

again nature of warfare that has plagued both nations.

Vs. 22: And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers.

Kely is the noun for “things” and as noted last in 14.1, refers to armor or more generally as baggage as used a second time in this verse. Perhaps David brought back more than provisions of food such as armor and the like, and may even have had a servant or two from his father to accompany him for that purpose.

As quickly as possible David dropped what he brought along and ran to greet his brothers. He had to run up and down the soldiers strung out along the end of the slope in an effort to find them which got the attention of the Philistines on other side of the valley, wondering what he was up to. David’s greeting of his brothers was spontaneous which shows that he and they must have had a good relationship. Earlier when Samuel was choosing a successor to Saul and having Jesse’s sons pass before him there could have been some bad blood between them. If that were true, it doesn’t see to be present now on the verge of an all-out battle.

The verb *sha’al* (to ask or to inquire, cf. 14.37) is used with the noun *shalom* prefaced with the preposition *l-* reading literally, “asked to peace.”

Vs. 23: As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

As noted in the previous verse, David got the Philistines’ attention while frantically searching for his brothers amid the rank of drawn-up soldiers which, in turn, made Goliath come out and continue his taunting, this time directed at David.

“And David heard him” is indicative of the soon-to-be combat between the two unequals. Most likely when David discovered his brothers they whisked him behind their protective shields and even may have attempted to block his eyes and ears, so frightening a sight was Goliath and the words he uttered.

Vs. 24: All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.

As in vs. 19 the singular *’ysh* (man) is used which can be taken as showing the unity of Israel when confronted with this grave danger. However, it was not to last long because this “man” fled. Obviously they saw Goliath often before and had engaged the Philistines in the valley of Elah, but this time there must have been something really frightful that made them “much afraid,” *yare’* coupled with the adverb *me’od* (both words, vs. 11) signifying excessiveness.

Vs. 25: And the men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and the man who kills him, the king will enrich with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel.”

After Goliath once again threw confusion in the ranks of the Israelites and had fled (keep in mind another example of *’ysh* or singular man applied to Israel), they came across David who must have returned to the rear after having greeted his brothers. By reason of his youth and lack of military equipment he stood out among everyone which is why the troops addressed him, more perhaps because they were so agitated and afraid.

Charaph is the verb for “defy” (cf. vs. 10).

Hashar is the verb for “enrich” noted last in 2.7 meaning fundamentally to be straight and is used with the noun

hosher or “riches.” In this verse, note the similar sounding words: *ha’ysh*, *’asher*, *yahshrenu* and *hosher* (the man, who, will enrich him and riches).

When speaking of freedom with regard to one’s house (*chaphash*, ‘free’), it hearkens back to the rights and duties of a king Samuel communicated to the people in the first part of Chapter Eight. A reference to *chaphash*: “to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke” [Is 58.6]. Mention of one’s father suggests that the freedom to be granted will endure as long as the family bloodline endures.

Vs. 26: And David said to the men who stood by him, “What shall 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 defy the armies of the living God?”

David speaks here spontaneously to the men who had just broken ranks because of Goliath. He does so without encouragement or authorization from King Saul nor any of his commanders. And so all the soldiers must have been amazed at his fortitude and defiance which matched that of Goliath which he explains later derived from experience of protecting the sheep against marauding animals. The intimacy of the situation is touching, the way the soldiers stood by David or literally “with him,” an indication that he was beginning to rally the Israelites.

Cherpah is the noun for “reproach” noted last in 11.2 as “disgrace” and derives from the verb *charaph* (‘should defy’) used here (cf. vs. 25).

Vs. 27: And the people answered him in the same way, “So shall it be done to the man who kills him.”

Davar (cf. 16.18) is the noun for way which means the soldiers concurred with David’s calm defiance of Goliath. However, no one volunteers to step forward.

Vs. 28: Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled 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 presumption and the evil of your heart; for you have come down to see the battle.”

As first born, Eliab felt he had the duty to rebuke David for words that to him seemed as insolent as Goliath’s. *Charah* is the verb for “kindled” (cf. 15.11) which reveals his attitude. Besides, Eliab felt embarrassed his youngest brother who was showing more courage than he and his other two siblings there in the ranks.

Zadon is the noun for “presumption” which also means haughtiness and swelling (of pride). “When pride comes, then comes shame” [Prov 11.2]. Adding insult to injury Eliab claims that evil lay in David’s heart, the preposition *l-* being used which reads literally “to his heart.” Both this presumption and evil led David to watch the battle from a safe distance irrespective of Israel’s fate, let alone that of his three brothers in the ranks. Such words amounted to bluster, for David fulfils his word and challenges Goliath while Eliab and everyone else remains safely behind their defensive positions.

Vs. 29: And David said, “What have I done now? Was it not but a word?”

David rebukes Eliab, the youngest to the oldest, which must have enhanced David’s reputation among the soldiers after his resound words in vss. 26-7.

Vs. 30: And he turned away from him toward another and spoke in the same way; and the people answered him again as before.

David felt that the threat from the Philistines was so pressing that this was no time for arguing. He turned away from Eliab most likely in anger with the Israelites gathered around the two brothers. They sided with David, the youngest over the oldest, simply by reason of his courage before Goliath which shortly would have dramatic consequences.

Vs. 31: When the words which David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him.

Apparently Saul didn't know what was going on, being preoccupied with the larger picture of facing off with the Philistines which consisted in a series of on-again, off-again skirmishes in the valley below. David's words about Goliath impressed the troops sufficiently, so they rushed off to inform their king. Anything at this stage is welcomed to break the deadlock that had been going on for forty days (cf. vs. 16). Although Samuel had anointed David recently...and it wasn't exactly clear if it was to be king...this wasn't on his mind.

Vs. 32: And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

Earlier David has entered King Saul's service and became his armor bearer (cf. 16.21) though in this dialogue Saul doesn't seem to have prior knowledge of David. As a footnote to the **RSV** says, it's a matter of the so-called Early and Late Sources.

The situation at hand, of course, is extremely grave and has been going on for some time without resolution, hence the direct manner of David's address to the king whom he never before had met. So right away David gets down to business and volunteers to fight Goliath.

Naphal is the verb for "fail" which fundamentally means to fall down and is used with *lev* or "heart" (cf. 16.7) as found last in 14.45 though not mentioned there. David calls himself a "servant" (*heved*, cf. vs. 9), a typical form of address before royalty, etc. In other words, David doesn't ask for permission, just that he will get the job over and done with.

Vs. 33: And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth."

Obviously Saul is thinking of the larger picture, that if Goliath slays David according to the agreement in vs. 9, the Israelites will be reduced to slavery under the Philistines. At the same time Saul wasn't prepared just yet to say no to David. He wanted to feel him out some more before coming to a decision of not allowing this contest to take place.

Vs. 34: But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and when there came a lion or a bear and took a lamb from the flock,

David speaks of his work as shepherd in the past tense, as though he had left it behind which is true objectively now that he has come to the battle line. By speaking of lions and bears, David is intimating that he can handle Goliath. Actually he speaks with a matter-of-fact manner to the king which must have taken him by surprise.

Vs. 35: I went after him and smote him and delivered it out of his mouth; and if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and killed him.

David continues to speak to Saul not to impress him but to get the opportunity of engaging Goliath as quickly as possible. Going after a lion or a bear with prey in its mouth was the height of bravery, second after being in the vicinity of these animals with cubs.

Vs. 36: Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God."

Perhaps due to his prowess out in the field, David's brothers didn't offer any challenge when Samuel anointed him. They were fully aware that their youngest brother was the fiercest and bravest among them. This is being made evident to Saul as he sets forth his argument as to why he should engage Goliath whom he doesn't call by name but as someone who is uncircumcised, a way of showing contempt.

Vs. 37: And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!"

Natsal is the verb for "will deliver" is noted last in 12.21. David's little speech certainly impressed Saul who immediately sent him off to do combat with Goliath. During this first encounter between Saul and David there is no hint of the antagonism that will arise. We're dealing with two men who have been anointed king. One obviously knows about it because he is such and the other doesn't quite realize it.

Vs. 38: Then Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail.

Saul is so impressed by David that he acts as armor bearer to his own armor bearer (cf. 16.21). In other words, the roles are reversed and can be taken as a sign of things to come. Saul was so anxious to have David encounter Goliath and break this stalemate that he didn't take into consideration David's diminutive size and young age.

Vs. 39: And David girded his sword over his armor, and he tried in vain to go, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these; for I am not used to them." And David put them off.

Ya'al is the verb for "tried in vain" and noted last in 12.22 as "pleased" and fundamentally applies to being before or first as well as to wish. The image is of a young man not of full stature attempting to walk while weighed down with a the armor and weapons of a grown man. "He was not used to them" is a kind of understatement, the verb being *nasah* meaning to try or to prove. "All this I have tested by wisdom" [Ecc 7.23].

As stated in the previous verse, Saul himself had put all this equipment on David both in eagerness and in fear of the threats his army has been suffering from Goliath. To David's credit, he kept a cool head throughout this crisis, apparently the only person among the Israelites to behave thus.

Vs. 40: Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's bag or wallet; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

Maqel means "staff" as well as a twig or spear and found next in vs. 43. "In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand" [Ex 12.11]. It was natural for David to take this staff, having been in charge of his father's sheep. Actually he didn't need it; perhaps he brought it along more or less as a companion of sorts, a means of support.

Qelah is the noun for "sling" and found next in 25.29: "And the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling."

Nagash as "drew near" is found last in 13.9 which means he must have descended into the valley below with the Philistines and Israelites lined up at the very edge of the cliffs above.

Vs. 41: And the Philistine came on and drew near to David with his shield bearer in front of him.

Chances are the Philistine got to the valley floor before David proudly marching behind his “shield bearer.” In 16.21 and in other places there is mention of an armor bearer whereas here it is someone...most likely a slave...bearing Goliath’s shield. Both the Philistines and Israelites must have had some pity on this fellow, completely exposed to the single combat about to take place. The armor bearer was the only person close enough to witness the details and surely later capitalized upon this to gain some fame as he recounted his story...for a fee.

Vs. 42: And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, ruddy and comely in appearance.

Two verbs pertinent to sight, *navat* and *ra’ah* (16.7 and 16.17), the former which implies beholding or having respect and the latter being the common verb to see. Both result in Goliath having disdain for David, *bazah* (cf. 15.9).

David as being “ruddy and comely in appearance” echoes 16.12 (‘ruddy and had beautiful eyes’). *Yapheh* as “comely” applies to the appearance of both men and women, this adjective being found in 16.12 but not mentioned there. Here it describes David’s overall “appearance” or *mar’eh* (cf. 16.7). Perhaps the shield bearer of Goliath had a more cautious opinion of David, but if he made it known, he would have suffered the same fate as Goliath intended for David.

Vs. 43: 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.

Maqel is the noun for “sticks” used in vs. 40 for “staff” which to Goliath in his conceit looked completely ridiculous.

Qalal means “cursed” noted last in 6.6 as “lightened.” The idea behind *qalal* is that cursing is a making light of a situation but in the negative sense. The form in the verse at hand is similar in sound to *maqel*, also as found in this verse, *bamaqlath wyegalel*. Goliath reflects the general, uninformed view of the Philistines that the Israelites believed in multiple gods as they did.

Vs. 44: The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.”

Here Goliath is called “the Philistine” which is true, but used in contrast to the proper name “David,” a way of denigrating him as he is doing presently the exact same thing to David. His words also could reflect a desire to get this contest over with and turn attention to the real business at hand, defeating the Israelites under Saul’s command.

Vs. 45: Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with 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 defied.

After having insulted Goliath as being over-armed, if you will, he corrects him (i.e., using ‘gods’ in vs. 43) by the “Lord of hosts” as well as God being the true leader of Israel’s armies. It is these armies (note the plural) which Goliath has “defied” or *charaph* (cf. vs. 26). Because Goliath and David were in the valley with the Philistines and Israelites drawn up on opposite cliffs above, probably they didn’t hear the two combatants but got a clear picture through their body language. Most likely the actual words came from David’s armor bearer as noted above. To both sides it looked as though Goliath was the obvious favorite. However, some may have looked at

Goliath's shield bearer and saw the fear in his face which revealed a different story.

Vs. 46: This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

“This day” in the sense of right now, without delay, when the Lord “will deliver” Goliath over to David, the verb being *sagar* noted last in 1.5 meaning means to close as well as to shut up as you would close a gate and in the verse at hand, David's hand acting like a trap ready to spring shut.

Not only will David slay Goliath standing relatively close to him but will precipitate the annihilation of the Philistine army or better, give them to birds and animals to devour. This slaughter about to happen is not just a potential military victory won by armed force but by the Lord. It seems that once the Goliath and the Philistines have been slain and eaten, the earth itself will “know” (*yadah*, cf. 16.18) that (literally speaking) “there is a God to (-) Israel.” Earlier the Philistines experienced a similar encounter with the divine or when their god Dagon was overturned by the Lord residing in the ark of the Lord (Chapter Five). Many of the Philistines present knew about that incident yet Goliath's insolence and apparent invincibility gave them hope to put that incident behind them.

Vs. 47: and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand.”

In addition to the earth itself knowing that God resides in Israel, the “assembly” or *qahal* will have the same knowledge or *yadah*. *Qahal* usually applies to the congregation of Israel but here can include everyone present. It makes sense here in that those whom David is addressing are like a gathering of people in an auditorium of sorts listening to a speaker which is true, given that he is in the valley with both armies lined up on opposite cliffs.

Yashah is the verb for “saves” as in 14.39. Here such saving will not take place by military might but by the Lord, the exact nature of which is known only to David. When he said that the “battle” (*milchamah*, cf. 16.18) belongs to the Lord, he seems to be referring only to the one-on-one combat with Goliath though the Israelites will pursue the Philistines immediately afterwards. Regardless, tension between the two armies were at their highest. If one side were to win, the other would become their slaves (cf. vs. 9). However, it remained to be seen if the defeated side would comply.

Vs. 48: When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

Qum is the verb for “arose” (cf. 16.12) which means that after having taunted David, Goliath called here again in derogatory fashion as “the Philistine,” finishes his tirade and leaves for one-on-one combat. David, in turn, “ran quickly” which consists of two verbs, *mahar* and *ruts*. In other words, David does not hesitate to engage Goliath who, despite his confidence, comes at David at a slower pace. *Mahar* is found first in 9.12 but not mentioned there; the same applies to *ruts* in 3.5.

The implied hesitation of Goliath is a hint that the outcome is assured for David. We get a similar feeling the fact that David ran towards the Philistines' battle line, that Goliath felt unsure of himself as he remained close by his comrades-in-arms. Since both armies faced each other on opposite sides of a valley, David's running to the battle line suggests that he descended the valley—the preordained spot of combat—and then up the other side to the drawn up Philistines, all this before Goliath had a chance to descend into the valley.

Both combatants “meet” each other in two different ways, *qara’* also meaning to shout as in vs. 8. Although this verb has two distinct uses, we may say that each man shouted as they drew near to each other.

Vs. 49: And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

While running as quickly as he could, David reaches into his bag and grabs a stone (*‘even*, found first in 6.14 but not mentioned there). He managed to lodge this stone in Goliath’s forehead, that is, “to (*‘el-*) his forehead,” this being preposition suggestive of David’s accuracy. Immediately afterwards the stone “sank into (*b-*) his forehead.” In other words, first *‘el* and then *b-*. Just as quickly as David aims and shoots, Goliath falls “on his face,” words with the same derisiveness as “the Philistine.” This achievement is all the more remarkable in that as vs. 48 says, Goliath was close to his own battleline. The Philistines could have killed David right there and then but were too stunned, just like the Israelites much further back, up on the hill looking down.

Vs. 50: So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone and struck the Philistine and killed him; there was no sword in the hand of David.

Chazaq means “prevailed” noted last in 15.27 as “laid hold of,” a strong word which is all the more stronger by use of the preposition *min*, literally “prevailed from the Philistine.” As for the actual slaying of “the Philistine” (again, held in too much contempt to be addressed by his name), the striking and actual killing are one and the same, separated, if you will, to increase the dramatic effect. The same applies to David not being armed with a sword.

Vs. 51: 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.

The verb *hamad* means “stood” (cf. 16.22) and is coupled with the preposition *‘el-*, literally as “stood to the Philistine.” Although the previous verse said that Goliath was killed, David wants to make certain. He also wishes to insult the Philistines—he was right there in front of their battle line, unprotected and unarmed—by running him through and then beheading him. David did this in slow motion for increased dramatic effect.

Gibor (‘champion’) is noted last in 16.18. In the fraction of a second that David slew Goliath, the Philistines must have thought of their man’s previous accomplishments, that they amounted to nothing before this youth. The original agreement between them and the Israelites was that whoever was victor in the one-on-one combat would mean one nation would be subject to the other. The Philistines showed not so much their fear but their cowardice which infuriated the Israelites all the more.

Vs. 52: And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Sha-araim as far as Gath and Ekron.

This sudden rally is a rising (*qum*) very different from that of Goliath in vs. 28, that is, “with a shout” or *ruah* (cf. vs. 2) from the other side of the valley which struck terror in the Philistines. Again, there is no mention of keeping the bargain, the victor quietly submitting to the victor. Surely Israel would do the same if the situation were reversed, indicative of the long standing enmity between the two peoples.

As vs. 23 reveals, Gath is the home of Goliath. It was as though the Philistines, still caught in disbelief that their champion had been slain by a mere youth, retreated to where Goliath had been born and raised. It might just offer the psychological refuge needed at the moment but to no avail. As for Ekron, it is first mentioned in 5.10 as one of the cities to which the Philistine lords had sent the ark of the Lord captured in battle, but it was afflicted by the tumors as had been the case with Ashdod.

Vs. 53: And the Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp.

Dalaq translates as “chasing” but implying more a burning. “What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me” [Gen 31.36]? Obviously the Israelites were eager to inflict as much harm upon their enemies as possible but dared go no further than Gath and Ekron. If they assaulted those two towns, they risked being defeated by reinforcements since they were exhausted after their pursuit and the tension that had built up between the two armies in the course of forty days (cf. vs. 16). So after the suddenness of David’s defeat of Goliath, the Israelites returned to the scene of the battle and “plundered” the camp, the verb being *shasas* which has five other biblical references. “And he (the Lord) gave them over to plunderers who plundered them” [Judg 2.14]. No information as to the spoils is given, but it must have been considerable, given the sudden and panicked retreat by the Philistines.

Vs. 54: And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.

This is the only mention of Jerusalem in First Samuel. Perhaps David had in mind even this early in his career that Jerusalem would be the capitol and center of worship. Where he placed it isn’t mentioned but presumably in a public place for all to behold. And so David wisely began making Jerusalem the center he felt it should become.

Because of his victory, naturally David was entitled to do what he wished both with Goliath’s body and any possessions found on him. Certainly his fearsome armor described in vss. 7-7 were valuable. One can just imagine the large items crammed into David’s small tent.

Vs. 55: When Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is this youth?” And Abner said, “As your soul lives, O king, I cannot tell.”

Saul comes across as somewhat clueless with the recent dramatic events, here not even knowing David’s identity. Regardless of the interpretation, this verse serves to introduce Abner who was allied with David in his kingship but later fell out of favor. Abner did not recognize David as a member of the army even though vs. 33 has Saul speaking with David.

Nephesh means “soul” and noted last in 2.35.

The name “Abner” is mentioned in First Samuel for the first time in 14.50 as Saul’s uncle.

Vs. 56: And the king said, “Inquire whose son the stripling is.”

Sha’al (cf. vs. 22) is the verb for “inquire,” the verbal root for the proper name “Saul.”

Helem means “stripling” and generally applies to a young man of the age of puberty. Compare it with the common *nahar* (cf. 16.18), a young man at the threshold of manhood. The only other biblical reference to *helem* is 20.22.

Vs. 57: And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

This verse intimates that David did not join in pursuing the Philistines. He had accomplished more than enough and was entitled to his glory. Besides, the Israelites didn’t want to expose David to further danger, for the Philistines now have a price on his head. Right away Abner whisked David away to safety and to the king with

Goliath's head in his hand, certainly a humorous touch. They had to wait for Saul's return (he went off pursuing the Philistines along with the army). During this lull David and Abner must have had an opportunity to speak with each other which enabled them to size up one other, hence the reason for David allowing Abner into his confidence at a later occasion.

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

Although we have here another instance of Saul and David not knowing each other even though other places say the contrary, it can be taken as a way of summing up the two men at an early stage in their relationship. It's amicable at this stage but soon will degenerate into open hostility. All the while David must have pondered his recent anointing by Samuel who passed out of the picture as quickly as he appeared. We don't hear about Samuel until 19.18 when David fled to him for refuge against the now hostile Saul.

Chapter Eighteen

Vs. 1: When he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

Although Jonathan was introduced in Chapter Fourteen where he had fallen out of favor with his father, Saul, the words of this verse intimate that this never had been resolved and that major problems lay ahead. Although Jonathan is reconciled with Saul, the tension between them remained, and Saul's suspicions were rekindled when he saw the attraction of his son for David.

Nephesh is the noun for "soul" noted last in 17.55 and fundamentally means breath, the animating principle of the body and also can be translated as mind. In the verse at hand the *nephesh* of Jonathan and David are "knit" together, the verb *qashar* meaning to bind as well as to conspire. The preposition *b-* (in) is prefaced to this noun, "in David," which makes for greater intimacy. *Qashar* is found next in 22.8 with this last sense: "that all of you have conspired against me?"

The result of the binding is *'ahav* or love between the two (cf. 16.21). Prior to David's victory over Goliath there is no mention of his relationship with Jonathan. Jonathan may not have known him earlier but was captivated by his appearance as well as bravery and ability to speak easily with his father with whom he did not get along well.

Vs. 2: And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house.

Compare this rather forcible taking of David with 16.29: "Send me David your son who is with the sheep," that is, for him to play the lyre and become armor bearer. Both instances are in line with the rights of a king in Chapter Eight. Surely David knew this possibility with the dangers involved, given Saul's tendency to violence, news of which was starting to spread around. However, he had Jonathan as an important ally and couldn't betray his trust.

Vs. 3: Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.

The verb *karath* ('made') and the noun *beryth* ('covenant') are both found in 11.2, the two often being used. We have no information as to this covenant. Given that both Jonathan and David were military men, it could have been a pledge of sorts common among soldiers who had created a bond among each other.

Again, mention of *nephesh* (cf. vs. 3) and the noun *'ahavah* (cf. 20.17) is deliberate insofar as they reveal the

close bond between the two. Perhaps knowledge of Saul's tendency to violence and depression had something to do with it, a way of watching each other's back.

Vs. 4: And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his girdle.

Pashat means "stripped" which is more a putting off of a garment as well as a spreading and is found next in 23.27: "Make haste and come; for the Philistines have made a raid upon the land." The "robe" at hand or *mehyl* (cf. 1.19) is an upper garment or exterior tunic which is wide and long, reaching to the ankles. Perhaps it was a special garment indicative of Jonathan's rank and being son of the king.

It is one thing to give another person a garment, even if precious and significant, but quite another for a soldier or officer to give one's armor and weapons. These items are essential to the trade, if you will, and a powerful outward sign of that *qashar* or binding of souls between Jonathan and David.

Vs. 5: And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

At this early stage of friendship between David and Jonathan chances are that Saul perceived their relationship was of no real threat to him nor to his kingly power. Right away Saul put David to work, for he had been "successful" or *sakal* which fundamentally means to look at in the sense of beholding and therefore having understanding as well as prudence. *Sakal* is found next in vs. 14: "And David had success in all his undertakings; for the Lord was with him."

This ability to *sakal* with regard to people elevated David to be "over" (*hal*) Saul's troops who are called "men of war," perhaps implying that these soldiers were an elite force of some sort. It met with approval of both the general population as well as Saul's servants though nothing is said of the soldiers' view of David.

Vs. 6: As they were coming home, when David returned from slaying the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with timbrels, with songs of joy and with instruments of music.

Mention of the Philistines here is rather casual, suggestive of the continuous give and take between Israel and their traditional enemy, almost as though fighting between the two people was commonplace and to be expected. After all, both lived in close proximity to each other, not in separate lands when two armies would travel some distance to clash. The incident in this verse isn't specified nor does it need to be, given this fact. However, what stands out is that women not just locally but "from all the cities" throughout Israel treated David as a hero. Besides, he was young and handsome, so they all tried to get as close to him as possible.

Ostensibly the women gathered from all around to meet king Saul, but he was simply an excuse for them to swoon over David. In the verse at hand already Saul is relegated, albeit in subtle fashion, to second place.

Vs. 7: And the women sang to one another as they made merry, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands."

Judging by vs. 6, half the population came out to greet Saul and David which meant that all the men of Israel were left behind. Surely a good number of these men...husbands...had a less than favorable view of what their wives were up to and could have been jealous of David. David, of course, realized this and knew if his fame increased, he would have to do something to assuage this attitude.

Hanah is the verb for “sang” noted last in 14.12 and connotes an answering or the giving of a response which fits in with the verse at hand insofar as the women formed a chorus or several choruses (‘to one another’). In addition to this *hanah*, the women “made merry” or *sachaq* which means to laugh, often with contempt as well as to jest. “And I was daily his delight, rejoicing ore him always” [Prov 8.30]. Even if Saul slew more Philistines than David, the women would still prefer David hands down. Actually this verse represents the precise turning point or source of ill-will between the two men.

Vs. 8: And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him; he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; and what more can he have but the kingdom?”

Charah is the verb for “angry” and as the last reference in 17.28 reveals, also means to kindle. It is used with the adverb *me’od* (‘very;’ cf. 17.24) to indicate excessiveness. *Davar* means “saying” or the familiar noun for word as discourse found last in 17.27 which literally “was evil in his eyes,” the verb being *raha* (cf. 12.25).

We don’t know whether Saul uttered these words to himself or among close friends and advisors. Regardless, his son Jonathan picked up on a definite change of attitude and informed David to be very careful. Even if Saul asked the question in vs. 8 rhetorically as to the kingdom and decided to abdicate at this moment or shortly afterwards, things would have turned out very differently. As for the people in general, they hadn’t a clue what was going on with their king and held him in high regard for his military prowess and choice of David.

Vs. 9: And Saul eyed David from that day on.

A short but ominous verse which signals a growing hostility ahead that could turn deadly. *Havan* is the verb for “eyed,” the only use of this verb in the Bible. Saul may have kept a look-out on David through spies, courtiers, military people or even himself. Though we have no precise information about it, Saul even could have attempted to enlist his son Jonathan but to no avail. That raised Saul’s suspicions every higher.

Vs. 10: And on the morrow an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand;

“On the morrow” shows how quickly Saul began to turn against David, that is, right after the women sang their praises and attributed more slain Philistines to David.

Tsalach is the verb for “rushed” along with the preposition *’el-*, “rushed to Saul.” The *tsalach* at hand is very different from 10.10 when “the spirit of God came mightily upon him (Saul), and he prophesied among them.” Once this divine spirit which is “evil” (*raha*, cf. 16.23) took possession of Saul, he “raved” or *nava’* which fundamentally means to pour forth or bubble up words. It is found last in 10.5 when Saul was among the prophets. “Within (*qerev*, cf. 16.13) his house” or in the very center of his house is a haunting image of a man all by himself bubbling incoherent words while servants and attendants were way at the other end in case he turned violent. Only David could approach Saul with that same fearlessness he ran up to Goliath. Not only did David assuage Saul once but frequently, “day by day.”

Even more ominous and scary than “within his house” are the words “spear in his hand.” One can easily picture Saul sitting by himself almost howling aloud in a large room with no one except David playing on the lyre. All along the servants were cowering just out of sight.

Vs. 11: and Saul cast the spear, for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David evaded him twice.

Nakah is the verb for “pin” and means more to kill or to slay as in vs. 7 though the verb isn’t mentioned there.

The verb for “evaded” is *savav* (cf. 14.21) with *mipanayu* or literally “turned from his face.” This sudden threat

of murder occurred not just once but twice. Surely he must have questioned his skill at soothing Saul on the lyre, that it wasn't having a positive effect.

Vs. 12: Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul.

Saul interprets the Lord as being with David through the women who came out to greet them both after the recent military victory. Now that Saul recognizes the words of Samuel as starting to come true, indeed he had reason to fear. Perhaps Saul wished he could pin Samuel to the wall as well.

"Departed" is *sur* (cf. 16.14) along with the preposition *min* (*min* prefaced to *ham*) reading literally as "departed from with Saul."

Vs. 13: So Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

Despite the recent violent outbursts and Saul's behavior trickling out to the people, he had to treat David carefully lest he have a rebellion on his hands. First Saul removes David (*sur*, cf. vs. 12) which implies he did this with some discretion and shortly appointed him as a "commander" or *sar* over a thousand troops. This was in accord with the precepts laid down by Samuel concerning the rights of a king, more specifically as in 8.12.

David's going in and out before the people is another ploy by Saul. If he were to confine David, more suspicions would be aroused. Of course, David was fully aware of this yet made the most of his position both not to be rebellious towards Saul and to remain in the people's favor.

Vs. 14: And David had success in all his undertakings; for the Lord was with him.

Sakal is the verb for "had success" as in vs. 5 and here is with respect to David's "undertakings" or *derek* (cf. 15.20) which fundamentally means road or way.

The Lord being with David stands in sharp contrast to Saul's degenerating condition who is drifting further and further away from the Lord. Surely Samuel was abreast as to these developments and was cheering him on, if you will, albeit discreetly. Those in close attendance to Saul and who were loyal to him from the beginning were starting to have second doubts.

Vs. 15: And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in awe of him.

Here *sakal* is used with the adverb *me'od* ('great;' cf. vs. 8).

Gur means "stood in awe" which means to tarry as well as to fear. "Who shall abide in your tabernacle" [Ps 15.1]? Such *gur* on Saul's part is twofold: obviously fear that David was not intimidated and a certain admiration of the youth who not long before had slain Goliath.

Vs. 16: But all Israel and Judah loved David; for he went out and came in before them.

Ahav is the verb for "loved" (cf. vs. 3) and here applies to every person under the jurisdiction of Saul. Such universal love sets the stage for David to succeed Saul as king. This is the second time David is described as both going out and coming in before the people, a way of saying that they had full access to him.

Vs. 17: Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you for a wife; only be valiant for me and fight the Lord's battles." For Saul thought, "Let not my hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him."

The two men got together after an indefinite period of time, that is, when David became commander. Saul decided to take a more subtle approach, one that David himself would adopt by having Uriah put in the heat of battle to be slain in front of a besieged city (cf. 2Sam 11.16+).

For Saul to give Merab, that is, his first-born daughter (cf. 14.49), was an exceptional offer which reveals the treachery he had in mind for David. The condition was for David to “be valiant” and fight on behalf of the Lord. The former reads literally as “son of strength” (*chayl*, cf. 17.20). By now David grew in realization that his anointing by Samuel was intended to take over from Saul. How and when that occurred was puzzling now. To hear Saul speak of the “Lord’s battles” must have struck David with some irony, that the Lord had forsaken him. Still, for the remainder of First Samuel David remains faithful to Saul as the legitimate king of Israel.

It must have been difficult for Saul to keep a secret, that is, his intent to have the Philistines kill David in battle instead of doing it by an assassin. The text reads literally with regard to “hand,” “let...it be in (*b-*) him.” Chances are that Saul shared his plan not with Jonathan but some close advisors. His other children don’t seem privy to any such council, good or otherwise.

Vs. 18: And David said to Saul, “Who am I, and who are my kinsfolk, my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?”

Chatan as “son-in-law” also applies to a bridegroom or a connection by marriage and found next in 22.14: “Who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king’s son-in-law?” Without a doubt David could see through the deception of Saul; he also doesn’t seem to have an attraction for his first-born daughter. At the same time David had to watch himself carefully, mindful of being in the eye of “all Israel and Judah” [vs. 16].

Vs. 19: But at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife.

It seems as though Merab had been promised as bride to someone else, Adriel, so Saul was caught off guard by this rather poor deception. However, the misstep shows that Saul was losing it, and David had the upper hand despite anything Saul might throw at him.

Vs. 20: Now Saul's daughter Michal loved David; and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

Ahav is the verb for “loved” as in vs. 16 although David doesn’t seem to have been aware of any affection shown by Michal. Perhaps she was among the women who came out to greet her father and David upon return from battle (cf. vs. 6). At the moment David doesn’t seem interested in having a wife, his mind being preoccupied with more urgent matters.

“They” is not specified but most likely Michal’s attendants who enjoyed gossiping about David. *Davar* means “thing” and noted last in vs. 8 and given the context, can refer to that gossip, i.e., talk.

Yashar (cf. 6.12) means to be straight which here suggests that the attendants’ suggest was accurate, something to follow up.

Vs. 21: Saul thought, “Let me give her to him, that she may be a snare for him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” Therefore Saul said to David a second time, “You shall now be my son-in-law.”

Saul continues his scheming, having no respect for his two daughters whom he viewed as means to an end, David's death, and hence elimination of a threat to his throne. In fact, Saul goes so far as to consider Michal a "snare" or *moqesh* which also can be a ring put through the nostrils of a beast. "The cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me" [2Sam 22.6]. Also the (singular) hand of the (plural) Philistines will be "against" or in (*b-*) David.

In vs. 17 Saul presents Merab to David as a wife whereas here he more or less forces Michal upon him.

Vs. 22: And Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David in private and say, 'Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you; now then become the king's son-in-law.'"

Given the bad blood between Saul and David, Saul bids his servants to approach David "in private" or *lat* an adjective with five other biblical references one of which is in 24.4: "Then David arose and stealthily cut off the skirt of Saul's robe."

When the servants are to say that Saul "has delight" in David or *chaphats* (cf. 15.22), David knows he is lying. Perhaps the servants were clueless as to the king's intent; after all they were simply messengers. They would approach David on his own turf, as it were, compared to David being in Saul's palace.

Ahav is the verb for "love" noted last in vs. 20.

Vs. 23: And Saul's servants spoke those words in the ears of David. And David said, "Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and of no repute?"

En route to David Saul's servants must have practised well the words they were to communicate to him as well as how to say it as convincingly as possible. "In the ears" suggests a direct, one-on-one contact where both parties pay close attention to each other.

Qalal is a verb for "seem a little thing" and as noted in 17.43, often suggests a curse.

Ysh-rash and *nigleh* means "poor man" and "no repute" or a man who is *rosh* or in want and one who is *qalah*. For the former, "Do justice for the afflicted and the needy" [Ps 82.3]. For the latter, "Then your brother should seem vile to you" [Dt 25.3]. Given the way David has comported himself since his introduction to Saul, such words of self-abasement are not a pretense but reveal David's basically humble spirit which is why he is loved by virtually everybody.

Vs. 24: And the servants of Saul told him, "Thus and so did David speak."

Apparently there is little time wasted between Saul's servants visiting David and David's response to Saul. Perhaps David had met Michal or at least had seen her and found her more attractive than Saul's first-born daughter, Merab. Regardless, marrying either one would put David firmly in the king's household, and that could be used later for political advantage. We get no clue that Saul had taken this into consideration. After all, David had proved himself successful in military ventures; chances were high that he would succeed yet again and have yet another advantage over Saul. Clearly Saul is too obsessed with getting rid of David and not thinking through all the ramifications.

Vs. 25: Then Saul said, "Thus shall you say to David, 'The king desires no marriage present except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged of the king's enemies.'" Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

David was quick in his response though nothing definitive is given, but apparently he consented. *Chaphats* is the verb for “delighted” as in vs. 22 which, of course, was partly feigned on Saul’s part.

Mohar means “marriage present,” one of three biblical references, the other two being Gn 34.12 and Ex 22.17, the former being cited here: “Ask of me ever so much as marriage present and gift, and I will give according as you say to me.” David didn’t give a second thought to this *mohar* consisting of a hundred Philistine foreskins which must have unnerved Saul though he was careful not to reveal his intent. At the same time Saul had an inkling that David was on to his scheme. *Naqam* means “avenged” noted last in 14.24.

“By the hand” literally reads “in (*b-*) the hand” as in vs. 21.

Vs. 26: And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law. Before the time had expired,

Indeed, Saul was taken off guard by David’s willingness to accept the terms offered him. Now all his hopes were pinned on David getting killed in battle though that was uncertain. David could see through Saul’s intent; it made a deep impression, so much that later he had Uriah slain in a not dissimilar fashion (cf. vs. 17).

Yashar is the verb for “pleased” noted last in vs. 20.

“Before the time had expired” reads literally “and not was filled the days.” In other words, without hesitation David took up Saul’s offer. Since Saul’s daughter Michal was the reason for this, she found herself in a difficult position: on one hand her love for David and on the other, first-hand knowledge of her father’s treachery.

Vs. 27: David arose and went, along with his men and killed two hundred of the Philistines; and David brought their foreskins which were given in full number to the king that he might become the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him his daughter Michal for a wife.

As noted in several instances earlier (cf. 13.15), *qum* (‘arose’) suggests the taking of action which here involves a loyal troop of men from among those thousand in vs. 13. David promptly returns not just with the required one hundred foreskins but double the number though chances are no one at Saul’s court was inclined to count them to make sure he was telling the truth. Just looking at them was proof enough for Saul to hand over Michal to David as his wife. She was relieved, of course, but must have felt contempt towards her father for being valued first at hundred Philistine foreskins, the number which David had doubled.

Vs. 28: But when Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that all Israel loved him,

Ra’ah and *yadah*: “saw” and “knew” as in 17.42 and 17.47 respectively. In the verse at hand they signify that finally Saul recognized Samuel’s prediction that someone would be favored over him as king. This isn’t explicit here but close to it. Some pity for Saul in his isolation is in order since the entire nation of Israel “loved” David (*’ahav*, cf. vs. 22). In a sense, this nationwide adoration for David shows that the people are fickle when they had demanded a king from Samuel. They were quick to abandon someone who fought long and valiantly on their behalf. Still there was time to resolve the situation if Saul would only abdicate.

Vs. 29: Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually.

Two short sentences which are very appropriate almost at the conclusion of Chapter Eighteen. The verb *yasaph* translates as “still” (cf. 15.35) which indicates something that is ongoing or in the process of accumulating.

“Continually” is rendered literally as “all the days” which can be taken as suggestive that having adopted this

attitude of fear and jealousy, Saul's days were numbered.

Vs. 30: Then the princes of the Philistines came out to battle, and as often as they came out David had more success than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was highly esteemed.

A wearisome verse, if you will, which brings Chapter Eighteen to a conclusion insofar as it demonstrates once more the unceasing state of war between Israel and the Philistines, that it would never be resolved until one exterminated the other. In many of the military encounters no specific place is mentioned which indicates this; they were too numbingly numerous to be counted. Besides, no one in particular was interested in keeping record, an indication that both sides were weary of interminable combat. As for the Philistines, now they had good reason to be angry because their champion Goliath had been slain. The same applies to Israel: the Philistines failed to keep their bargain of submission which Goliath himself had proclaimed so loudly and boldly before the two armies.

The conflict reaches a new intensity with mention of the Philistine "princes" (*sar*, cf. vs. 13 which there means 'commander'). Because military situation at hand never had been resolved one way or the other, these princes can be taken as civilian leaders out for revenge and a determination that never would they become slaves to Israel. When David engages the Philistines, he does so simultaneously with Saul's forces. There's no hint yet of a tension reflected in these two groups which would be devastating to the nation as a whole, something the Philistines could exploit to their advantage. Perhaps a tacit agreement was made between Saul and David or between their representatives not to reveal this split.

Yaqar is the verb for "esteemed" or held in honor used with the adverb *me'od* ('highly') as in vs. 15.

Chapter Nineteen

Vs. 1: And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David.

Another instance where the ubiquitous connective *w-* ('and') plays an important role at the beginning of a new chapter as we come off a series of dramatic events. It serves to give the impression that one incident is happening immediately after the next, leaving you breathless.

After a failed attempt to have David killed by accident, if you will, Saul knows this won't work. In fact, he must have entertained that idea seriously beforehand. Now he makes known his plan to a wider circle, Jonathan and his servants. Earlier Saul may have kept his intent completely to himself, but that would be difficult. In other words, probably he shared it with just a few very close advisers. We don't know the response of the servants, perhaps agreeing to save themselves but otherwise siding with David.

Chaphats is the verb for "delighted" (cf. 18.25) with the adverb *me'od* (cf. 18.30) as "much" or more to the point, excessively.

Vs. 2: And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you; therefore take heed to yourself in the morning, stay in a secret place and hide yourself;

This isn't news to David except that now he had direct access to what Saul was thinking and planning through his most trusted son, Jonathan. *Baqash* is the verb for "seeks" (cf. 16.16).

Shamar is the verb for "take heed" noted last in 13.14 which here means that David should be on guard about dealing with people in his confidence. Jonathan had more insight due to his closeness to Saul and could inform

David instantly if a traitor were in the vicinity.

Jonathan advises David both to stay in a “secret place” or *seter* and to “hide” himself or *chava’*. A reference for the former is found next in 25.20: “And as she rode on the ass and came down under cover of the mountain.” The latter is found in 10.22 but not noted there.

Vs. 3: and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you; and if I learn anything I will tell you.”

Judging by this verse, Jonathan had in mind a hiding place for David out in a gully or depression of sorts which provided natural shelter. At the same time it wasn’t far from where Saul lived. The occasion at hand can be taken as a moment of relaxation when Saul went out for either an early morning or evening walk, the coolest times of the day.

Apparently Saul thought his son was trustworthy to confide his intent of killing David, and Jonathan would take maximum advantage of this trust. However, if he were discovered, Saul would put him to death as well. Words spoken earlier (14.44) were stuck in Jonathan’s mind: “You shall surely die, Jonathan.”

Vs. 4: And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king sin against his servant David because he has not sinned against you and because his deeds have been of good service to you;

Chances are these words (they continue through the next verse) were spoken in that field above and within earshot of David. Jonathan had to be careful with his father, keeping him away from David during their walk as well as keeping at bay any bodyguards that may have been in attendance.

Jonathan speaks rather forcefully using the word *chata’* or “sin” (cf. 15.30) with regard to David, a human being, this verb usually taken with respect to the Lord.

The adverb *me’od* (cf. vs. 1) is used for “good” or service which has been done excessively well.

Vs. 5: for he took his life in his hand and he slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great victory for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced; why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?”

Nephesh is the noun for “life” and more commonly translates as soul as in 18.3.

Teshukah means “victory” or more properly deliverance as in 11.13.

For the second time Jonathan reminds his father not to sin against David for killing him “without cause” or *chinam*, an adverb which also means in vain. It is found next in 25.31: “My lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause.”

Vs. 6: And Saul hearkened to the voice of Jonathan; Saul swore, “As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death.”

The verb “hearkened” or *shamah* (cf. 15.24) is used with the preposition *b-* prefaced to “voice” or *qol* (cf. 15.24) which reads literally “hearkened in the voice of Jonathan,” that is, Saul paid close attention to his son’s words.

While speaking within earshot of David, Jonathan was taking a considerable risk. However, he knew his father better than his siblings and used it to his advantage. Saul concurs in an almost matter-of-fact manner which

pleased Jonathan (and David, hiding in the field). However, there is something not quite right...Saul is too compliant in light of his recent behavior and attitude, as though he were faking it even when invoking the Lord.

Vs. 7: And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

When Jonathan calls David it was immediately after he was left alone in the field, barely able to restrain his excitement over his father's compliance. The verb *nagad* translates as "showed" and more commonly refers to the telling of something (cf. 10.16) which in the verse at hand is *davar* (cf. 18.20) or "things," that which Saul had just spoken.

Jonathan felt confident enough to bring David into Saul's presence "as before" which means that Saul restored him to his earlier position as commander of a thousand as well as being on hand to play the lyre. Nothing is said of this encounter which suggests a tension and loose alliance between the two. Certainly those Israelites who got wind of this apparent reconciliation were delighted, for it showed a unified front against the Philistines.

Vs. 8: And there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines and made a great slaughter among them, so that they fled before him.

The key word here is "again" which takes the form of the verb *yasaph* (cf. 18.29) meaning an increase or repetition. Given its use relative to the Philistines, *yasaph* is indicative of weariness of what almost was becoming a habit and tradition of fighting them on a regular basis. We don't hear how the Philistines handled this continual warfare but seems it was less draining on them, having more resources and perhaps alliances with other tribes.

Use of the word *milchamah* as "war" (cf. 17.47) is indefinite, deliberately so, to reflect this state of affairs. Apparently David did a lot of damage which caused the Philistines to flee...but unfortunately to regroup for yet another encounter.

Vs. 9: Then an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing the lyre.

A verse essentially mirroring the same condition in 18.10-11 where the Lord is the corrupting influence, if you will, with that *ruach* ('spirit') which is *raha* or "evil," both as in the two verses being cited. As there, the presence of evil is heightened by Saul sitting alone, possibly in the evening, with spear in hand.

The words "and David was playing the lyre" obviously heighten the sinister atmosphere though David is on guard after his earlier brush with death. The type of song isn't specified, but David must have chosen it deliberately to sooth the king. And so these notes drifted on the night air throughout the house where others nearby picked them up creating a melancholy atmosphere. Yet it was tempered by the fact that Saul could run his spear through David at any second just as he tried to do earlier.

Vs. 10: And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear; but he eluded Saul so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped.

In 18.11 Saul "thought" to carry out his action which uses the verb *'amar* (to speak) whereas here for "sought" the verb is *baqash* (cf. vs. 2). In other words, the first incident seems less impulsive and thought-through than the second.

Patar is the verb for “eluded” meaning to split, to burst forth or to go free and has six other biblical references. “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quite before the quarrel breaks out” [Prov 17.14].

The second sentence with two similar verbs where one would be sufficient can be taken as a way of assuring us that David was okay.

Vs. 11: That night Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, “If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.”

“That night” is not in the Hebrew text. However, given Saul’s intense desire to get rid of David, he must have sent these messengers that very night when under the influence of the evil spirit. Thus the imagery of night, Saul sitting along, spear in his hand and dispatching these messengers all make for one of the most ominous scenes in the Bible. *Mal’ak* is the noun for “messengers” noted last in 11.4.

Once the messengers arrived at David’s house...it must have been at night or well before dawn...they took up positions to watch him (*shamar*, cf. vs. 2). Since they couldn’t see clearly who was in the house, these messengers or essentially assassins had to wait until dawn.

We don’t have information as to how Michal discovered the plot. Either one of the messengers caved in or more likely her brother Jonathan sent word to her, outrunning the messengers...and just in time.

Vs. 12: So Michal let David down through the window; and he fled away and escaped.

This escape must have taken before dawn or before the messengers could see anyone moving around. When Michal got word of the assassination plot as noted in the previous verse, the person who brought this news must have spied out the location of Saul’s messengers around the house. Thus Michal could pick out a blind spot, if you will, allowing her husband to get away.

The two verbs *barach* and *malat* (‘fled’ and ‘escaped’) work hand in hand. It turned out that David made his way to Samuel at Ramah (cf. vs. 18).

Vs. 13: Michal took an image and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats' hair at its head and covered it with the clothes.

Teraphym is the noun for “image” noted last in 15.23 though not always in the negative sense of idols as used here. In other words, Michal hastily made some kind of dummy to place in the bed in order to mislead the so-called messengers.

Vs. 14: And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.”

Most likely these messengers approached David’s house in the usual way instead of stealthily coming in through a window or unlocked door. They had to keep up the pretense of paying a visit in the name of the king so as not to arouse suspicion among the neighbors.

Vs. 15: Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me in the bed that I may kill him.”

This verse intimates a second group of messengers only this time with Saul himself accompanying them. To see her father making such a demand must have horrified Michal, daughter of Saul. Surely she and her brother Jonathan were determined more than ever from this point on to assist David even if it meant in eliminating her

father. Perhaps Michal and/or Jonathan consulted Samuel as what to do. If they didn't directly, they could have done it through intermediaries.

Vs. 16: And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed with the pillow of goats' hair at its head.

The previous verse intimates that Michal knew the intent of her father's messengers whereas here they seem to have forced their way to the bedroom. All Michal could do was follow them upstairs with Saul at the head. Perhaps he had some of his so-called messengers restrain Michal downstairs which he prepared to kill David. All this, of course, had to be done as quietly as possible that they don't wake up David. In the meanwhile Michal was bracing herself for what would happen when her father discovered the trick.

Vs. 17: Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go so that he has escaped?" And Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go; why should I kill you?'"

Ramah is the verb for "deceived" and fundamentally means to cast, to throw and from which derives the hometown of Ramah. The verb is found next in 28.12: "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul." Michal conveys her husband's words to Saul, that he doesn't wish to kill him. At least Saul doesn't do harm to his daughter. If he did, those around him would get word out, and all Israel would revolt.

Behind the restraint which David showed through Michal lay his awareness of having been anointed by Samuel. As pointed out several times, that anointing presumably was for him to be king though it was not specified as such. The anointing was a kind of sacrament which had a lasting effect, and David is clearly proof of this. As for the ambiguity about his anointing, it was left for David to figure out on his own, especially when reflecting on how he had comported himself in difficult circumstances.

Vs. 18: Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt at Naioth.

To play it safe, David didn't inform Michal about his intended destination of Ramah in order to consult Samuel. Given her position as daughter of the king and her love for David, she wasn't disposed to comprehend her husband's relationship with Samuel. Besides, Michal was too young to know Samuel first hand though certainly she heard of his fame as the last judge of Israel. We can be almost certain that this knowledge was colored by her father's rejection, so indeed Michal would have had mixed emotions if David told him of his destination. Given Samuel's position as retired senior statesman, he must have been informed to all that was going on, of how David was attempting to discern the meaning of his anointing. He knew that one day David would pay him a visit, so now was the opportunity. Both men decided not to stay in Ramah but move to nearby Naioth because of the spies in hot pursuit. Saul knew that most likely David would head for Samuel, so rightly he anticipating this move.

Vs. 19: And it was told Saul, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah."

No precise information is given as to who informed Saul about David's location. Because David was known throughout Israel, surely some of Saul's supporters found this out. Then again, perhaps some of the Philistines got the information and were all too willing to help out.

Vs. 20: Then Saul sent messengers to take David; and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

Saul doesn't waste any time going after David, his messenger-assassins following his orders. Upon reaching Naioth they see a "company" of prophets or *lahaqah*, this being the only occurrence in the Bible. The "prophesying" or *navy'* (cf. 10.13) most likely means a kind of babbling instead of coming forth with predictions or warnings associated later with prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. It must have been quite a sight for these would-be assassins to behold Samuel "as head" or *natsav* (cf. 15.12) over (*hal-*) these men, the number of which isn't given. All were making what most likely was a loud, incoherent noise, at least to an outsider.

Samuel could have been in their midst or more precisely, on a rock or platform overseeing the event. The occasion for such prophesying isn't given and could have been a ruse in order to confuse Saul's messengers. Whether or not this is true, they joined in thereby defusing the threat of assassinating David.

Vs. 21: When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.

Those who informed Saul perhaps weren't the first batch of messenger-assassins who remained with Samuel but other persons in the vicinity who had witnessed this unusual sight. Saul sends two further groups who similarly joined in prophesying. During all this Saul recalled his earlier experience of coming under the spell of prophecy. He must have thought of what became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" [10.12] and didn't want that to interfere with his deadly intent. This intent trumped his confrontation with a memory of divine intervention which could have changed everything, and this is the real tragedy of Saul.

Vs. 22: Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu; and he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And one said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah."

After all this strange behavior Saul himself goes to Ramah to get a first hand assessment of the situation. The well in Secu, as well as Naioth, are either within Ramah proper or adjacent to it. Saul made sure those accompanying him were not meant to assassinate David but simply to gather information. At least Saul knew David's whereabouts and could track him down once he left the protection of Samuel at Ramah. Besides, the last person Saul wanted to see was Samuel.

Vs. 23: And he went from there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

Most likely this descent of the *Ruach* of God was something Saul wished to avoid (cf. 10.10). If it did, Saul might be converted, and David would become king. Thus Saul preferred hanging onto his kingship more than being possessed by the Lord...in other words, two different types of attachment. In the verse at hand, this prophesying was continuous as Saul moved along, making for an astonishing sight which must have confused and frighten people, let alone those who are in his company.

Vs. 24: And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Hence it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Apparently Saul was not aware of coming into the presence of Samuel as he prophesied naked before him. Nothing unfavorable is recorded about this since it was taken as more or less normal behavior for a person under the Spirit's influence. Obviously there came a time when Saul ceased his prophesying (i.e., the next day), rose and apparently gave up his search for David. Chances are Samuel looked at Saul with complete disgust yet didn't say a word. The same applies to David, for he has remained at Naioth in Ramah as the first verse of the next chapter indicates.

Vs. 1: Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father that he seeks my life?”

Note yet again the importance of the connective *w-* which here translates as “then.” In other words, *w-* shows immediate connection between the close of the last chapter and the current one, that the action hasn’t ceased but is ongoing. *W-* takes on special significance for the dialogue between David and Jonathan because of the tenseness of the situation relative to Saul.

In 19.18 David meets Samuel, but nothing is said of what they had discussed though obviously Saul was on top of their minds. Surely David promised to keep Samuel abreast of future developments though as the story continues to unfold, has a less intimate role with the prophet compared with Saul. In other words, Samuel and Saul have locked horns and stay that way, even after death, as the incident with the medium of Endor reveals.

In his distress (and that includes abandoning his wife, Saul’s daughter) David rushes to the only person he can trust, Jonathan. He asks him two questions, blurting them out rhetorically, if you will. The first deals with *hawon* or “guilt” (cf. 1.14) and the second with *chata’th* or “sin” (cf. 15.25: noted there but not mentioned). In the verse at hand, such *chata’th* is with regard to Saul, Jonathan’s father, and David hopes Jonathan can shed some light on this terrible situation. It turns out he can’t in the long run because Saul has been affected by that “evil spirit” from the Lord (cf. 19.9).

Vs. 2: 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; and why should my father hide this from me? It is not so.”

Jonathan tells David what he needs to hear desperately. He can speak this way being Saul’s son and having had experience of that unauthorized attack on the Philistines resulting in him breaking the fast.

Galah is the verb for “disclosing” (cf. 14.11), instances of which are not recorded. In the verse at hand *galah* reads literally “disclosing to my ears.”

Jonathan appears somewhat naive in telling David that his father doesn’t hide any plans from him, but it turns out to be otherwise. David is trying to get Jonathan understand that his father has been possessed by that “evil spirit” noted in the last verse. Then again, Jonathan was just as distressed as David and probably spoke more or less impulsively.

Vs. 3: But David replied, “Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes; and he thinks, ‘Let not Jonathan know this lest he be grieved.’ But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.”

Despite his desperation, David is more accurate in his assessment of Saul than Jonathan, a trait to assess a situation as well as a person we’ve seen since he first appeared on the scene. He wishes to inform Jonathan that Saul wouldn’t hesitate to assassinate him quietly, for in Saul’s eyes, Jonathan is his successor. Obviously it would be disastrous for David to intervene.

Chen is the noun for “favor” and refers in this particular context to 16.22 when Saul first notices David. David speaks of the “soul” or *nephesh* (cf. 19.5) proper to Jonathan which is placed in a kind of one-on-one relationship with the Lord who “lives” just like Jonathan’s *nephesh*.

Pesah means “step,” the only use of this word in the Bible. It derives from a verbal root meaning to stride, so in the present context David is fully aware that Saul is, as it were, one *pesah* behind him, a fact that unfortunately

will come true in several instances.

Vs. 4: Then said Jonathan to David, “Whatever you say, I will do for you.”

David’s forceful and truthful words to Jonathan are sufficient to win him over. *Nephesh* as noted in the previous verse is used for “you,” indicative of that strong bond between the two men. While Jonathan was uttering his consent, he knew at the same time that he was making a final break with his father. As for Michal, we don’t know where she stands in all this even though she helped her husband, David, escape. Also we don’t know if she and Jonathan (her brother) talked over the matter nor could trust each other despite their devotion to David and difficult relationship with their father, Saul. The last word about Michal is in 25.44 where Saul gives her to another man to be his wife because of David’s relationship with Abigail.

Vs 5: David said to Jonathan, “Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit at table with the king; but let me go that I may hide myself in the field till the third day at evening.

The new moon is a festival day, unspecified, when families assemble to eat together. Surely many had in mind these gatherings were mini-Passovers, if you will, linking together the passage of time, month after month and possibly culminating in the Passover itself.

“I should not fail to sit at table” is expressed by the verb *yashav* (to sit, cf. 7.2) used twice. David decides not to attend this family gathering but asks Jonathan to make an excuse for him, that he will go to his family in Bethlehem even though technically he was part of the king’s household in accord with the stipulations laid down by Samuel when Saul assumed the throne.

As for hiding in the field by himself, it must have been one of the loneliest periods of David’s young life, one he reflected upon in later years and perhaps influenced his writing of some of the psalms.

Vs. 6: If your father misses me at all then say, ‘David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city; for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.’

Paqad is the verb for “misses” which has numerous meanings, chiefly to muster, and is used twice; it is found last in 17.18.

“Earnestly asked” is expressed by use of the verb *sha’al* twice (cf. 17.56). Note that David stresses “run” which means he has to get to Bethlehem as quickly as possible. He could have made up the story of a yearly sacrifice which made his story more plausible, given that the new moon feast was near.

Vs. 7: If he says, ‘Good!’, it will be well with your servant; but if he is angry, then know that evil is determined by him.

In this conversation with Jonathan David is attempting to ascertain the mind of Saul, very difficult, given his mood swings and being possessed by that “evil spirit” from God. Still, some glimmer of hope is held out for Saul though chances are nothing will come of it.

Rahah is the word for “evil” (cf. 19.9) which here is in the passive mode showing that Saul indeed is responsible for it. The verb “is determined” or *kalah* (cf. 15.18) generally pertains to making an end of something. In the verse at hand, *kalah* is used with the preposition *min-* (from) or literally “from him” which makes the evil more connected with Saul.

Vs. 8: Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a sacred covenant with

you. But if there is guilt in me, slay me yourself; for why should you bring me to your father?"

Here David gets very personal with Jonathan, the person he trusts more than anyone else. "Deal kindly" is rendered literally as "make" (*hasah*, cf. 14.45) *chesed*, that indefinable term pertaining to both mercy and love (cf. 15.6), applicable to God or man. In the verse at hand, *chesed* is used with the preposition *hal-* or literally as "upon your servant."

David attributes Jonathan as instigator of that "sacred covenant" between them, the noun *beryth* being used for the two English words and found in 18.3.

Hawon means "guilt" (cf. 20.1) which must have shocked Jonathan as well as the demand for him to slay David if he has it. He doesn't wish Jonathan to be responsible in any way whatsoever for the tension between him and Saul.

Vs. 9: And Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it was determined by my father that evil should come upon you, would I not tell you?"

Chalylah (cf. 14.45) means "far be it" with the preposition *l-* prefaced to "you," or literally "to you" which indicates directness.

Kalah is the verb for "determined" as in vs. 7 with regard to "evil" or *rahah*, also in vs. 7. Jonathan seeks to put David at rest in his distress, that never he would betray him.

Vs. 10: Then said David to Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you roughly?"

Qashah is an adjective meaning "roughly" noted last with its fundamental meaning as heavy in the sense of being oppressive.

Vs. 11: And Jonathan said to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So they both went out into the field.

Sadeh is the noun for "field" noted last in 14.26. Jonathan seeks to relieve the anxiety of his closest friend by going for a walk where a bit later in this chapter he reveals a plan that will inform David as to Saul's state of mind. Because Saul still sought David's life, the two friends must have sneaked out into the field without informing anyone and stayed a good distance away from any habitation.

Vs. 12: And Jonathan said to David, "The Lord, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded my father, about this time tomorrow or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you?"

After the two friends shared more about the delicate situation at hand out of earshot of anyone, Jonathan blurted out the words of this verse to David perhaps with some anger that his friend had some lingering doubts about their friendship. Jonathan shouts out the words "the Lord, the God of Israel." I.e., the English translation lacks "witness."

Chaqar is the verb for "sounded" which means to search out or to explore. "Would not God discover this" [Ps 44.21]? Jonathan decides to wait a while, anytime from one day to three. It happened that David had to wait three days (cf. vs. 19) which must have seemed an eternity.

Tov is the common adjective for good used here as "well disposed" and noted last in 9.10. If this is how Saul will feel, Jonathan will "disclose" it to David, *galah* being the verb (cf. 20.2). Throughout all this Jonathan knew

he was putting his life on the line because Saul was completely unpredictable.

Vs. 13: But should it please my father to do you harm, the Lord do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away that you may go in safety. May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father.

Tov is the adjective for “should it please” noted in the previous verse and used with *rahah* or “harm” (cf. vs. 9) and the verb *yasaph* (‘and more also’) which means to increase (cf. 19.8 as ‘again’).

Galah means “disclose” as in the previous verse and here reads literally “disclose to your ears.”

Shalom is the common noun for peace and here means “safety” (cf. 17.22).

Interestingly Jonathan wishes the Lord to be with David as he had been with his father. Note the past tense, that no longer is the Lord with Saul. Jonathan was referring to the good Saul had done for Israel, protecting her from the Philistines and setting up the kingship for the first time in that nation’s history. He had no precedents so had to start pretty much from scratch. Although we have no information about Jonathan’s attitude toward Samuel, it must have been ambivalent, for Samuel had condemned Saul quite vehemently possibly without Jonathan knowing all the facts.

Vs. 14: If I am still alive, show me the loyal love of the Lord, that I may not die;

Not very encouraging words for David to hear which further confirmed his attitude toward Saul. If Jonathan’s life is in jeopardy from his own father, surely his own is more so.

The common verb *hasah* (to do, to make) is used for “show” (cf. vs. 8) with regard to *chesed* or “loyal love” (cf. vs. 8).

Vs. 15: and do not cut off your loyalty from my house for ever. When the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth,

Karath is the verb for “cut off” (cf. 18.3) which often is associated with the making...cutting...of a covenant and used here with *chesed*. “My house” is the same as that of Saul and his children to whom Jonathan must be devoted although we don’t hear about that relationship. Perhaps they remained quiet, less bold and courageous than Jonathan.

In the second sentence of this verse Jonathan has a premonition that ultimately David will be victorious. *Karath* is used in a different sense here, that is, destructive.

Vs. 16: let not the name of Jonathan be cut off from the house of David. And may the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies.”

Here Jonathan again uses the verb *karath* but with respect to David’s house, a way of referring to his lineage. Note that this use of *karath* Jonathan is making a clean and total break with his father’s household.

Baqash is the verb for “take vengeance” and as noted in 19.10, means to seek...to seek (David’s) enemies.

Vs. 17: And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

Jonathan reminds David of that covenant both made in 18.1 and puts it in terms of swearing an oath. The verb *yasaph* (‘again,’ cf. vs. 13) is used with *shavah* (‘swear,’ cf. 14.28) with respect to *ahavah* or “love” (cf. 18.3).

The verb *'ahav* (cf. 18.28) is used twice with “soul” or *nephesh* (cf. vs. 4) being the bond between the two men.

Vs. 18: Then Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow is the new moon; and you will be missed because your seat will be empty.

Paqad is the verb for “missed” as in vs. 6 and used again as “empty.” As noted earlier, this verb suggests the idea of mustering, of making preparations. Saul had prepared a “seat” or *moshav* for David (next occurs in vs. 25) because he was his son-in-law. It would be an ideal situation to kill David...not at the banquet itself in front of people but afterwards in order to avoid any scandal.

Vs. 19: And on the third day you will be greatly missed; then go to the place where you hid yourself when the matter was in hand and remain beside yonder stone heap.

For “missed” the Hebrew has the verb *yarad* (cf. 9.27) which means to go down. Apparently this monthly feast extends for three days; David might get away without attending for the first two but after that he would be in trouble, an insult to the king. After all, David is celebrated for having slain Goliath, very fresh in the minds of everyone.

“The matter at hand” translates literally as “in the day of the deed” (*mahaseh*, cf. 8.8).

'Azel is the noun for “heap,” the only use of this word in the Bible.

Vs. 20: And I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a mark.

Jonathan continues to expand upon his plan to signal David about whether Saul is hostile to him or not. *Matarah* is the noun for “mark” which more frequently translates as prison. “Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard which was in the palace of the king of Judah” [Jer 32.2].

Vs. 21: And behold, I will send the lad, saying, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to the lad, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you, take them,’ then you are to come for, as the Lord lives, it is safe for you and there is no danger.

In a sense, *hineh* (‘behold,’ cf. 16.18) serves to cushion David’s possible objection to having another person involved in their scheme even though he is a “lad” (*nahar*, cf. 17.56) and not a threat to it. Still, a third person, even if a youth, could spoil everything.

Shalom is the word for “safe” noted last in vs. 13 with the same meaning, and *davar* means “danger” or more commonly, word or thing (cf. vs. 7).

Vs. 22: But if I say to the youth, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go; for the Lord has sent you away.

When proposing this scheme, Jonathan obviously was using his attendant as one familiar with his regular practice of shooting arrows. The noun here is *helem* which, as noted in 17.56, generally applies to a young man of the age of puberty and is one of two biblical references.

Vs. 23: And as for the matter of which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever.”

Here we have *davar* as noun and verb, “matter” (cf. vs. 21) and “have spoken” (cf. 16.4).”

Another instance of *hineh* ('behold,' cf. vs. 21) which introduces something important Jonathan is about to communicate to David. David gives no response; none is needed with these assuring words.

Vs. 24: So David hid himself in the field; and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food.

In the interim, Jonathan must have gone out for target practice on a regular basis so as not arouse suspicion both at home and especially with the youth who accompanied him.

Vs. 25: The king sat upon his seat as at other times, upon the seat by the wall; Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty.

This seat by the wall has something ominous about, the same place or near the same place where Saul had attempted to spear David while playing the harp. Obviously Saul's seat contrasts with the empty one of David. This is the first time we hear of Abner since he had brought David to Saul after he had killed Goliath (cf. 17.57).

Vs. 26: Yet Saul did not say anything that day; for he thought, "Something has befallen him; he is not clean, surely he is not clean."

There is something quite vulgar about Saul's musing to himself, that is, about David not being "clean" or *tahor*, often in a moral sense as it is here. "The unclean and the clean of it may eat of it" [Dt 12.15].

'Amar is the verb for "thought," the common verb to speak (cf. 19.10). Given the circumstance, *'amar* could translate as speaking aloud, but Saul was crafty enough to keep his intent to himself though everyone at table knew about it. It was simply a matter of when Saul would make his move. That feast of the new moon must have been very uncomfortable for all present. In previous gatherings David was present which, despite the tension between him and Saul, at least put it out in the open.

Vs. 27: But on the second day, the morrow after the new moon, David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

This is the second day of the feast with David not being present, a fact that made everyone more anxious than the first. Finally Saul spoke to Jonathan about what everyone knew was on his mind and which bothered him since last evening's meal. When Saul made the question the people at table, especially Michal, were too afraid to do anything, even eat, wishing and hoping that Jonathan would provide information about David. Each person didn't say a word for fear of being pinned against the wall. In fact, everyone was fully aware of that mark made by the spear hovering over them as a stark reminder.

Vs. 28: Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem;

Jonathan answered his father in a cool, matter-of-fact manner since he had rehearsed this response many times.

The verb *sha'al* ('answered,' cf. vs. 6) is used twice for emphasis and stands out all the more in this short sentence by reason of being the verbal root for the proper name Saul.

Vs. 29: he said, 'Let me go; for our family holds a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

This request to leave the king's presence is presumptuous even if there were no tension between Saul and

David because anyone taken into royal service was considered part and parcel of the household. This fact must have angered Saul even more.

David came from a large family and didn't mention which brother had made the request. Actually the verb *tsawah* or "commanded" is used which Jonathan shouldn't have said in case it angered his father. At least he was vague as to identifying which brother ordered David in order to protect the identity of them all from Saul.

Vs. 30: Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"

This verse is a genuine low-blow by Saul to his son in reference to his mother which, if anyone had any hopes about Saul's reformation, are dashed for good. Even though cursing one's mother was popular at the time, it's especially low because of Saul being king and was slandering his own wife.

The wife of Saul is Ahinoam noted more or less in passing in 14.50. We have no information about how she and Saul got along or whether Jonathan and his siblings discussed with her what they should do. She even could have concurred with Saul's intent to kill David and if she did, this curse would have changed her mind.

Charah is the verb for "kindled" noted last in 18.8 and here used with the preposition *b-*, literally "in Jonathan."

Saul's curse is two-fold: 1) *havah* is a participle for "perverse" also meaning to overturn. "A man is commended according to his good sense, but one of perverse mind is despised" [Prov 12.8]. 2) *mardoth* or a noun, the only one in the Bible, from the verbal root *marad*.

Bosheth means "shame," used twice, and refers to Jonathan's friendship of David or indirectly to Saul's jealousy of David.

Hervah is the noun for "nakedness," the first biblical mention and possibly the root for associating it with shame being Gn 9.22 with regard to Noah: "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father."

Vs. 31: For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and fetch him to me, for he shall surely die."

"As long as" is rendered as "all the days. When Saul refers to "your kingdom" clearly he has in mind Jonathan as his successor as king. This prospect never seemed to be a priority for Jonathan, perhaps agreeing tacitly with Samuel's rejection of his father and wishing for the days when Israel had been governed by judges with a more hands-on approach. Saul sends Jonathan off to bring David to him in order to put him to death, a test to see where Jonathan's loyalties really lay.

Vs. 32: Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

Jonathan knew very well that by asking this question he was putting his life on the line which happened to be true. If Jonathan couldn't stand up to Saul here and now, he would not be able to do so in the future.

Vs. 33: But Saul cast his spear at him to smite him; so Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death.

An understatement of sorts because Jonathan knew much earlier that his father was determined to slay David. Actually Jonathan had his eye on the nearby spear, knowing that what happened to David could happen to him, and that proved to be true.

Kalah is the verb for “determined” last noted in vs. 9.

Vs. 34: And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David because his father had disgraced him.

Chory is a noun meaning heat which here translates as “fierce” and has five other biblical references, one of which is Dt 29.24: “What means the heat of this great anger?”

Hatsav is the verb for “grieved” which fundamentally means to labor, to fashion and here ties into the fact that Saul had “disgraced” David, *kalam* meaning to wound, to insult. “Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm” [25.7]. Indeed, Saul’s words were of the vilest kind, even for today’s audience.

Vss. 35-40: In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David and with him a little lad. And he said to his lad, “Run and find the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad came to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the lad and said, “Is not the arrow beyond you?” And Jonathan called after the lad, “Hurry, make haste, stay not.” So Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows and came to his master. But the lad knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, “Go and carry them to the city.”

The night before must have been sleepless for Jonathan, and he couldn’t wait to go out into the field and inform David of what had happened, that is, by way of their pre-arranged signal. Saul made nothing of this apparent target practice because Jonathan made sure he had established a routine with the same young man as assistant. In that way no one’s suspicions were aroused, including any spies Saul may have had. All the while Jonathan had his eye on the boy just in case he too may have been bribed by Saul. Nothing could be put past him at this stage of the game.

The verb *yadah* (cf. 18.28) is used for “knew” in vs. 29 along with *davar* (cf. vs. 23) or “matter,” that which both had spoken (*davar*) before.

Vs. 41: And as soon as the lad had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times; and they kissed one another and wept with one another until David recovered himself.

Naphal is the verb for “fell” noted last in 17.32 and here suggests reverence along with bowing or *shachah* (cf. 15.31) which often applies to worship.

Nashaq as “kissed” (cf. 10.1) most likely was done twice, first on one cheek and then the other. Here it reads literally as “man kissed his neighbor.”

Gadal means “recovered” (cf. 3.19) means to grow, to become great, so the sense at hand is that David grew out of the shock of this encounter with Jonathan. Jonathan proved himself the stronger in that he had to wait for David “to grow” out of this emotional encounter.

Vs 42: Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord shall be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.’” And he rose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city.

The noun *shalom* is used for “peace” and is prefaced with the preposition *l-* reading literally as “go to peace.”

Jonathan reminds David of their oath which he says here in full for the first time. Note the two uses of “between” (*beyn*): first with respect to Jonathan and David followed by their mutual descendants. In other words, the Lord will act as a connector between the two friends which will be sufficiently strong to carry into future generations without ceasing. Jonathan clearly is not interested in assuming a leadership role but is content to allow David to take hold of it.

The last sentence of this verse is 21.1 in the Hebrew text which makes vs. 1 of Chapter 21 vs. 2.

Chapter Twenty-One

Vs. 1: Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came to meet David trembling and said to him, “Why are you alone and no one with you?”

Nob presumably is in the vicinity of Jerusalem where Ahimelech functioned as “priest” or *kohen* (cf. 6.2). The other two priests mentioned in First Samuel are Eli and Ahijah, son of the infamous Phinehas whose father was Eli. It seemed that Ahimelech didn’t know much about David yet heard of his strife with Saul and obviously didn’t want to get involved.

Charad is the verb for “trembling” noted last in 16.4. If David were with some other men, perhaps Ahimelech wouldn’t have been so terrified. Surely he wished to keep the strife between David and Saul away from his jurisdiction.

Vs. 2: And David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place.”

David is telling a white lie, if you will, in an attempt to keep from Ahimelech the true reason of his presence at Nob. He puts it in terms of a “matter” or *davar* (cf. 20.40) with which Saul had “charged” (*tsava’*, cf. 2.22) him. In the meanwhile Ahimelech was attempting to assess the situation, whether or not to assist David and run the risk of incurring Saul’s wrath.

Yadah or the verb to know (cf. 20.40) for “I have made an appointment” and *maqom* for “place” (cf. 14.46).

Vs. 3: Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever is here.”

“At hand” reads literally “under your hand.”

David asks for five loaves of bread or the equivalent in order to keep up the appearance of his white lie. Note that he makes more of a demand instead of asking politely.

Vs. 4: And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread at hand, but there is holy bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women.”

Chol is the adjective for “common” with six other biblical references, one of which is in the next verse. “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common and between the unclean and the clean” [Lev 10.10]. *Chol* stands in contrast to that bread which is “holy” or *qodesh* (cf. 6.20) or bread set apart from ordinary use.

The bread which is *qodesh* would be available for David and his supposed men provided they had no intercourse (*shamar*, cf. 19.11) with women which means they were on a sacred mission.

Jesus Christ refers to this incident in Mk 2.23-28 with regard to the Sabbath being made for man, not the other way around.

Vs. 5: And David answered the priest, “Of a truth women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?”

Hatsar is the verb for “have been kept” noted in 9.17 with the connotation of restraint, more forceful than *shamar* of vs. 4.

Yatsa’ (cf. 13.10) is a common verb meaning to go out and here translates as “go on an expedition.”

The “vessels” or *kely* often refer to baggage as in 17.32 which here are “holy” or *qodesh* (cf. vs. 4) perhaps meaning they are kept for such a purpose instead of ordinary baggage. David has it this way whether on a “holy” or “common” (*chol*, cf. vs. 4) journey.

Vs. 6: So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which is removed from before the Lord to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

“Bread of the Presence” or bread of the *panym* which literally means “face” as in 13.12. There are two references, Lev 24.5-9 and Ex 25.23-30. In the former such bread is reserved for Aaron and his sons whereas in the latter we have a description of the table, etc., for it. Vs. 30 of this second passage reads “And you shall set the bread of the *panym* on the table *lepanay* (before me).” In other words, two uses of the same word with respect to the notion of face.

Vs. 7: Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen.

Hatsar means “detained” (cf. vs. 5) with respect to *lipanay* or “before the Lord” as in the previous verse. This can intimate that the Lord is responsible for keeping Doeg for a yet unspecified purpose, one as ominous as the sound of his name. Adding to this is the way Doeg is introduced: “a certain man.” Doeg doesn’t seem to be detained at Nob on his own nor does he seem to have been spying for his master, Saul. He and David seem to be there by coincidence.

Vs. 8: And David said to Ahimelech, “And have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me because the king's business required haste.”

Here the noun *kely* is used for “weapons” and is found last in vs. 5 as “vessels” or baggage. Again the noun *davar* is used for “business” (cf. vs. 2) which, as noted frequently, is something that had been spoken or communicated.

Such *davar* was in “haste” or *nachats*, the only use of this verb (participle) in the Bible. Surely Ahimelech must have seen through David’s story by now, for an agent of the king doesn’t travel about unarmed or without an escort.

Vs. 9: And the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

Chances are David knew that Goliath’s sword had been kept at Nob as a kind of trophy in the local temple

although this term or one like has not been mentioned yet explicitly. This sword is protected by a “cloth” or *simlah* which usually applies to a large outer garment. “Then David...changed his clothes” [2Sam 12.20]. It is protected further by an “ephod” (*ephod*) as first associated with Samuel as a boy in 1.18, this being a priestly garment without sleeves first mentioned in Ex 25.7.

As for the sword, David was of course familiar it, the very sword he used to behead him. David knew that Goliath’s sword was an object of pride at Nob, and to take it meant he was desperate. Yet given the huge size of Goliath and the relative smallness of David mentioned before their conflict, this sword must have been almost too big for David to wield. However, the sword had symbolic value. As originally intended for use against Israel, now it would be used against Israel as well or more specifically, Saul and his supporters. Without a doubt, David knew the irony involved.

Vs. 10: And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath.

Another use of the verb *qum* (cf. 18.27) which indicates a decision had been made and must be carried out. Here Saul apparently was hot on the heels of David though we have no intimation of it except through the “detained” presence of Doeg, his chief herdsman.

David flees to Gath, ironically the hometown of Goliath himself (cf. 17.23). He must have known that despite entering the lion’s den, as it were, king Achish would receive him provided he come up with a ruse which he did.

Vs. 11: And the servants of Achish said to him, “Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, `Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands’?”

Achish himself seemed uninformed as to David’s valor against the Philistines and had to be told by his servants. Even though the tension between the Philistines and Israelites was constant, at the same time there was a certain give and take between the two peoples. They couldn’t have been hostile all the time and perhaps some areas had more cordial relations than others. Such may have been the case with Gath despite it’s association with their recently slain hero, Goliath.

The servant of King Achish mistakenly identify David as “king of the land.” They were partially correct, knowing by now that David had achieved such fame that he was a serious rival to Saul who in their eyes was on the decline. Apparently the chant by the women in 18.7 became well known well outside Israelite circles which, as has been observed earlier, was very close to Philistine influence, the two peoples living virtually side by side.

Vs. 12: And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

The verb for “took” is *sum* (cf. 8.5) meaning to place, to put with respect to *davar* (‘words,’ cf. vs. 8) in his *lev* or “heart,” (cf. vs. 6). The adverb *me’od* (‘much,’ cf. 19.4) connotes that which is excessive and rightly so in the context. After all, he was alone, a perfect target for revenge by the king of Achish who probably had sponsored Goliath as champion of the Philistines.

Vs. 13: So he changed his behavior before them and feigned himself mad in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.

This verse demonstrates quick action on David’s part, just about the only avenue of escape left to him. *Shanah* is the verb for “changed” which fundamentally means to repeat, to do the same. “I will not strike him twice” [26.8]. In the verse at hand *shanah* is used with respect to David’s “behavior” or *taham* which means taste or flavor. “Blessed be your discretion” [25.33].

Halal means “feigned (himself) mad” (cf. 6.6) which means to maltreat as well as glean and to perform any deed. “In their hands” can suggest being held captive by guards as David stood before Achish.

Vs. 14: Then said Achish to his servants, “Lo, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me?”

Shagah is the verb for “is mad” and suggestive of some type of divine influence not unlike Saul when he was among the prophets. “Why did this mad fellow come to you” [2Sam 9.11]? Perhaps Achish thought that this madness came over David from time to time and endowed him with sufficient strength to have slain Goliath. That would make him relatively harmless; chances are David wouldn’t manifest this madness again or if he did, the Philistines would be prepared for it. All in all, a lucky break for David.

Vs. 15: Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?”

This is quite a telling statement from a king and one with some truth to it. Achish must have been thinking of the string of defeats suffered at the hands of both Saul and David which showed up the Philistine’s incompetence in battle. Anyway, a good way to bring Chapter Twenty-One to a close.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Vs. 1: David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.

First David “departed” (*halak*, cf. 7.16) followed by having “escaped” (*malat*, cf. 19.12). The first action may have been a discreet withdrawal from the presence of King Achish. Once he had gotten a safe distance, then David beat it out of there to a cave not far from Bethlehem. Adullam is mentioned later in yet another conflict with the Philistines: “And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam” [2Sam 23.13].

Since David’s situation was well known, word about him spread quickly which made it difficult to hide from Saul. Not only did David’s brothers hear about his plight but “all his father’s house” which could mean a considerable number of people. That group formed a core of supporters which eventually would grow. As for the brothers, all were present when Samuel anointed David and hence were eyewitnesses to that event even though it wasn’t clear what was transpiring, i.e., “the Lord’s anointed” [16.6].

Vs. 2: And every one who was in distress and every one who was in debt and every one who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.

Three types of people are singled out for the Robin Hood type figure, David: *matsoq*, *nasa’* and *mar-nephesh*. The first is a noun with four other biblical references, one of which is Ps 119.143: “Trouble and anguish have come upon me, but your commandments are my delight.” The second is the verb usually meaning to bear, to carry as noted last in 15.25 as “pardon.” The third translates literally as “bitter soul” with *mar* in 15.32 and *nephesh* in 20.17.

David becomes the “captain” or *sar* (cf. 18.30) over these three groups, all of whom he had to unify that they do not squabble among each other and provide Saul with an easy target. As vs. 1 points out, this group is built around David’s brothers and extended family.

Vs. 3: And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, “Pray let my father and my mother stay with you till I know what God will do for me.”

A footnote to the RSV says that “the locations of Mizpeh of Moab and Hereth are unknown.”

Moab is mentioned last in 14.47 which fought against King Saul. In light of this the king (name not given) must have been pleased to receive David, now Saul’s arch-enemy. If he could further the rift between the two, all the better for him. We know the name of David’s father (Jesse) but not his mother. The verb *yatsa’* translates as “stay” but more commonly means to go out as in 21.5.

In Hebrew, “what God will do for me” is rendered literally as “to (-) me.”

Vs. 4: And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

Given what was implied in vs. 3, the king of Moab could use David’s family as hostage should that be to his advantage. Then again, the king saw the motley group which formed around David as a threat to Moab. Of course, both men had different thoughts running through their heads. As for David, he had little choice but to whisk away his family to safety.

Apparently the cave of Adullam is the “stronghold” or *metsodah* which means a fortress or place of defence, not necessarily somewhere on a hilltop though the cave could include that. *Metsodah* is mentioned in the next verse and then 23.14: “And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph.”

Jonathan was mentioned last at the end of Chapter Twenty and doesn’t reappear until 23.16 when he joins David at Horesh. Although the two friends are separated during this crucial period, they must have remained in contact, Jonathan stealthily providing information about his father’s intent and movements.

Vs. 5: Then the prophet Gad said to David, “Do not remain in the stronghold; depart and go into the land of Judah.” So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

This “prophet” (*navy’*, cf. 19.20) appears out of nowhere and is the means by which God communicates to David as he wished in vs. 3. The same anonymous prophet appears later in 2Sam 24.13 after which he disappears from the scene. Given the absence of Samuel throughout these tense times, he may have sent this man to David, afraid that Saul would slay him should he decide to go. Anyway, David followed this prophet’s advice and took up a new refuge. The prophet of Gad then went his own way, chiefly out of fear of being discovered by Saul’s spies. Surely he didn’t return to Samuel who was equally fearful of his life.

Vs. 6: Now Saul heard that David was discovered and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him.

“Heard” can mean spies or Saul’s agents making inquiries in the vicinity. *Yadah* (cf. vs. 2) is the verb for “was discovered” and suggests the relatively small area in which both Saul and David were operating, easy to hit upon each other.

Gibeah is noted last in 15.34, Saul’s house. This image of him under a tree with spear in hand is just as dramatic as when he was alone in his house and attempted to run David through. Despite being surrounded by his servants, possibly acting as a bodyguard, Saul was never more alone.

Vs. 7: And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, “Hear now, you Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds,

So here we have Saul in his backyard calling his servants Benjaminites, a way of intimidating them just in case any should consider joining David. The same tactic applies by calling David “the son of Jesse.” Apparently these servants comprised the upper echelon since they were military leaders.

Vs. 8: that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a league with the son of Jesse, none of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait as at this day.”

Qashar is mentioned last in 18.4 with its fundamental sense of binding together which is true with regard to forming a conspiracy. For Saul to perceive such *qashar* among his leading military people is a sign of his growing paranoia and deterioration. Surely those who are more perception felt this yet didn’t dare contradict the king.

“Discloses” is rendered literally as “reveals (in) my ears,” the verb being *galah* noted last in 20.13 and used in this verse twice. In the verse at hand it is with respect to *karath* (‘makes a league’) which means to cut as with a covenant, 18.3 being the reference to which Saul is referring.

Chalah means “is sorry” and found last in 13.12; *qum* as “stirred up” (cf. 21.10); and *’arav* as “lie in wait” or to wait in ambush. Of course, no one could discuss the matter at hand with Saul, just take it in and hope to be dismissed as quickly as possible. After this incident it wouldn’t be surprising that some joined David and sought out Jonathan as an ally in this matter.

Vs. 9: Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, “I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub,

This standing by (*hal-*, literally as ‘on’) Saul’s servants gives the impression that Doeg, always identified as an Edomite and hence an outsider (albeit a useful one), was on the periphery. After all, Doeg was a herdsman, not a military officer. His devious ways were probably known by many present who resented him being there. Some of Saul’s servants were astonished to hear Doeg speak, not expecting him to be present. He must have known about this meeting at Saul’s house and was brash enough to enter that he may offer his bit of information. As with Saul in the previous verse, Doeg refers to David disparagingly as “son of Jesse.”

Vs. 10: and he inquired of the Lord for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”

The verb for “inquired” is *sha’al* noted last in 20.28 and has the preposition *b-* (‘in’) prefaced to *YHWH*, “in the Lord.” There’s no record of this, perhaps an exaggeration on Doeg’s part to get Saul even angrier. However, Doeg is correct about the “provisions” and Goliath’s sword. The noun for the former is *tsydah*, usually as food for a journey, the bread of Presence which Doeg mistakenly identifies. “Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance” [Ps 78.25].

Vs. 11: Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king.

Without a doubt, Ahimelech knew something not good was in store for him when summoned by Saul. Not only that, the entire house of his father had to go, all of whom were priests like Ahimelech. That meant the people

of Nob and surrounding areas would be without a ministry.

Vs. 12: And Saul said, “Hear now, son of Ahitub.” And he answered, “Here I am, my Lord.”

By addressing Ahimelech as “son of Ahitub” Saul was putting a certain distance between him for any future action. In his mind, that would help relieve him of responsibility for his death which was soon to come.

Vs. 13: And Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?”

Qashar is the verb for “conspired” as in vs. 8 when Saul lashes out at his own servants. Ahimelech and his household had heard that Saul was prone to such outbursts and now were the direct object of them. As soon as they had been summoned they knew their fate. What must have struck Ahimelech as especially outrageous was Saul’s claim that he laid in wait, *’arav*. This verb is also found in vs. 8 and carries just as much sinister destructive force as *qashar*.

Vs. 14: Then Ahimelech answered the king, “And who among all your servants is so faithful as David who is the king’s son-in-law and captain over your bodyguard and honored in your house?”

Throughout this tense encounter between Saul and Ahimelech the connective *w-* has special importance as has been noted elsewhere. That is to say, *w-* serves to unite the action and make it pass quickly before our eyes.

Ahimelech knew his fate and was emboldened to speak the truth as he does here. Without hesitation he reminds Saul that David is his son-in-law. The verb *’aman* is used for “faithful” noted last in 3.20 and similar here to *kavad* (‘honored,’ cf. 15.30). Those standing around knew what Ahimelech was talking about but were fearful to say it. Even a few who heard him and soon witnessed his execution must have gone over to David’s side.

Sar means “captain” as in vs. 2 and here is used with regard to “bodyguard” or *mishmahath* which has three other biblical references, one of which being 2Sam 23.23: “ It derives from the verbal root *shamah* (to hear) and thus connotes obedience. “And David set him (Benaiah) over his bodyguard.”

Vs. 15: Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father; for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little.”

Ahimelech presents Saul with a rhetorical question to which he responds, not expecting an answer. “No” is rendered as *chalyah* noted in last in 20.9, “far be it.”

Sum (cf. 21.12) is the verb for “impute” which fundamentally means to place with regard to “servant” as prefaced with the preposition *l-* or literally “to his servant.” What Ahimelech wishes Saul not to place...*sum*...is “anything” or the noun *davar* which, as noted frequently (cf. 21.12), means word. As to the “house” of Ahimelech’s father, all belonging to it was present with him before Saul (cf. vs. 11). Although Ahimelech feels obliged to speak the truth, he knows Saul isn’t listening but hopes to influence some of his attendants nearby.

Vs. 16: And the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s house.”

Words of no surprise to Ahimelech, really, but at last the truth is out. “Surely” is rendered by double use of the verb *muth* (‘die’).

Vs. 17: And the king said to the guard who stood about him, “Turn and kill the priests of the Lord; because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me.” But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord.

Ruts is the verb for the English noun “guard” noted last in 17.48 with its basic meaning to run. This man’s position is “about him” or literally on (*hal-*) Saul. Without hesitation Saul orders than guard to slay the priests who refused to do so. We have a singular *ruts* with a plural “servants” suggesting that the former would instruct the latter to carry out the king’s command.

This guard knew all along that he would be chosen to fulfill this wicked deed. We don’t hear what happened to him nor the servants for refusing, but they too may have fallen victim to Saul’s rage at the hand of Doeg.

Vs. 18: Then the king said to Doeg, “You turn and fall upon the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned and fell upon the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod.

Doeg gladly carried out Saul’s order even though his task was a herdsman. Apparently he slew the entire lot of eight-five persons. *Nasa’* (cf. vs. 2) is the verb for “wore” literally meaning to raise which suggests the priests wore their ephods as sign of their office and did so with pride even as they were being put to death.

Vs. 19: And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both men and women, children and sucklings, oxen, asses and sheep, he put to the sword.

Apparently king Saul said nothing about killing the entire population of Nob and possibly did not intend to go that far. However, Doeg was a particularly heartless person. He was a foreigner, an Edomite and not of Israel, and therefore had no vested interest in affairs other than what was to his own advantage. Saul was aware of this and directed Doeg’s fury to his own end.

Vss. 20-21: But one of the sons 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.

Note that Abiathar, the apparent sole survivor of Doeg’s single-minded massacre of the priests and inhabitants of Nob fled “after” David. In other words, Abiathar didn’t simply join David but clung to him. This man proved his loyalty to David when he remained in Jerusalem just after David had fled to escape vengeance by his son Absalom. However, Abiathar was of the lineage of Eli and later was deposed as high priest thus fulfilling the curse that the priesthood would pass from the line of Eli (cf. 2.30). This was brought on by an anonymous man of God (cf. 2.27).

Vs. 22: And David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house.

Upon hearing of this devastating news, David reflects back and regretted he didn’t do anything about Doeg the Edomite when he could have. *Savav* is the verb for “occasioned” noted last in 18.11 and fundamentally means to turn. It is used with respect to “persons” or *nephesh* (soul, cf. vs. 2) which here is singular concerning the plural of “house” or its members.

Vs. 23: Stay with me, fear not; for he that seeks my life seeks your life; with me you shall be in safekeeping.”

Two uses of *nephesh* (‘soul,’ cf. vs. 22): that of David and that of Abiathar. *Mishmereth* is the noun for “safekeeping” or charge. “Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge” [Gen 26.5]. Later when David moved the ark to Jerusalem he must have had in mind the inhabitants of Nob who lived nearby, all of

whom were slaughtered by Doeg the Edomite.