

Chapter Twenty-Three

Vs. 1: Now they told David, “Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors.”

The familiar connective *w-* (‘now’) serves to turn attention away from the recent tragedy of the priests and inhabitants of Nob to the perennial issue of dealing with the Philistines.

Keilah is close to Adullam, David’s hideaway. He could have returned there shortly after the above-mentioned massacre to recuperate and plan his move against Saul. However, the Philistines must have gotten wind of what happened at Nob and saw it to their advantage, hence the attack. This was a new form of warfare, going after “threshing floors” or *goren*. “The threshing floors shall be full of wheat” [Jl 2.24]. By so robbing them, the Philistines were depriving the inhabitants of Keilah of their food supply. *Shasah* (cf. 14.48) is the verb for “robbing” which means more a kind of plundering.

Vs. 2: Therefore David inquired of the Lord, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the Lord said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

Sha’al is the verb for “inquired” (cf. 22.10) and used with the preposition *b-*, literally as “in the Lord.” This asking can take the form of personal prayer or public as in a temple. Since it involves the safety of Israel, chances are David made his *sha’al* public or through liturgical means. At the same time David wished to keep any public manifestation quiet so as not to inform the Philistines.

Nakah is the verb for “attack” noted last in 18.11, the result of which will be saving Keilah, the verb being *yashah* (cf. 17.47).

Vs. 3: But David's men said to him, “Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?”

Perhaps those in Judah were under the threat of attack by the Philistines. If they disturbed the tenuous peace (it was always this way between Israel and the Philistines), there was the danger of suffering a crushing defeat at Keilah. This situation intimates that despite earlier victories by Saul and David, the Philistines grew stronger and could wipe out the Israelites at any moment.

Vs. 4: Then David inquired of the Lord again. And the Lord answered him, “Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand.”

Because the situation was so precarious, David made a second *sha’al* of the Lord, the verb *yasaph* being used (cf. 20.17). That verb means to increase which intimates that David’s second inquiry was done with greater earnestness. Also David had to take into consideration an assault by Saul who would take advantage of this to defeat his rival who would be fighting on two fronts. Without hesitation the Lord responded that he would assist David and protect him from Saul, putting an end to this dilemma.

Vs. 5: And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their cattle and made a great slaughter among them. So David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

Not only did David defeat the Philistines, he captured their cattle which was an important source of food for an army of the move. Perhaps these cattle are mentioned because they were intended for an even larger group of Philistines. It was, in the long run, just another encounter with a persistent enemy with the prospect of more encounters to come.

Vs. 6: When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, he came down with an ephod in his hand.

This ephod, symbolic of the priesthood, is singled out for special mention. It was worn with pride not just now but in future liturgical ceremonies of an ugly event in Israel's history.

Vs. 7: Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given him into my hand; for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars."

"It was told" is found last in 19.21, suggestive of spies on Saul's behalf. Saul figured that he would have David surrounded in a small town and easily starve him to submission. However, David and his men were determined to avenge the death of the priests and inhabitants of Nob at the hand of a foreigner, Doeg the Edomite.

Nakar is the verb for "has given" which has multiple meanings such as to estrange, to look at something, to know how and found next in 26.17 as "recognized."

Vs. 8: And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

Shamah (cf. 22.14) is the verb for "summoned" which means to hear; i.e., Saul caused the people to hear and if they refused, they would be put to death on the spot. Chances are most people were on David's side. The situation at the time was fluid: on one hand you have the Philistines and on the other, Saul and David slugging it out. Throughout all this the loyalty of people was questionable as to whom to support.

Vs. 9: David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."

The preposition *hal-* ('upon') is prefaced to "him" reading literally "upon him" which makes Saul's intent all the more pressing and near to David. *Rahah* is the noun for "evil" (cf. 20.13). David wishes to wear the ephod in his prayer to the Lord which begins in the next verse. Given that it is the only surviving ephod, he wished to keep it safe from the hands of Saul.

Vs. 10: Then said David, "O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account.

David begins with an acknowledgment that the Lord is fully aware of the situation at hand. "Surely" is rendered by a second use of the verb *shamah* (to hear, cf. vs. 8) as is the case in 22.17.

Shachath is noted last in 6.5 and also means to deal wickedly.

Vs. 11: Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O Lord, the God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell your servant." And the Lord said, "He will come down."

The first question suggests some anxiety over the allegiance of the inhabitants of Keilah, for as noted earlier, the Israelites were divided as to their loyalty, Saul or David. More precisely, the noun *bahal* is used for "men" which also means lord or ruler thereby suggesting those in charge of the city are of concerning to David, that he was unsure as to their loyalty. "If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God" [Ex 22.8].

Na' is used for "beseech" which followed directly after the verb "tell" and means something like "I pray" (cf. 15.25).

As in most instances both here in First Samuel and in other situations, the Lord responds to a prayer in a matter-of-fact way which is reassuring despite its brevity.

Vs. 12: Then said David, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the Lord said, “They will surrender you.”

David’s premonition about the inhabitants of Keilah proves true despite having rescued them from the Philistines. *Sagar* is the verb for “surrender” noted last in 17.46. It is to David’s credit that he didn’t take vengeance upon Keilah; at least this is not recorded.

Vs. 13: Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

Between 22.2 and now David had picked up an additional two hundred followers; not much but certainly better than before. The chief advantage was their loyalty compared to those who may have been conscripted by Saul.

“Wherever they could go” suggests a limited field of operation, hemmed in, if you will, by Saul as well as the Philistines. Saul had to face the same opposition as well, so the two sides were at a disadvantage.

Yatsa’ is a verb meaning “expedition” noted last in 22.3.

Vs. 14: And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.

Metsodah means “stronghold” noted last in vs. 4 where it is singular compared to here where it is plural implying that David had expanded his base over a period of time. Not only that, it includes Ziph.

Midbar is the noun for “wilderness” and derives from the verbal root *davar*, to speak. This noun also is a poetical way of indicating the mouth, instrument of speech: “your mouth is pleasant” [Sg 4.33].

While David’s small force may excel in military prowess and motivation, Saul certainly is single-minded (‘sought him every day’), though that isn’t especially mirrored in his troops which must have been very trying.

Vs. 15: And David was afraid because Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the Wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.

This verse explicitly says that Saul himself participated in the search for David which means that he wasn’t engaged directly in the pursuits described earlier. After all, as king he had to attend to other matters. If people saw him obsessed with his pursuit of David, surely a rebellion would be at hand.

Vs. 16: And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose, and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God.

This is the second mention of the verb *qum* (‘rose;’ cf. vs. 13) which suggests a going into action and hence determination. Jonathan was following events very closely, perhaps through personal spies, and finally decided it was time to make his move.

Chazaq is the verb for “strengthened” noted last in 17.50. Jonathan thus counters the hand of Saul [vs. 14] with David’s, that is, “in God.”

Vs. 17: And he said to him, “Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you; you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you; Saul my father also knows this.”

Yet another instance of “hand” which here takes on a sinister extension as it twists and turns, reaching into every valley and crevice. By saying he would be next to David, Jonathan isn’t attempting to usurp power or the like. The friendship between the two was too strong for this. As the verse says, Saul “knows” this, *yadah* (cf. vs. 6) and realizes he never had any deep friendship to help him along when he assumed the kingship. His ears were still ringing with Samuel’s condemnation.

Vs. 18: And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord; David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

Refer to 18.3 for something similar where the verb *karath* (‘made’) and the noun *beryth* (‘covenant’) are found together. In the verse at hand, this is “before” (*liphney*) the Lord whereas the earlier one did not mention the Lord. The departure of Jonathan is poignant in that it heightens the significance of this covenant the two friends just made or renewed.

Vs. 19: Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Does not David hide among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon?”

Apparently the Ziphites were allied with Saul and squealed on David. Then again, perhaps they feared Saul and wanted to get on his good side. David and his company apparently had plenty of hiding places but given the compact geographic of the area, it was difficult to conceal for long the movement of some six hundred men.

Vs. 20: Now come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand.”

Avath is the noun for “desire” and is used with *nepshesh* (soul; cf. 22.23) as “heart.” As for the former, cf. Dt 12.20: “You may eat as much flesh as you desire.” The Ziphites were correct to use these words which echo Saul’s attitude.

Sagar is the verb for “surrender” (cf. vs. 12). Apparently the Ziphites underestimated David and were willing to cast their lot in with Saul.

Vs. 21: And Saul said, “May you be blessed by the Lord; for you have had compassion on me.

These words are more indicative of relief, of exclamation that at last Saul was to capture David. Even if he did, there’s no clear indication on what he would do with him. Should he put David to death, that would weaken his grip on the kingship even further.

Chamal is the verb for “have had compassion” and noted last in 15.15 as “spared.” These are precisely the words the Ziphites wished to hear.

Vs. 22: Go, make yet more sure; know and see the place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for it is told me that he is very cunning.

Kun is the verb for “make sure” noted last in 13.13 as “established.” In the verse at hand, *kun* is joined with *hod* (‘yet more’) implying that which is done repeatedly.

Regel is the noun for “haunt” and means “foot” implying that a haunt is a place one frequents. Saul also wishes

to know if anyone has seen David in this place and if so, quickly would summon him for further information.

“For it is told me” is ironic as used with the verb *haram* (‘cunning’) because Saul himself is far more “cunning.” The idea of excessiveness (‘very’) is expressed by a second use of this verb. Three other biblical references exist, one of which is Prov 15.5 with an alternate meaning: “A fool despises his father’s instruction, but he who heeds admonition is prudent.”

Vs. 23: See therefore, and take note of all the lurking places where he hides and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.”

This verse and succeeding ones follow with almost breathless rapidity, another instance where the connective *w-* plays an important role as it bridges the verses together and present a picture of Saul bordering upon insanity. Also it assumes significance when used with the verb *baqash* (to seek) mentioned so often here. Initially the Ziphites wanted to get on Saul’s good side, but the more they saw of Saul, the more they must have regretted their decision. His words “among all the thousands of Judah” revealed this side of Saul clearly. However, the dye had been cast and were caught up in the king’s insane pursuits.

Yadah is the verb for “take note,” mentioned last in vs. 17, with respect to David’s “lurking places” or *machavo’ym*, the only use of this word in the Bible which is derived from the verbal root *chava’* (to hide, cf. 19.2) which is used here.

Kun is the verb for “sure information” as found last in vs. 22.

Chaphas means “search out” and implies taking counsel with the intent to devise a plan. It is found next in 28.8 with yet another meaning befitting the character of Saul: “So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments.”

Vs. 24: And they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.

“They” refers to the Ziphites now irrevocably bound up with Saul’s fate. As noted several times earlier, the verb *qum* (‘arose’) signifies an action about to be taken, this one now done out fear of the king.

A second mention of *midbar* or “wilderness” as in vs. 14. Throughout all this hunting and searching both Saul and David had plenty of spies on the look out for each other’s position. Now more than ever their reports meant life or death.

Vs. 25: And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told; therefore he went down to the rock which is in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

“And David was told” can apply to the observation in the previous verse, that he received intelligence from his spies about Saul’s pursuit. This is the third mention of *midbar* as “wilderness” which shows that so much of this deadly pursuit took place in deserted areas away from towns, etc. David was on more familiar ground compared to Saul. He had been a shepherd and knew how to live on his own outdoors for an extended period of time.

Radaph is the verb for “pursued” (cf. 7.11), yet another indication of Saul’s near insane preoccupation with David. As for the men under Saul, they had no choice but to obey even if many secretly sided with David.

Vs. 26: Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other side of the mountain; and David was making haste to get away from Saul, as Saul and his men were closing in upon David and his men to capture them,

Both sides were very close to each other blocked only by a mountain. *Hatar* is the verb for “closing in” and means to cover or to clothe. “For you bless the righteous, O Lord. You cover him with favor as with a shield” [Ps 5.12].

Taphas means “to capture” and is noted in 15.8. Such capturing implies that the two forces will re-emerge on the other side of the mountain, depending upon who will get their first. Since the mountain is a major obstacle, chance are scouts from both sides were up there observing each force’s movements.

Vs. 27: when a messenger came to Saul saying, “Make haste and come; for the Philistines have made a raid upon the land.”

A revealing verse in that it shows the real threat against Israel comes from the Philistines. Surely they must have observed this pursuit of Saul and took advantage of making a raid, *pashat* being the verb noted in 18.4. *Pashat* doesn’t apply to a full scale invasion but more a foray to exploit a particular opportunity. If successful, the Philistines just might continue with such hit-and-runs to weaken first Saul and then David after which could come a full scale invasion.

Vs. 28: So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines; therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.

Saul would have been renowned in Israel’s history had he not been fixated by David but spent his energies subduing the Philistines. Apparently he was successful even though we have no further information.

“Rock of Escape:” *selah* and *machaloqoth*. The first is suggestive of elevation and the latter is derived from the verbal root *chalaq* which means to divide or to despoil. *Selah* is found in 13.6 and 14.4 though not mentioned there.

Vs. 29: And David went up from there and dwelt in the strongholds of En-gedi.

This verse is the first verse of Chapter Twenty-Four in the Hebrew text. This is a fitting way to leave of Chapter Twenty-Three, with David safely ensconced in yet one of his “strongholds” or *metsodah* (cf. vs. 14). The idea of dwelling (*yashav*, cf. 20.5) is reassuring even though Saul could discover David and slay him at any moment.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Vs. 1: When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, “Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.”

The Hebrew text lacks the verb “following.” Nothing is said of this expedition against the Philistines, presumably successful, but for Saul an interruption in his pursuit for David.

Hineh or “behold” (cf. 20.23) is, as noted several times earlier, a way of getting attention.

Vs. 2: Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Wildgoats' Rocks.

Bachar is the verbal root for “chosen” and found next in 26.3 though not mentioned there. These special troops go with Saul to “seek” (*baqash*, cf. 26.2 with the alternate meaning of to take vengeance) David. Although not specially mentioned, *baqash* is used frequently throughout Saul’s pursuit of David.

“Wildgoat” (*yehelym*) is a very descriptive term and has two other biblical references, Job 39.1 and Ps 104.18. The latter is cited here: “The high mountains are for the wild goats.”

Vs. 3: And he came to the sheepfolds by the way where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave.

Gederah is the “fold” in “sheepfolds” and also refers to a hedge. “You have breached all his walls; you have laid his strongholds in ruins” [Ps 89.40].

“To relieve himself” literally reads “to cover his feet,” as though Saul were peeing on his feet. Chances are David had some look-outs at or near the cave’s entrance though the second sentence doesn’t seem to intimate this, as though they had been caught off guard.

Vs. 4: And the men of David said to him, “Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, ‘Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.’” Then David arose and stealthily cut off the skirt of Saul's robe.

“Day” (*yom*) is similar to its use in 9.13 as “immediately” or a unique opportunity which the men with David him remind him even though the reference isn’t exactly clear. Here is yet another reference to “into your hand” as in 23.4. Despite the danger, it was certainly to David’s long term advantage who didn’t respond in accord to what his men desired. After all, they were exhausted from being chased throughout the countryside by Saul.

Lat is the adjective for “stealthily” with four other biblical references, the last reference being 18.22.

Vs. 5: And afterward David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

Nakah is the verb for “smote” noted last in 23.2 in conjunction with *lev* or “heart” (cf. 21.12) which here can be taken as David’s conscience.

Vs. 6: He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my Lord, the Lord's anointed, to put forth my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed.”

Chalylah as “forbid” is noted last in 22.15 as “far be it from” and *davar* is the noun for “thing” (cf. 22.15) with regard to Saul being the “anointed” or *mashyach* (cf. 12.5). While this gesture is usually taken as a magnanimous one on David’s part, it can be an example...a warning of sorts...to his men. That is to say, Samuel had anointed David, and to harm Saul might put in their minds that at some future time they could do the same to David.

Vs. 7: So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave, and went upon his way.

Shasah is the verb for “persuaded” which fundamentally means to cleave, to tear into pieces. “And he (Samson) tore the lion asunder as one tears a kid” [Judg 14.6].

Natah is the verb for “permit” noted last in 14.7 as “incline” used with *qum* (cf. 23.24) as “to attack.” *Qum* is used in the second sentence as “rose up.”

Vs. 8: Afterward David also arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, “My Lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and did obeisance.

David obviously allows Saul to get a safe distance ahead of him who presumably was alone. *Adony* is the noun for “lord” noted last in 1.26. This surprised Saul who then “looked” behind him, the verb being *navat* (cf. 17.42) which involves a beholding which in this case was sudden.

Qadad means “bowed” in the sense of giving reverence. “And he (Saul) bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance” [28.14]. Compare with *shachah* (‘did obeisance’), a verb with a stronger sense of giving homage. Often the two are found together as if for emphasis or dramatic effect.

Vs. 9: And David said to Saul, “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Behold, David seeks your hurt?’

This is the first time we have direct knowledge (more precisely, through David) that Saul had been influenced by advisors telling him to slay David. Some may have obtained knowledge that Samuel had anointed David and therefore posed a direct threat to Saul’s kingship and their influence over him.

Rahah is the noun for “hurt” noted last in 23.9 as “evil.”

Vs. 10: Lo, this day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hand in the cave; and some bade me kill you, but I spared you. I said, ‘I will not put forth my hand against my Lord; for he is the Lord’s anointed.’

Hineh translates as “lo” and is noted frequently as “behold” (cf. vs. 1).

Chus is the verb for “spared” which means to have compassion or pity. “He shall spare the poor and the needy” [Ps 72.13]. Surely Saul knew that Samuel had anointed David though had not admitted it. In his fury towards David Saul thought he was taking action, albeit indirectly, against Samuel who earlier had condemned so thoroughly. Thus Saul was attempting to get at one man through another, both of whom he perceived as taunting him, even conspiring against him.

Vs. 11: See, my father, see the skirt of your robe in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the skirt of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you though you hunt my life to take it.

Technically David was correct in addressing Saul “my father” because of his status as son-in-law.

The pair *yadah* and *ra’ah* or “know” and “see” has a parallel in 18.28 only reversed, “saw and knew.” Both are related to (no) “wrong” or “treachery” or *raha* (cf. vs. 9) and *peshah*. The latter pertains to a trespass or fault. “Pray forgive the trespass of your handmaid” [25.28].

Tsadah is the verb for “hunt” and also means to lie in wait. It has two other biblical references, Ex 21.13 and Zeph 3.6, the former being cited here: “But if he did not lie in wait for him...then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee.”

Vs. 12: May the Lord judge between me and you, may the Lord avenge me upon you; but my hand shall not be against you.

David wishes that the Lord both “judge” and “avenge” Saul, *shaphat* and *qum* (12.7 and vs. 7), the latter

fundamentally meaning to arise. At the same time David makes it clear that his own hand will not be “against” Saul, the preposition *b-* meaning “in.”

Vs. 13: As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you.

Apparently the proverb David quotes from the “ancients” or *qadmony* (adjective) is a gloss inserted into the text. *Qadmony* means literally those who have come first (*qedem*) and also refers to the direction of the east. “With his face toward the east sea” [Jl 2.20].

The adjective *rashah* (‘wicked,’ cf. 2.9) and the noun ‘wickedness’ (*reshah*) derive from the same verbal root. One reference to the latter is Prov 8.7: “For my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.”

Vs. 14: After whom has the king of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog! After a flea!

David is correct in identifying himself as a dead dog and a flea compared with the far greater threat by the Philistines. If he and Saul could only join forces this long term menace would be eliminated once and for all.

Vs. 15: May the Lord therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.”

David concludes both his plea and threat to Saul with five successive wishes that the Lord will fulfill: “be judge,” “give sentence,” “see,” “plea” and “deliver:” *dyn* (cf. 2.10), *shaphat* (cf. vs. 12; used twice here), *ra’ah* (cf. vs. 11), *ryv* (cf. 2.10) and *shaphat*.

Vs. 16: When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept.

Saul responds to David at considerable length, to the end of this chapter. Surely Saul recognized David but exclaimed these words out of surprise and perhaps defence because he was in such a vulnerable position where David could either capture or kill him. The lifting up (*nasa’*, cf. 22.18) of Saul’s voice suggests effort compared with the more spontaneous or unreflective *qum* (to rise).

Vs. 17: He said to David, “You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good whereas I have repaid you evil.

Tsadyq is the adjective for “righteous,” the only use of this word in First Samuel. “Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous” [Ps 1.5]. The difference between Saul and David is heightened by use of the preposition *min-* (‘from me’).

Gamal means “repaid” and found last in 1.22 as “weaned;” it also means to give, to show. *Rahah* is the noun for “evil” (cf. vs. 11).

Vs. 18: And you have declared this day how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when the Lord put me into your hands.

Nagad as “declared” is found last in 19.7 as “showed” and “dealt” is the common verb to do (*hasah*, cf. 20.14).

Vs. 19: For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safe? So may the Lord reward you with good for

what you have done to me this day.

The common verb *shalach* (to send) and the noun *derek* (road, way; cf. 18.14) are used to express “will he let him go away safe” or “will he send him in the way.”

Hasah translates as “reward” (cf. vs. 18).

Vs. 20: And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.

Here *hineh* (‘behold;’ cf. vs. 10) signifies realization of a fact, namely, that David will be king, something he had known all along since Samuel’s rejection of him.

Qum (cf. vs. 12) means to rise.

Vs. 21: Swear to me therefore by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name out of my father's house.”

Shavah is the verb for “swear” (cf. 20.17) which Saul cunningly uses to his advantage, that is, by the Lord, something he knew David could not resist. Saul realizes that he is doomed yet has concern for his descendants, that they not be “cut off,” *karath*, the same verb used to cut a covenant as in 23.18. *Shamad* means to “destroy” as to lay waste a field. “And we will destroy the heir” [2Sam 14.7]. For someone’s name to be obliterated was in essence to destroy one’s own identity which was carried over to future descendants.

Vs. 22: And David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

True to his nature, David promised Saul. The two men did not meet until later in Chapter Twenty-Six which was the last time before Saul’s death. Note that the connective *w-* is used three times in this verse: “and,” “then” and “but.”

Chapter Twenty-Five

Vs. 1: Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah. Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

As noted in the concluding verse of the last chapter, *w-* is used three times, indicative of consecutive action which is fast-paced, the same being applicable here: “now,” “and,” “and” and “then.”

Nothing much is said of Samuel’s death except for this brief account. While “all Israel” may have mourned for him, Saul must have been glad although as king he could not express this publically.

Qavats is the verb for “assembled” (cf. 8.4) and *saphad* is the one for “mourned” which literally means to beat the breast. It is used next in 28.3, again with reference to the death of Samuel. Although David went to the *midbar* (cf. 23.25) or “wilderness” of Paran, this doesn’t mean he attended the funeral, much as he would have liked to have done so. Surely Saul was on the look-out for David being there. Now David did not have Samuel to consult as to his earlier anointing. It was up to him to discern this which most likely pertained to him being the next king.

Vs. 2: And there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

As a footnote in the **RSV** says, “This Carmel...must not be confused with the famous Mount Carmel to the north near the seacoast.” The man, soon to be identified as Nabal, had “business” there, *mahaseh* (cf. 20.19), the root of which is the common verb *hasah*, to do, to make.

“Very rich” is rendered *gadol me’od* (cf. 21.12) or literally “excessively great.” And this richness was translated in terms of owning sheep.

Vs. 3: Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was of good understanding and beautiful, but the man was churlish and ill-behaved; he was a Calebite.

Later in 25.25 Abigail says that her husband is aptly name, Nabal meaning fool. This concurs with him being described as “churlish” and “ill-behaved” or *qasheh* (cf. 1.15) and *rah* (cf. 16.14), that is, hard and evil. Both adjectives modify the noun (not in the English translation) *mahalal* which means doings or works. “Requite them according to the work of their hands; render them their due reward” [Ps 28.4]. If this weren’t sufficiently bad, the verse adds that Nabal was a Calebite or originally not belonging to the tribe of Judah (cf. Jos 15.13-19 and Judg 1.12-15).

In contrast to this man who is the incarnation of foolishness we have Abigail who is both of good “understanding” and “beautiful.” *Sekef* is the former which also includes prudence. “Good sense wins favor, but the way of the faithless is their ruin” [Ps 13.15]. The latter is rendered literally as “beautiful form” or the noun *to’ar* (cf. 16.18 as ‘presence’) modified by the adjective *yapheh* (cf. 17.42).

Vs. 4: David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep.

That is to say, word got to David about Nabal’s activities which could provide some food and clothing for his men.

Vs. 5: So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.

“Greet” is rendered by the verb *sha’al* (to ask; cf. 23.4) and the noun *shalom* (peace; cf. 20.42).

Vs. 6: And thus you shall salute him: `Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.

“Salute” is rendered in Hebrew by *lechay* or “to life.”

The noun *shalom* occurs three separate times, as though David went out of his way to make Nabal feel at ease. As a rich man Saul must have sought his acquaintance and even bought some of his sheep. Thus David had to be very careful in approaching Nabal.

Vs. 7: I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel.

Despite Saul’s constant menace, David had sufficient freedom to interact with local shepherds, chiefly for food and clothing. Throughout this amicable relationship David’s men did no “harm” to Nabal’s shearers, the verb being *kalam* noted last in 20.34 as “disgraced.”

Paqad is a verb with many meanings and here means “missed” as in 20.18.

Vs. 8: Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes; for we come on a feast day. Pray, give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David."

Chen is the noun for "favor" (cf. 20.3) which David requests of Nabal toward his young men because of a "feast day" which is rendered *yom tov* or literally "good day," the nature of which isn't specified but presumably known by Nabal.

"Pray" is rendered as *na-* (cf. 23.11) after the verb "give." David takes the further step of showing obeisance to Nabal by referring to himself as "your son."

Vs. 9: When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited.

En route to Carmel those sent by David discussed among themselves how to present their leader's request to a man who essentially was quite odious. Hovering in the background was the fear that Nabal could inform Saul. So when they arrived, the young men spoke "in the name of David" which means they spoke with Nabal just as David would have if he were present. Obviously one of them was their leader who took the initiative.

The waiting seems to have been done in the same place the delegation met with Nabal. Nabal must have stepped aside and consulted others in the meanwhile letting the young men to become more nervous as they waited a response.

Vs. 10: And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who are breaking away from their masters.

After what must have seemed an eternity of waiting for the young men, Nabal returned with his answer. Their earlier contact with his shearers clued them in on Nabal's character, so they weren't terribly surprised at his response. Reference to "servants"...slaves (*heved*, mentioned last in 18.30)...could refer to those who joined David. Thus Nabal was putting the young men on the spot.

Parats is the verb for "breaking away" noted last in 3.1 as "frequent."

Vs. 11: Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?"

Indeed, Nabal knew about David and his followers, but the reasons for his rejection of them isn't clear; most likely it wasn't anything political but simply due to his innate churlishness.

Vs. 12: So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this.

Presumably the young men behaved in accord with their good reputation, having been instructed by David to do so regardless of Nabal's response. At least they could give a favorable impression to others whom they have met.

Vs. 13: And David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword!" And every man of them girded on his sword; David also girded on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David while two hundred remained with the baggage.

David was already on edge because of Saul pursuing him, so it isn't surprising that he was ready to take action against Nabal. "Baggage" is *kely* noted last in 21.8 and can refer to weapons. It was just as important to leave a

large contingent of men with these valuable stores as engaging in battle since David was in a remote area and fearful not just of Saul but of any Philistine raiders.

Vs. 14: But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed at them.

The fact that one of Nabal's men informed Abigail reveals that many who were under him sympathized with David and his cause. Perhaps at the root of Nabal's anger was that he was losing valuable workers to David and wanted to put a stop to it.

Barak is the verb for "salute" and fundamentally means to bless as noted in 15.13. Nabal's response was to rail at David (*hyt*), this verb being noted last in 15.19 as to swoop, one of three biblical uses, all in First Samuel. *Hyt* is an apt description of how Nabal "swooped" down in his intense anger upon David's messengers.

Vs. 15: Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields as long as we went with them;

Me'od is an adverb for "very" and as mentioned earlier, connotes excessiveness (cf. vs. 2). *Kalam* is the verb for "suffered (no) harm" found last in vs. 7. *Paqad* is the verb for "missed" (cf. vs. 7). In other words, this verse is a repeat of vs. 7.

Vs. 16: they were a wall to us both by night and by day all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

David had been a shepherd and thus had first hand knowledge of sheep and how to deal with them, shepherds included. While Nabal's shearers were with these men they were a "wall" or *chomah* of protection. "They fastened his (Saul) body to the wall of Beth-shan" [31.10]. *Chomah* is used with the preposition *hal-*, literally, "a wall upon us."

Vs. 17: Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is so ill-natured that one cannot speak to him."

The anonymous young man who is speaking with Abigail must have had a good relationship with her, and she with others in her husband's service, a way to counter his churlishness. He asks her to both "know" and "consider" (*yadah* and *ra'ah* or 'to see,' the pair used in 24.11).

He speaks of "evil" or *rahah* (cf. 24.17) which had been "determined" or *kalah* (cf. 20.33) against Nabal, a rather bold way of speaking to his master's wife.

Ben-helyhal translates as "ill-natured" which literally reads "son of worthlessness." Refer to 10.27 where "worthless men" is rendered *beney belyahal* or literally "sons of Belial," a way of expressing a wicked person. *Belial* consists of *bely* and *yahahl* or "not," "without" and "benefit."

Vs. 18: Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep ready dressed and five measures of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs and laid them on asses.

The bold words of the anonymous servant galvanised Abigail. The young man mirrored what she already thought and knew it was time to take action or to make haste, the verb being *mahar* (cf. 17.48). Chances are the servant helped Abigail and may have come along with her, thus joining David's forces. She prepared quickly a lot of provisions and had to do it quietly without attracting notice to herself.

Vs. 19: And she said to her young men, “Go on before me; behold, I come after you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

Since the servant was in league with Abigail, he informed her of other like-minded servants which is why “young men” is in the plural. Chances are that if Abigail informed Nabal he would have taken out his wrath against her.

Vs. 20: And as she rode on the ass and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her; and she met them.

This verse gives the impression that Abigail was on her own. Perhaps she was, but the young men mentioned in vs. 20 must have followed at a discreet distance since women, let alone a single man, never travelled alone. Nabal’s workers were shepherds and shearers which meant they were scattered throughout the area of Carmel. Thus it was relatively easy for those supporting Abigail to gather at a pre-arranged time and space to make good their escape.

Vs. 21: Now David had said, “Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good.

Sheqer is a noun for “in vain” and means a lie or fraud. “Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief” [Ps 7.14]. The verb *shamar* (“guarded,” cf. 21.5) comes right after it and is similar in sound.

The preposition *tachat* translates as “for” which more technically means “under.”

Fortunately Abigail comes on the scene just as David was planning to attack Nabal which would have alienated any potential followers.

Vs. 22: God do so to David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.”

The verb *yasaph* (cf. 23.4) translates as “more also” and fundamentally means to increase.

“Male” in Hebrew literally means “one who urinates against a wall,” the verb being *shatan*. “Truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male” [vs. 34].

Vs. 23: When Abigail saw David, she made haste and alighted from the ass and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground.

This verse is reminiscent of Isaac seeing Rebekah for the first time, Gen 24.63-64, and could take place in the evening as with this parallel passage.

The haste (*mahar*, cf. vs. 18) could mean that Abigail rode more quickly or dismounted more quickly. She was quite embarrassed at the behavior of her husband which contributed to her obeisance to David as well as a certain nervousness. Regardless, she was relieved at last to have escaped Nabal’s oppressiveness.

Vs. 24: She fell at his feet and said, “Upon me alone, my Lord, be the guilt; pray let your handmaid speak in your ears and hear the words of your handmaid.

Now begins a lengthy entreaty that continues through vs. 31. Abigail has no need to rehearse her words on her journey; they come out spontaneously. Abigail attributes “guilt” or *hawon* (cf. 20.8) to herself which certainly is not true. Nowadays we might call this a kind of guilt by association, she being under the thumb of her husband

Nabal.

Na- translates as “pray” as in vs 11. Abigail’s intent on speaking with David is expressed by wanting to speak in his ears and hearing her words.

Vs. 25: Let not my Lord regard this ill-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him; but I your handmaid did not see the young men of my Lord, whom you sent.

“Regard” is rendered in Hebrew literally as “do not (*na-*) place his heart” or *lev* (cf. vs. 5). The object is *belyahal* noted in vs. 17, also “ill-natured.”

Abigail explains what doesn’t have to be explained, Nabal’s name which is “folly,” a fact clear to David and to virtually everyone else, *nevalah* being the noun. “He has wrought folly in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter” [Gen 34.7].

Vs. 26: Now then, my Lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, seeing the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from taking vengeance with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my Lord be as Nabal.

Manah is the verb for “restrained” as in Ps 21.2: “And have not withheld the request of his lips.”

“Bloodguilt” is rendered literally as “from going (*bo’*) in blood.”

Yashah is the verb for “taking vengeance” which is rendered as saving, the meaning of this word (cf. 23.2).

Abigail wishes the enemies of David to be like Nabal...foolishness...which refers, of course to King Saul as well as to her husband, a lesser threat. Certainly included are the Philistines.

Vs. 27: And now let this present which your servant has brought to my Lord be given to the young men who follow my Lord.

Berakah is the noun for “present” which more specifically means a blessing. “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord” [30.26]. While uttering these words Abigail refers to herself as a “servant” or *shiphchah* (cf. 8.16), more properly a maid servant.

“Follow” is rendered literally as “going in the feet” which refers to David’s young men who had given support to Nabal’s shearers without him appreciated it.

Vs. 28: Pray forgive the trespass of your handmaid; for the Lord will certainly make my Lord a sure house because my Lord is fighting the battles of the Lord; and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live.

“Pray” is rendered as *na-* (cf. vs. 25) with the verb *nasa’* (‘forgive,’ cf. 24.16) which fundamentally means to lift, to raise, here concerning Abigail’s “trespass” or *peshah* (cf. 24.11). Abigail is referring to herself as a “handmaid” or *amah* (cf. 1.18). Compare with *shiphchah* in vs. 27 which usually refers to the mistress of a household and can include a female slave.

When Abigail refers to David eventually becoming a “sure house,” she has in mind his ongoing conflict with Saul, that he will prevail despite the present gloomy situation compounded by Nabal’s activities. The verb *aman* is used for “sure” (cf. 22.14).

Rahah is the noun for “evil” (cf. vs. 17) and refers to David’s life which is rendered literally as “your days.”

Vs. 29: If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling.

Radaph is the verb for “pursue” noted last in 23.25 and probably was in Abigail’s mind when she uttered these words, namely, King Saul. *Nephesh* or “soul” (cf. 23.20) translates as “life.”

“Bound” (*tsarar*) is found last in 13.6 with the alternate meaning of to be in straits and is the root for “bundle” or *tsror*. “My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts” [Sg 1.13]. In the verse at hand, *tsror* is in divine “care” which isn’t mentioned in the Hebrew text.

Abigail must have had in mind David’s victory over Goliath when referring to a “sling” (cf. 17.50).

Vs. 30: And when the Lord has done to my Lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel,

Two words for “Lord:” *YHWH* (cf. 22.10) and *’adony* (cf. 24.8), the divine name proper and “lord” as applicable both to God and a human ruler or overseer.

Nagyd means “prince” as in 13.14.

Vs. 31: my Lord shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for my Lord taking vengeance himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my Lord, then remember your handmaid.”

This verse concludes Abigail’s lengthy plea begun in vs. 24 to which David payed the closest attention. Surely while she was speaking David was eager to break in but restrained himself until he knew Abigail was finished.

Puqah is the noun for “grief,” the only mention of this word in the Bible.

Mikshul is the noun for “pangs” and fundamentally means a stumbling block. “Nor put a stumbling block before the blind” [Lev 19.14]. In the verse at hand, it is with *lev* or “conscience” (heart, cf. vs. 25), i.e., stumbling block of the heart.

Chinam (cf. 19.5) also means “in vain.”

Yashah is the verb for “taking vengeance” as in vs. 26.

A second pair of “Lord” as in the previous verse. Abigail concludes with a plea to be looked after which, as she intends, might end with her marrying David who certainly wishes this to be the case.

Vs. 32: And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!

At last David speaks after having listened so intently to Abigail’s plea, and he continues through vs. 34. Though nothing is said about marriage by either one, it is obvious they were attracted to each other.

“This day” heightens the tension just experienced and its immediate relief although the problem of what to do about Nabal remained.

Vs. 33: Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand!

Taham is the noun for “discretion” noted last in 21.13 as “behavior” and fundamentally refers to the sense of taste. Abigail had many opportunities over the years to develop this sensitivity, having suffered so much at the hands of her husband.

Kala’ is the verb for “kept” found last in 6.10 but not noted there. As in vs. 26, both “bloodguilt” and “avenging” (*yashah*) are mentioned.

Vs. 34: For as surely as the Lord the God of Israel lives who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had made haste and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.”

Even though David loves Abigail and is moved by her decision to take refuge with him, he would have taken the drastic step of killing her along with her churlish husband. David attributes his restraint to the Lord, the verb being *manah* noted last in vs. 26. *Manah* pertains to “hurting” or *raha* noted last in 12.25 and means to act or to do in a wicked fashion.

“Male” is rendered as *shatan* (to urinate) as in vs. 22, a derogatory way of referring to someone.

Vs. 35: Then David received from her hand what she had brought him; and he said to her, “Go up in peace to your house; see, I have hearkened to your voice, and I have granted your petition.”

Shalom is the noun for “peace” as in vs. 6. David doesn’t give the reason why Abigail has to return home, but he figures that for the interim it would be better for her to be there. We don’t have her response but can assume, especially after her passionate appeal, that it was painful to do so.

Nasa’ is the verb for “granted” (cf. vs. 28) which means to raise and pertains to Abigail’s “petition” or *peny* which literally means “face” (cf. 13.12). In other words, “I have lifted up your face.”

Vs. 36: And Abigail came to Nabal; and, lo, he was holding a feast in his house like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light.

Mishte is the noun for “feast” and implies heavy drinking. “When Abner came with twenty men to David in Hebron, David made a feast for Abner and the men who were with him” [2Sam 3.20]. Comparing this feast to that of a king showed the wealth at Nabal’s disposal but more so, as reflective of his odious character.

Nabal’s “heart” (*lev*, cf. vs. 31) was “merry,” the common adjective for “good,” *tov* (cf. vs. 8), a way of saying he was stone “drunk” (*shakar*, cf. 1.13).

“Nothing” is rendered in Hebrew literally as “not a word (*davar*, cf. 24.6) small or great.” Abigail was used to putting up with such drinking bouts despite the pain and shame they caused her. Her restraint from saying anything until the next day was a familiar tactic she employed, one she had learned long ago to keep her sanity and perhaps from being subject to a beating.

Vs. 37: And in the morning when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.

The description of Nabal's return to sobriety ('wine had gone out') is a vivid one and suggests he may have used artificial means to make him sober quickly. However, this time it was too much. Nabal died of his drunkenness, rather, his "heart" (*lev*, cf. vs. 36) had died "within" him, *qerev* (cf. 18.10) being suggestive of the very center of anything.

Nabal is described as having become as a stone which is pretty much what he had been throughout life.

Vs. 38: And about ten days later the Lord smote Nabal; and he died.

Many years ago the heart of Nabal had died. Now it was time for his body to follow suite, the Lord having finished him off with the verb *nagaph* being used (cf. 7.10) which suggests putting to route, of driving away. These ten days must have been the longest and most trying for Abigail as she tried to put on a normal face while secretly rejoicing at the death of such a brutal husband.

Vs. 39: When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal and has kept back his servant from evil; the Lord has returned the evil-doing of Nabal upon his own head." Then David sent and wooed Abigail to make her his wife.

Since the Lord was responsible for smiting Nabal, it was he who had informed David of his death. *Ryv* is the verb for "avenged" (cf. 24.15) used twice here with the noun *cherpah* or "insult" (cf. 17.26). Reference to Nabal's hand indicates a certain intimacy, here of the negative kind, where he had been responsible directly for David's woes.

Rahah is the noun for "evil" used twice here (cf. vs. 28).

The verb *davar* (cf. 20.40), so often as referring to speaking, is used for "wooed."

Vs. 40: And when the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife."

This must have happened quite soon after Nabal's death. In the previous verse David "wooed" (*davar*) Abigail whereas here his servants "said" or spoke (*davar*) with her to be his wife. In other words, the two had contact before this. Abigail had to dispose of her husband's possessions as well as people who had worked for them. Either they sought work elsewhere or joined David. As for Nabal's possessions, we have no word what David may have done with them. Chances are he disposed of them wisely and at the same time retained some of Nabal's fortune to procure supplies, etc.

Vs. 41: And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord."

As noted earlier, the verb *qum* ('rose,' 24.20) suggests an immediate response to a situation as here with Abigail. *Shachah* is the verb for "bowed" (cf. 24.8) which is a sign of submission, a gesture Abigail does in accord with custom. However, in her case it reveals the long term abuse at the hands of her husband, Nabal, something David was keenly aware of. Chances are David submitted to her washing his feet. To refuse would cause her further harm so soon after the death of Nabal.

Vs. 42: And Abigail made haste and rose and mounted on an ass, and her five maidens attended her; she went after the messengers of David and became his wife.

Mahar is the verb for "made haste" (cf. vs. 23). Here the verb *qum* as noted in the previous verse follows

whereas in many instances it would come before. Both verbs reveal the eagerness of Abigail to accept David's invitation for marriage as well as to escape the environment in which she suffered for so long.

"Attended" is rendered literally as "went to her feet."

Vs. 43: David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and both of them became his wives.

Ahinoam is mentioned in 14.50 as Saul's wife though it is not certain if the woman here is the same person. She is mentioned in a matter-of-fact way suggesting that this marriage was more political in nature than the one with Abigail. Although Nabal was very rich, nothing is said about the transference of his wealth to David through Abigail.

Vs. 44: Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

This chapter concludes with Saul giving Michal or David's wife to another person. He did this without consulting David which must have been a relief of no longer being affiliated with the royal family. This is the only mention of Palti in the Bible.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Vs. 1: Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding himself on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the east of Jeshimon?"

The familiar connective *w-* as "then" gets this new chapter off to a quick start by returning to the familiar yet now wearisome struggle between Saul and David. Apparently the Ziphites, last mentioned in 23.19, hadn't lost interest in David or more specifically, of receiving some kind of recompense from Saul for their information.

Vs. 2: So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, with three thousand chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

Saul took the Ziphites at their word, for this verse begins with yet another instance of *qum* (cf. 25.42) as indicative of taking action. In this instance, the *qum* of Saul must have been painful and wearisome, again on the hunt for David. Now Saul takes a more substantial force of "chosen" men, that is, men whom he could rely upon and not desert to David's side. In the meanwhile Saul certainly heard of Nabal's fate and wondered if the same might be in store for him.

Vs. 3: And Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah which is beside the road on the east of Jeshimon. But David remained in the wilderness; and when he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness,

Saul learned about what happened to Nabal and that many of his servants had joined David. As for Hachilah, David had encamped there earlier (cf. 23.10) which is why Saul wanted to do the same, one less place of refuge for David. Obviously David has scouts following Saul's movements who were less flexible than the loosely organized men under David's command. Thus he was able to detect any movement by Saul as when he left Hachilah for the wilderness or desert.

Vs. 4: David sent out spies and learned of a certainty that Saul had come.

We have here mention of "spies" or *ragal*, the verbal root for *regel* or "feet" (cf. 23.22). "But Absalom sent secret messengers throughout all the tribes of Israel" [2Sam 13.10].

The words “of a certainty” are rendered as *‘el-nakon* or something like “to that which is certain” or *kun* (cf. 23.23).

Vs. 5: Then David rose and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David saw the place where Saul lay with Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; Saul was lying within the encampment while the army was encamped around him.

As with most examples, this instance of *qum* signifies not literal rising but preparing oneself (cf. vs. 2).

Note two uses of *maqom* (‘place,’ cf. 21.2). We have no information as to how David sneaked into this “encampment” or *mahgal* which applies to a fortification constructed of wagons brought together or piled together noted in 17.20. Mention of the army about Saul only heightens this drama.

Vs. 6: Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Joab's brother Abishai the son of Zeruah, “Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?” And Abishai said, “I will go down with you.”

Presumably Ahimelech and Abishai were trusted men whom David asked to accompany him into the midst of Saul’s encampment. Only Abishai agreed whereas we have no response from Ahimelech. Later Abishai, along with Joab, is responsible for killing Abner, now Saul’s commander of the army.

Vs. 7: So David and Abishai went to the army by night; and there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the army lay around him.

When David saw Saul’s spear nearby surely he was reminded of the two times Saul had tried to kill him, perhaps that very weapon. To slay Saul with that spear would have been sweet revenge for David, but he refused. At the same time he couldn’t help but gaze at Saul’s entire army helpless before him.

Vs. 8: Then said Abishai to David, “God has given your enemy into your hand this day; now therefore let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice.”

Sagar is the verb for “given into (your) hand” noted last in 23.20 as “surrender.” Abishai couldn’t resist slaying Saul with the very spear he had attempted to slay David. Although in the next verse David doesn’t concur, surely he was tempted to allow Abishai to do this.

Vs. 9: But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him; for who can put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?”

Shachat translates as “destroy” noted last in 14.32, a powerful verb meaning to annihilate and connotes acting wickedly. David reminds Abishai that Saul is the “anointed” of the Lord or *mashyach* as he had done in another incident in 24.6.

Naqah means “be guiltless” as well as to be pure or innocent. “Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression” [Ps 19.13].

Earlier Samuel had anointed David so he was naturally cautious of causing harm to Saul. If he allowed Abishai to kill Saul, what could prevent him or someone else to kill David on some later occasion?

Vs. 10: And David said, “As the Lord lives, the Lord will smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle and perish.

Nagaph is the verb for “smite” noted last in 25.38 and connotes being driven out. David knows that Saul will perish as a result of his attitude, most likely at the hands of the Philistines who were a constant threat to Israel.

Vs. 11: The Lord forbid that I should put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed; but take now the spear that is at his head and the jar of water, and let us go.”

Chalylah is the word for “forbid” noted last in 24.6 and expressive of David’s fear of harming Saul which, as pointed out in the previous verse, can apply to himself. However, David is keen on taking Saul’s spear which he must have valued as much as the sword of Goliath.

Vs. 12: So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head; and they went away. No man saw it or knew it nor did any awake; for they were all asleep because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

Tardemah is the noun for “deep sleep,” the same noun used when the Lord took a rib from Adam’s side to fashion a woman. “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man” [Gen 2.21]. In the verse at hand, *naphal* is the verb for “had fallen” which adds to the profound nature of this sleep, as though being unconscious.

Vs. 13: Then David went over to the other side and stood afar off on the top of the mountain with a great space between them;

Because of the *tardemah* or “deep sleep” the Lord made to fall upon Saul and his troops David could make his way at a leisurely pace to the mountain. Before he cried out from this safe distance he must have taken in the sight of an entire army encamped with the intent of coming after him, the campfires flickering in the darkness.

Vs. 14: and David called to the army and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, “Will you not answer, Abner?” Then Abner answered, “Who are you that calls to the king?”

Now at a safe distance David called out to the men below in Saul’s camp signalling out Abner, Saul’s commander, who was responsible for his master’s safety. David couldn’t have done this while everyone was in that *tardemah* which means the Lord lifted it in exchange for a normal sleep so they could be roused by David.

Vs. 15: And David said to Abner, “Are you not a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your Lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your Lord.

David addresses Abner instead of Saul. He wishes to intimidate Saul indirectly by saying that Abner failed to protect his king. It was embarrassing enough for Abner as well as Saul to hear this, let alone the regular troops whose confidence in their leaders was shaken. *Shachat* is the verb for “destroy” noted last in vs. 9.

Vs. 16: This thing that you have done is not good. As the Lord lives, you deserve to die because you have not kept watch over your Lord, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is and the jar of water that was at his head.”

Davar is the noun for “thing” found last in 25.36.

“Deserve to die” is rendered literally in Hebrew as “sons of death.” Although Abner is chiefly responsible for protecting Saul, in a way he can’t be blamed because that “deep sleep” of vs. 12 had fallen upon everyone. They must have felt it coming on and probably tried to resist but were unable since it came directly from the Lord. Abner knew that Saul’s spear was the same in two attempts to kill David and wished he could have used it for the same purpose.

Vs. 17: Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my Lord, O king."

Nakar is the verb for "recognized" which has multiple meanings such as to estrange, to look at something, to know how (cf. 23.7 as 'has given'). Indeed, this question by Saul was one of recognition and estrangement at the same time.

Vs. 18: And he said, "Why does my Lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? What guilt is on my hands?"

Although we don't hear about it, Abner and especially the soldiers in his command, could not but help David speaking aloud like this, a voice in the darkness, which made it all the heavier. Chances are many soldiers were seeking ways to desert Saul and come over to David's side. In fact, David may have returned with some in his company.

Radaph is the verb for "pursue" (cf. 25.29), and *rahah* is the noun for "guilt" usually translated as "evil" (cf. 35.29).

Vs. 19: Now therefore let my Lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is the Lord who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering; but if it is men, may they be cursed before the Lord, for they have driven me out this day that I should have no share in the heritage of the Lord, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.'

David calls himself a "servant" or *heved* (cf. 25.10) not so much for the sake of Saul but for those soldier in the camp that they recognize what he is doing.

Suth is the verb for "stirred up" which also means to instigate or to stimulate. First David wisely attributes the difficulty to the Lord and then to men, careful to omit Saul. This would give Saul time to reflect on his actions and make him look bad before his army. As for *suth*, cf. 1KG 21.25: "There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab whom Jezebel his wife incited." David proposes an "offering" or *minchah* (cf. 10.27) which isn't specified but most likely an animal sacrifice.

The verb *ruach* (verbal root for spirit) translates as "accept" but fundamentally means to smell. I.e., the Lord will smell David's proposed offering. "And the Lord smelled as sweet savour" [Gen 8.21].

In contrast to the Lord whom David posits as possibly stirring up Saul against him are men whom David wishes to be "cursed" (*arar*, cf. 14.28). So without mentioning Saul by name, David includes him as well as those in his service such as Abner. *Garash* is the verb for "driven out" which connotes plundering or spoiling. "Behold, a people has come out of Egypt...perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out" [Num 22.11]. Should this occur through human means, David will "have no share" in the Lord's heritage, the verb being *saphach* (cf. 2.36). The noun for "heritage" is *nachalah* (cf. 10.1). To serve other gods is the ultimate rejection by men which is the exact opposite of *nachalah*.

Vs. 20: Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the Lord; for the king of Israel has come out to seek my life like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."

Perhaps David had in mind the Lord's words to Cain just after he slew his brother, Abel: "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" [Gen 4.10]. In the verse at hand, David's blood would be "from the presence of th Lord" or literally "from before the face of the Lord."

Instead of the English “partridge” the Hebrew text has “flea” as in 24.14. There is an advantage of being a flea, however, for it is so small and easily can get lost in the mountains just as David has been doing while staying one step ahead of Saul. However, Saul deserves some credit, if you will, for his single-minded determination.

Vs. 21: Then Saul said, “I have done wrong; return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm because my life was precious in your eyes this day; behold, I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly.”

Saul repents just as he had done in his last encounter in the cave, but David is fully aware that it is insincere. His words “my son” must have galled David to a certain degree. *Chata’* (cf. 19.4) is the verb for “have done wrong” often translated as to sin and literally as to miss the mark.

Rahah is the verb for “do (you) harm” noted last in 25.34.

Nephesh translates as “life” and more accurately means “soul” (cf. 25.29) which Saul calls “precious” or *yaqar* (verb, cf. 18.30).

Saul also accuses himself of having “played the fool,” *sakal* connoting a certain wickedness instead of ignorance. “But now, O Lord, I pray, take away the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly” [2Sam 24.10]. He also claims to have “erred” or *shagah* where in 21.14 it is rendered as “is mad.” Saul goes to the extreme here for the verb *ravah* (cf. 2.3) means to increase coupled with the adverb *me’od* or “excessively” (cf. 25.15).

Vs. 22: And David made answer, “Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

David used Saul’s spear, perhaps the very one he attempted to kill David on two occasions, as a taunt which must have embarrassed Saul exceedingly. At the same time Saul was relieved that the distance between them both was too great for David to cast it at him.

Vs. 23: The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put forth my hand against the Lord’s anointed.

The verb *shuv* means “rewards” and more usually refers to turning back as noted last in 15.11. In the verse at hand it refers to a person’s “righteousness” and “faithfulness” or *tsadaqah* (cf. 12.7) and *’emunah* (the only occurrence in First Samuel). “A God of truth without iniquity” [Dt 32.4].

The two verbs *shalach* and *bo’* (cf. 24.19 and 25.26) are rendered literally as “I will (not) go to send” with reference to David’s hand “against” (b-, in) the “anointed” (*mashyach*, cf. vs. 9). After all, David was *mashyach* by Samuel but thus far known to a few people such as his family.

Vs. 24: Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.”

Hineh or “behold” (cf. 24.20) is a way David gets Saul to shake of his illusory repentance and to pay attention. *Gadal* is the verb for “precious” (cf. 20.41) and fundamentally means “to be great” here in reference to *nephesh* or “life” (cf. vs. 21).

Natsal means “may he deliver” (cf. 17.37) in conjunction with “tribulation” or *tsarah* (cf. 10.19). The tribulation David has in mind refers, of course, to Saul whom David knows will continue to pursue him.

Vs. 25: Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.” So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

These are the last words from Saul to David who again calls him “my son.” *Yakal* is the verb for “succeed” which also means to prevail and found last in 17.39 but not noted there. Saul must have had in mind that David will succeed him as king of Israel which leads to their final encounter. David’s ears must have echoed with these words as both men went their own ways never to meet again.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Vs. 1: And David said in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.”

Once again the conjunctive *w-* (‘and’) plays an important role, here to show the connection between the two chapters and that David uttered these words to himself (literally as ‘to’ or ‘el his ‘heart’ or *lev*, cf. 25.37) possibly en route back from his encounter with Saul. Despite the protestations of Saul, David could see through him and that he would not rest until he was dead.

Saphah is the verb for “perish” which in 12.25 reads as “swept away” which is more accurate. “By the hand of Saul” can apply to anyone who kills David but given the enmity between the two, David has in mind Saul himself.

Baqash is the verb for “seeking” noted last in 24.2.

Malat is the verb for “escape” (cf. 22.1) which here refers to the Philistines, Israel’s mortal, long-term enemy, indicative of David’s desperation. Indeed, Saul would “despair” of seeking him there, the verb being *ya’ash* signifying to be without hope and with five other biblical references one of which is Is 57.10: “But you did not say, ‘It is hopeless.’” Chances are that David had entertained this option all along and wondered if he could bring some trusted followers. He didn’t share this desperation lest he demoralize those under his command, but now was the time to make known his plans.

Vs. 2: So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath.

David certainly must have had some reliable intelligence that he and his troop of soldiers could carry out his plan.

As pointed out several times earlier, *qum* (‘arose,’ cf. 26.5) doesn’t necessarily mean a literal rising but putting into action what one had prepared. Here it is used with the verb *havar* (‘went over,’ cf. 16.8) which is more than moving from one place to another; rather, it’s more an entering into hostile territory, especially with six hundred men.

Earlier David had fled to Achish in Gath (cf. 21.10-15) to escape Saul after having taken the sword of Goliath who himself was from Gath. When David’s identity was discovered, he feigned madness. Now David decides to approach this very same man but must have sent out messengers to alert the Philistines as to his benign intention.

Vs. 3: And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow.

Ahinoam is mentioned last in 25.43. No account is given as to why Achish agreed to allow David and his six hundred men access to his territory. Not only that, he allowed the household of each man which swelled the

number considerably. Perhaps Abigail, former wife of Nabal, had some positive influence with Achish of Gath since her husband was very rich and traded with the Philistines.

David's reconciliation with Achish could have been a ploy by the king. If he took the gamble of enlisting David in his service, without a doubt it would be a blow against Saul. Even though David slew Goliath of Gath, Achish was more interested in settling his real score with King Saul.

Vs. 4: And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he sought for him no more.

Saul must have been astounded to hear about David's decision. It worried him considerably because David could ally himself with Achish and be a formidable enemy in the field. The verb *yasaph* (cf. 25.22) is used as "(no) more" and connotes a constant increase which here means a cessation of his fanatical pursuit of David.

Vs. 5: Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be given me in one of the country towns that I may dwell there; for why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?"

Here King Achish and David exchange words in a matter-of-fact way. Perhaps David explained to Achish why not long ago he had feigned madness, was willing to forgive this sleight of hand, and see how he could use David to his own advantage.

Chen is the noun for "favor" noted last in 25.8. David translates, if you will, this favor into a wise proposal of not being a threat to Achish in his own royal city. "Country towns" translates literally as cities of the field."

Vs. 6: So that day Achish gave him Ziklag; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

Ziklag is located in the territory between the Philistines and Judah, a somewhat neutral place, given the ongoing warfare between the two peoples. Certainly Saul was dying of curiosity to know what David and his men were doing there, having taken over an entire town.

Vs. 7: And the number of the days that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.

During this relatively brief time David and his men had time to prove himself to King Achish. Chances are there were no conflicts between Saul and the Philistines, Saul reluctant to engage a newly found enemy in alliance with an ancient one.

Shortly (cf. 28.3) Samuel will die. One can only wonder what he thought about all this from his disengaged vantage point.

Vss. 8-10: Now David and his men went up and made raids upon the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites; for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old as far as Shur to the land of Egypt. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the asses, the camels and the garments and came back to Achish. When Achish asked, "Against whom have you made a raid today?" David would say, "Against the Negeb of Judah," or "Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites," or, "Against the Negeb of the Kenites."

Apparently these peoples were more distance from Saul's sphere of influence though he had done battle with the Amalekites earlier (cf. 15.2+). One can only wonder what was going through his mind as he got word of this. If the Philistines were putting David to work killing off their adversaries, chances are that soon they would attack him.

Achish asked David about one of his raids, the tone of his question seeming casual and one that was asked frequently ('Against whom have you made a raid today?'). Apparently he gave David pretty much free reign to fight against people he chose as long as they were enemies of the Philistines. We hear no word as to what David's own men thought, let alone the Philistines whose champion Goliath David had slain not long ago.

Vs. 11: And David saved neither man nor woman alive to bring tidings to Gath, thinking, "Lest they should tell about us and say, 'So David has done.'" Such was his custom all the while he dwelt in the country of the Philistines.

The verb "to live" (*chayah*) is used for "saved alive," and "tidings" is not in the Hebrew text. All the while in Achish's service David had his own goal in mind. First he wished to be safe from Saul as well as eliminate foes of the Philistines which hopefully would weaken them. And so David and Achish worked toward the same end but with different goals in mind.

Mishpat is the noun for "custom" noted last in 10.25 and has the fundamental meaning of judgment.

Sadeh (cf. 20.11) is the noun for "country" and more commonly the one for field as found in vs. 5 but not noted there.

Vs. 12: And Achish trusted David, thinking, "He has made himself utterly abhorred by his people Israel; therefore he shall be my servant always."

After only some sixteen months in his service David had proved himself worthy of Achish's trust, '*aman* being the verb used here (cf. 25.28). '*Amar* is the verb for "thinking" noted last in 20.26 in a similar fashion.

"Utterly abhorred" is rendered by use (twice) of the verb *ba'ash* noted last in 13.4. In many ways Achish is correct...not just with regard to Israel but the six hundred troops who came with David to Achish. Certainly everyone was wondering what had happened to him. Obviously David himself was concerned about digging himself into a hole from which he couldn't extricate himself. Thus David was in danger of becoming a "servant" (*heved*, cf. 26.19) to Achish or more accurately, his slave from which there would be no escape.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Vs. 1: In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Understand that you and your men are to go out with me in the army."

Qavats is the verb for "gathered" noted last in 25.1 used with the preposition *b-* ('in') prefaced to Israel, i.e., "in Israel," which intimates the intensity of the impending conflict. We have no details as to why the Philistines attacked Israel this time, perhaps sensing a weakening of its position due to the well known conflict between Saul and David.

Yadah is the verb for "understand" (cf. 25.17) which here pertains to the agreement David had made with Achish to support him in battle.

Vs. 2: David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." And Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

Yadah is the verb for "know" as in the previous verse. David has proved himself to Achish by defeating his enemies. He had proved himself so worthy in this endeavor that Achish appointed him as "bodyguard" which

consists of the verb *shamar* (to guard, cf. 21.25) and the noun *r'osh* (head), that is, one who guards his master's head.

"For life" is rendered literally as "all the days."

Vs. 3: Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the wizards out of the land.

Note two instances of the familiar conjunctive *w-*. The first is used as "now" which here brings in quickly the fact of Samuel's death, almost as in passing. It sets the stage for Saul's encounter with his spirit the night before he fell in battle.

Saphad is the verb for "mourned" noted last in 25.1 and suggests the beating of one's breast.

The second use of *w-* serves to show the sharp contrast between Saul's banishment of mediums and wizards and his secret consultation with one of them. *Ov* is the noun for "mediums" or a soothsayer. "Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" [Lev 19.31]. *Yidhony* is the noun for "wizards" and derives from the verbal root *yadah* (to know). It too is found in Lev 19.31. Both types of people stand in sharp contrast to the prophetic role of Samuel.

Vs. 4: The Philistines assembled and came and encamped at Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa.

Qavats is the verb for "assembled" as in vs. 1 after which they took up their position at Shunem while Saul did the same (*qavats*) with "all Israel." In other words, both sides had been aware of each other's movements and ended up in these respective places. Even though this verse is presented in a matter-of-fact way, there's something ominous about it, that something tragic is about to unfold.

Vs. 5: When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.

In earlier engagements with the Philistines Saul had been fearless but not now. He sensed his impending doom and at this point began to think about the recently deceased Samuel whom he'll contact through a medium. *Charad* is the verb for "trembled" (cf. 21.1) as it pertains to Saul's "heart" (*lev*, cf. 27.1) along with the adverb *me'od* (cf. 26.21) intimating excessiveness. Despite this unnerving experience Saul must have tried his best not to reveal his feelings so as to frighten his men.

Vs. 6: And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

A play on words: the proper name Saul and the verb "inquired," *Sha'ul* and *sha'al* (cf. 25.5). In his desperate state Saul tried every possible means to get divine assistance: "dreams, Urim and prophets" or *chalom* (cf. vs. 15), Urim (cf. 14.41) and *navy'* (cf. 22.5). As for the prophets, perhaps Saul had along with him some men who fit that description though we have no information about them. Chances are some of his troops got wind of this desperation which affected them, wishing they had thrown in their lot with David.

Vs. 7: Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a medium at Endor."

At this point Saul didn't care whether anyone would think ill of him for summoning a "medium" which in Hebrew consists of three words: *'isha* (woman), *bahalah* (mistress) and *'ov* (medium, cf. vs. 3). As for the

second word, there are two other biblical references, 1Kg 17.17 and Nah 3.4, the latter being quoted here: "And all for the countless harlotries of the harlot, graceful and of deadly charms."

Darash is the verb for "inquire" noted last in 9.9, a situation somewhat parallel to the one at hand. Right away Saul's servants responded that a medium was in Endor, this despite Saul having done away with some people. In other words, they were very much alive albeit functioning underground.

Vs. 8: So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you."

Chaphas is the verb for "disguised" noted last in 23.23 as to search out. We don't have the names of the two men who had accompanied Saul during the night, but they were perhaps among just the few who knew of Saul's sortie, certainly not his troops. This anonymous medium of Endor must have known about the nearby encampment of the Philistines and Israelites, perhaps even having had other from both camps come to her in secret.

Qasam is the verb for "divine" noted last in 6.2 used here with the noun 'ov of "spirit" as in the previous verse and which differs from the more common noun *ruach*.

Vs. 9: The woman said to him, "Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?"

Hineh is the word for "behold" noted last in 26.24. Obviously the woman didn't recognize Saul which is to his credit.

Naqash is the verb for "laying a snare" which has four other biblical references, one of which is Ps 9.16: "The wicked are snared in the work of their own hands." Even though the woman took Saul for someone else, she is wary of anyone who approaches her and rightly so. However, she must have known that the impending battle would be crucial for Israel's survival and expected more Israelites to consult her than normal. As for the Philistines, they had no hesitations about dealing with mediums.

Vs. 10: But Saul swore to her by the Lord, "As the Lord lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

Saul mentions the Lord in the context of a medium which reveals that the two elements co-existed for some time despite efforts to eliminate diviners, etc.

Hawon is the noun for "punishment" noted last in 25.24 as "guilt" and *davar* is the noun for "thing" (cf. 26.16).

Vs. 11: Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He said, "Bring up Samuel for me."

The medium speaks here in a professional, almost matter-of-fact tone of voice which reveals a certain familiarity with her occupation. Samuel is reported in vs. 3 as having died, not terribly long ago, so for him to be summoned up was unusual, given his reputation as a prophet.

Vs. 12: When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul, "Why have you deceived me? You are Saul."

We don't know the details about how the woman summoned Samuel, but she seems surprised at having done

so. She must have been taken aback some by the nasty way Samuel looked at Saul just as he had done while alive. Everyone in Israel knew of the bad blood between the two men, so this was nothing new. However, to see it extended after death in Samuel's case was a bit unnerving.

Ramah is the verb for "deceived" noted last in 19.17 and fundamentally means to cast, to throw.

Vs. 13: The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up out of the earth."

This verse calls Saul "king" with the definite article perhaps indicative that he has revealed himself to the medium and that the two were somewhat at ease with each other.

'Elohyim is the word for "god" last mentioned in 14.37, a word that can refer to God or a god. The medium was exposed to spirits (that was her job, summoning them up) as well as to the God of Israel. During that time people didn't seem to have qualms about switching between the two with some ease, indicative of the lengthy struggle of monotheism to take root in Israel. In the verse at hand, this *'elohym* comes from the earth (*'erets*) as opposed to from above or heaven, that is from Sheol or the underworld.

Vs. 14: He said to her, "What is his appearance?" And she said, "An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance.

Apparent the *'elohym* was visible only to the medium, not to Saul, hence the question as to his "appearance" or *to'ar* noted last in 25.3. As soon as the medium said this god had a robe Saul knew it was Samuel. *Mehyl* is the noun for "robe" or a wide, long upper garment worn by both men and women, one which Hannah used to bring to Samuel when he was young (cf. 1.19). Apparently Samuel kept that robe or had one similar to it when he functioned as a prophet, perhaps commemorating the devotion of his mother.

Qadad and *shachah*: "bowed" and "did obeisance." The former implies the giving of reverence (cf. 24.8) and the latter, a sense of submission (cf. 25.41).

Vs. 15: Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" Saul answered, "I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more either by prophets or by dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do."

Ragaz is the verb for "disturbed" noted last in 14.15 as "quaked," more suggestive of the way the medium had summoned Samuel as from a deep sleep. The last thing Samuel wanted to see, even though he was dead, was Saul against whom he had railed for so long.

Tsar is the noun for "distress" (cf. 2.32) coupled with the adverb *me'od* ('great,' cf. vs. 5), the source of which comes from the Philistines "warring against me" or literally, "in (b-) me."

Sur is the verb for "turned away" (cf. 18.13) which is similar in sound to *tsar*, the two being the same. The preposition *hal-* is used, literally as "from upon me."

Because Saul has been thoroughly rejected by the Lord he has turned to Samuel even though Samuel had rejected him just as thoroughly. *Yadah* is used for "to tell" (cf. vs. 3) and means to know, here more accurately as "cause to know." Despite Saul's distress, he must have had a sense of resignation knowing full well that Samuel would reject him just as when he had been alive.

Vs. 16: And Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me since the Lord has turned from you and become your

enemy?

In the previous verse Saul consents to the fact that the Lord has “turned away” (*sur*) from him, a fact which Samuel now acknowledges. Thus the conversation between the two men is ended; in fact it came to an end a long time ago.

Har is the noun for “enemy,” a noun which more fundamentally pertains to a city. “Their cities you have rooted out” [Ps 9.6].

Vs. 17: The Lord has done to you as he spoke by me; for the Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David.

Samuel now reminds Saul of what he had known all along, that he was a mouthpiece of the Lord. *Qarah* is the same verb in 15.28 for “has torn” with respect to the kingdom of Israel. It also includes the noun *reah* as applying to David.

Vs. 18: Because you did not obey the voice of the Lord and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the Lord has done this thing to you this day.

These words addressed to Saul must have been a powerful experience to the medium of Endor. Chances are that after Saul’s death she decided to give up th practice.

Note that Samuel speaks of the “voice” (*qol*, cf. 19.6) of the Lord, not the Lord directly, this being a common expression.

Hasah (cf. 25.2) is the common verb “to do” which translates here as “did (not) carry out.” Its object is the Lord’s “fierce wrath” or *charon* which derives from the verbal root *charah* “to kindle” as in 20.30. “Pour out your indignation upon them and let your burning anger overtake them” [Ps 69.24]. The issue, of course, is Saul’s failure to utterly destroy Amalek and his people as recounted in Chapter Fifteen.

“This day” obviously means here and now, that a connection exists between that incident with Amalek and the present and which will culminate shortly in Saul’s death.

Vs. 19: Moreover the Lord will give Israel also with you into the hand of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the Lord will give the army of Israel also into the hand of the Philistines.”

And so ends for good the dialogue between Samuel and Saul. Nothing is said of how Samuel returned to the place from which he came (‘out of the earth,’ vs. 13) nor if he required the assistance of the medium. At least Saul could take solace that he will be joined in death with his sons and most of his army. “With me” or with Samuel, however, is not so consoling.

Vs. 20: Then Saul fell at once full length upon the ground, filled with fear because of the words of Samuel; and there was no strength in him, for he had eaten nothing all day and all night.

In other words, Saul simply collapsed after his dialogue with Samuel. The adverb *me’od* (cf. vs. 15) is used for “filled” as with fear.

Koach or “strength” is noted last in 2.9.

Vs. 21: And the woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified she said to him, “Behold, your handmaid has hearkened to you; I have taken my life in my hand and have hearkened to what you have said

to me.

This experience clearly shook the medium who most likely never had experienced such a violent reaction in all the spirits she had conjured up. *Bahal* is the verb for “terrified” and also means to hasten. “And all Israel was dismayed” [2Sam 4.1].

Often a person will speak of himself or herself as a third person, here as a form of obeisance to someone in higher authority. Also it provides an opportunity to put some distance between oneself and that person as well as the event at hand. For example, the medium refers to herself as a “handmaid” or *shiphchah* (cf. 25.28).

Nephesh (fundamentally as ‘soul’) is the noun for “life” noted last in 26.24.

Vs. 22: Now therefore, you also hearken to your handmaid; let me set a morsel of bread before you; and eat that you may have strength when you go on your way.”

The noun *qol* or “voice” is used (cf. vs. 18) is used as in the previous verse with the verb “hearken.”

Koach is the noun for “strength” as in vs. 20.

Although Saul was king of Israel, the medium wished him to leave her house as quickly as possible so as not to be affected by anything he might do, knowing that he was a walking dead man.

Vs. 23: He refused and said, “I will not eat.” But his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he hearkened to their words. So he arose from the earth and sat upon the bed.

As soon as Saul refused to eat his servants and the medium knew they had a problem on their hands, that they had to spirit him away from there as quickly as possible. The servants were at a loss as how to relate to their master knowing full well that he will be dead on the morrow.

Parats is the verb for “urged” noted last in 25.10 as “breaking away.”

We don’t know until now that Saul had been speaking while prone on the ground, face down.

Vs .24: Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house, and she quickly killed it, and she took flour and kneaded it and baked unleavened bread of it,

To go to such lengths as preparing food from scratch, especially at night, shows the good will of the medium plus desire to get on Saul’s good side just in case what Samuel predicted didn’t come true. After all, she was a medium, one of whom Saul had banished from Israel (cf. vs. 9).

Vs. 25: and she put it before Saul and his servants; and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

All present knew what would transpire, so chances are the meal was eaten in silence.

Qum as “rose” is noted last in vs. 2 with the frequent sense of having completed something and being ready to move onto something else, here with an ominous significance. “At night” adds to the drama just as Jn 13.30: “So after receiving the morsel, he (Judas) immediately went out; and it was night.”

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Vs. 1: Now the Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek; and the Israelites were encamped by the fountain which is in Jezreel.

The conjunctive *w-* ('now') serves to make a quick transition from Saul being with the medium of Endor to the beginning of a decisive battle with the Philistines, one that will end in Saul's death. *Qavats* is the verb for "gathered" (cf. 28.4) as it relates to "all their forces" (*machaneh*, cf. 14.15) indicative of a final, decisive encounter with Israel.

Vs. 2: As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish,

Seren is the noun for "lords" noted last in 7.7 which also means a pole meaning that the affairs of government revolve around such a person.

This "passing" (*havar*, cf. 27.2) by both Philistines and the Israelites is a pre-battle ritual of sorts. Each side is attempting to intimidate the other with David in the company of the Philistines but only in the rear. That's a good position from his point of view: to be out of sight of the Israelites.

Vs. 3: the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is not this David, the servant of Saul, king of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years, and since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day."

Sar is the word for "commanders" noted last in 22.14. These military leaders naturally asked about the presence of David's troops towards the rear, a position they could use in battle from which to attack the Philistines. The way they ask the question seems to indicate that David and his men came on the scene suddenly.

Naphal is the verb for "deserted" which fundamentally means to fall and noted last in 26.12. Indeed, Achish had to do some quick explaining.

Vs. 4: But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him; and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Send the man back that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him; he shall not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his Lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here?"

Qatsaph is the verb for "were angry" and fundamentally means to cut off or to divide, a vivid way to describe anger towards a king, that is, Achish. It is intensified by used of the preposition *hal-*, literally as "upon him." "And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker" [Gen 40.2].

Paqad (cf. 25.15) translates as "have assigned" or the place Achish had put in battle order David and his forces. Apparently Achish had David stationed in another place, possible an auxiliary one, instead of being in the rear and hence a potential threat of an attack from that exposed direction.

The Philistines ask a good question, "How could this fellow reconcile himself to his Lord?" After all, David had been in Saul's service and became famous after having slain their champion, Goliath of Gath. *Ratsah* is the verb for "reconcile" which also means to be delighted, to make anyone pleased. "Lord" or *'adony* (cf. 25.3) seems to apply to David's God although that word can refer to a human lord.

When the Philistine lords speak of "heads," they could be referring to him slaying the men under their command as the next verse seems to indicate.

Vs. 5: Is not this David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, `Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?"

This quote from 18.7 by a chorus of women had echoed painfully for some years among the Philistines. Now was the appropriate time for them to reverse this. They had been observing closely the pursuit of David by Saul, knowing that he was squandering valuable resources and hence weakening his position.

Vs. 6: Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the Lord lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign; for I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless the lords do not approve of you.

The words between David and Achish as well as the latter's interaction with the Philistines reveals that the two men had formed a bond of friendship. This is indicated by Achish's use of the adjective *yashar* (cf. 18.26) for "honest" and connotes a sense of righteousness. *Yashar* contrasts with *rahah* ('wrong,' cf. 26.18).

"Do not approve" is rendered literally as "not good you."

Vs. 7: So go back now; and go peaceably that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines."

Achish reluctantly asks David to leave the scene for his own safety, that is, to go "peacefully" or in *shalom* (cf. 25.35).

"May not displease" is rendered literally as "not do evil in the eyes of."

Vs. 8: And David said to Achish, "But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my Lord the king?"

David protests vigorously to Achish. Throughout all this it's difficult to decide whether the bond between the two is genuine friendship or an elaborate ploy by David to insinuate himself into the camp of one of Israel's enemies.

Vs. 9: And Achish made answer to David, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, `He shall not go up with us to the battle.'

David was fortunate that the Philistine commanders didn't kill him on the spot but let him retire. Despite the fact that Saul had been pursuing David, he was not trustworthy enough to join their forces against Saul.

The common adjective *tov* ('good,' cf. 25.36) is used for blameless and here is used in conjunction with *mal'ak* or "angel" (cf. 19.11). *Mal'ak* may be taken in the original sense as a messenger which David had been while in the service of Achish.

Vs. 10: Now then rise early in the morning with the servants of your Lord who came with you; and start early in the morning and depart as soon as you have light."

Achish knew better than David that the Philistine commanders were plotting against David before engaging Saul in battle. That's why he urged David to flee at the first light of day which turned out to be the day of battle.

Vs. 11: So David set out with his men early in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

On one hand it was a relief for the Philistines that David had departed but on the other hand, a threat that he might attack them should it be to his advantage. David had an intimation from the Philistine forces he had seen that they would overpower Saul. He did return to the land of the Philistines but not for long. After the defeat of Israel David would have to make a move to establish himself as king, but for now that was not a possibility. All he could do was wait for the right opportunity.

Chapter Thirty

Vs. 1: Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid upon the Negeb and upon Ziklag. They had overcome Ziklag, and burned it with fire,

This chapter is a kind of lengthy interlude between David's rejection by the Philistines on the eve of battle with Saul. From the previous chapter one got the impression that this battle was to take place the very next day whereas here we have a longer span of days. As for Ziklag, King Achish had given David that city in which to reside.

Vss. 2-3: and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great; they killed no one but carried them off and went their way. Vs. 3: And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.

Although David was shocked to have found Ziklag in ruins, he could take comfort in the fact that the Amalekites didn't slay anyone left in the town. They knew that Achish had given Ziklag to David, hence they might have thought the inhabitants...wives and children of David's retinue...could be bargained for.

Vs. 3 is more or less redundant to the previous one.

Vss. 4-5: Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept, until they had no more strength to weep. David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.

Here *qum* (cf. 28.25) is used in almost a literally sense with regard to a collective weeping, that is, David, his soldiers and those who weren't taken captive by the Amalekites.

Koach (cf. 28.22) is the noun for "strength." At first David may have thought that the Philistines were responsible for this tragedy, but it turned out otherwise. If they were, he would have been powerless to take any action, given his small force of soldiers.

Of particular distress to David was the fact that his two wives were taken captive. The Amalekites knew who they were and could use them as bargaining chips.

Vs. 6: And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

Tsarar is the verb for "distressed" noted last in 25.29 as "bound" which is what distress can do to a person. This verb is used with the adverb *me'od* ('greatly,' cf. 28.20). It was natural for the people, survivors at Ziklag and soldiers, wanting to take vengeance on David for not leaving a sufficient armed guard.

Marar is the verb for "bitter" and here pertains to the collective "soul" (*nephesh*, cf. 28.21) of the people. "For it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone forth against me" [Rt 1.13].

The second sentence provides valuable insight into David's capacity to deal with a tragic situation, a strength he will have to summon later on as king of Israel. *Chazaq* is the verb for "strengthened" (cf. 23.16) which most likely was through ardent prayer and intercession.

Vs. 7: And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David.

This is the second time David asked Abiathar to bring the ephod to him, the last being in 23.9 when Saul sought him in Keilah. The ephod was a priestly garment without sleeves which David put on when he was about to inquire of the Lord.

Vs. 8: And David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I pursue after this band? Shall I overtake them?" He answered him, "Pursue; for you shall surely overtake, and shall surely rescue."

The last time David made this inquiry was in 23.4 when Saul sought David in Keilah as noted in the previous verse. The verb is *sha'al* (cf. vs. 6) as is the case there meaning to ask.

Gedod means "band" found next in vs. 15, this noun referring to a troop of soldiers which usually is small. Immediately the Lord responds to David's request, the means of which is not spelled out as often the case in such circumstances. It is left to the reader to discern how this may take place.

Natsal (cf. 26.24) is the verb for "rescue" used twice, that is, as "surely."

Vss. 9-10: So David set out and the six hundred men who were with him, and they came to the brook Besor where those stayed who were left behind. But David went on with the pursuit, he and four hundred men; two hundred stayed behind who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor.

Since only a handful of people must have survived the attack at Ziklag, David took all his army. He left at Besor these survivors, not wanting to jeopardize them a second time.

David was fairly confident that he could attack the Amalekites with a reduced force, so he decided to leave two hundred behind, that is, those who were exhausted by the forced march. *Pagar* is the verb for "exhausted" which has one other biblical reference, vs. 21.

Vs. 11: They found an Egyptian in the open country and brought him to David; and they gave him bread and he ate, they gave him water to drink,

As happens on occasion, an anonymous person comes on the scene in order to change the course of events. *Sadeh* is the noun for "open country" (cf. 27.11).

Vs. 12: and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. And when he had eaten, his spirit revived; for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights.

Ruach is the noun for "spirit" (cf. 19.23) which means literally that breath returned to this Egyptian who was left as half dead, the reason for his abandonment given in the next verse, a sign of the ruthlessness of the Amalekites. Now David has some concrete information of how far away are these people, three full days.

Vs. 13: And David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago.

“To whom do you belong?” means that right away David knew the Egyptian, a foreigner in those parts, was not there on his own. The verb *hazav* (‘left behind,’ cf. 12.10) implies abandonment, of casting alongside the road.

Vs. 14: We had made a raid upon the Negeb of the Cherethites and upon that which belongs to Judah and upon the Negeb of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.”

Apparently the Egyptian, being a foreigner, didn’t recognize David, hence his forthright description of what the Amalekites had done. *Pashat* is the verb for “made a raid,” and as used in 23.27, implies just that, a raid, compared to a full scale military assault.

Vs. 15: And David said to him, “Will you take me down to this band?” And he said, “Swear to me by God, that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band.”

The Egyptian feared his Amalekite master more than David; if he had known David, he would not have been so willing to give information. *Gedod* is the noun for “band” as in vs. 8.

Vs. 16: And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

Even though the Egyptian had been abandoned for three full days he knew where the Amalekites were, having heard them discuss it beforehand. Apparently they were a large number “spread abroad” or *natash* (cf. 12.22) literally “on the face of all the earth.” The Amalekites had despoiled the Philistines who were marshalled against King Saul and left many of their cities deserted or with a minimal guard. David had come upon them at a perfect time when, despite their large number, they were at their most vulnerable.

Shalal is the noun for “spoil” noted last in 15.21.

Vss. 17-18: And David smote them from twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped except four hundred young men who mounted camels and fled. David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken; and David rescued his two wives.

Nakah is the verb for “smote” (cf. 24.5). The length of battle, which included all night, shows the intensity of David’s anger against the Amalekites. The “young men” (*nahar*, cf. 20.21) most likely weren’t combatants but teenagers or younger who were simply too frightened to participate in the battle.

Natsal is the verb for both “recovered” and “rescued” (cf. vs. 8). The Amalekities having taken David’s two wives gave added impetus to his pursuit.

Vss. 19-20: Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken; David brought back all. David also captured all the flocks and herds; and the people drove those cattle before him and said, “This is David’s spoil.”

Hadar is the verb for “missing.” “By daybreak not one was left who had not crossed the Jordan” [2Sam 17.22]. The length of the battle with the Amalekites described in vs. 17 shows that David had no mercy, this despite the fact that kept casualties from Ziklag were at a minimum. Perhaps despite they having taken his two wives, they could pose a threat to David when it came time to deal with the Philistines who were now facing off with Saul.

Shalal is the noun for “spoil” used in both verses (cf. vs. 16). Although the people attributed the spoil to David, surely he must have distributed it as best as he could to those who had possessed it back in Ziklag.

Vs. 21: Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David and who had been left at the brook Besor; and they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him; and when David drew near to the people he saluted them.

These men saw David approaching from afar off with all the rescued captives and spoil which must have made them feel ashamed for not having gone with them. So when they went out to greet David, they did so with some reluctance, for they were certain he would chide them, if not worse. However, David “saluted” these people which is rendered literally as “said (*sha’al*, cf. vs. 8) to them to peace” (*shalom*, cf. 29.7).

Vs. 22: Then all the wicked and base fellows among the men who had gone with David said, “Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil which we have recovered except that each man may lead away his wife and children, and depart.”

‘Ysh-rah and *belyahal* (cf. 25.25) are rendered as “wicked” and “base fellows,” the former literally as “man evil” (cf. 25.3). They accompanied David more for their own profit and desire for glory. Perhaps some may have fallen in on the bad side of King Saul, hence the reason for their association with David who took them in anyway. This was an awkward situation for David because he couldn’t afford losing any men for what he knew would be a major confrontation with the Philistines. They would be emboldened after their defeat of Saul which was on the horizon.

Vs. 23: But David said, “You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the Lord has given us; he has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us.

David calls these “wicked and base fellows” “brothers,” that is, he was savvy enough in order to gain support for any future crisis which would involved him becoming Israel’s next king.

Shamar is the verb for “preserved” noted last in 28.2.

Vs. 24: Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike.”

David puts on the spot these less than desirable hangers-on before everyone else, *davar* being the noun for “matter” (cf. 28.10).

Cheleq is the noun for “share” which means a portion as well as smoothness. “We have no part in David” [2Sam 20.1]. And so David reconciles everyone involved. Hopefully the “wicked and base fellows” were won over, for their services would be required shortly.

Vs. 25: And from that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.

Choq and *mishpat* translate as “statute” and “decree,” the former meaning that which is appointed or apportioned and the latter (cf. 27.11) fundamentally as judgment. As for *choq*, cf. 1Kg 3.14: “And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments.” Both are to extend from “that day” into the indefinite future, hence “to this day.”

Vss. 26-31: When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah, saying, “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the Lord;” it was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, in Racal, in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, in the cities of the Kenites, in Hormah, in Borashan, in Athach, in Hebron, for all the places where David and his

men had roamed.

These verses end on a positive note against a gloomy backdrop and an equally gloomy future. David goes at considerable length to distribute the spoil from the Amalekites to thirteen places. That is to say, he recalled the inhabitants of each where he had roamed and assisted as many people as possible, a shrewd political move he realized from the beginning. That means the spoil was considerable and for the most part unexpected. David risked arousing the jealousy and ire from those among him, especially the rescued people of Ziklag. Then again, everyone was willing to achieve peace due to the threat Saul was facing, one which would lead to a terrible defeat. At least all these cities and regions would be prepared to absorb the fallout.

Chapter Thirty-One

Vs. 1: Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

This is the last time the conjunctive *w-* begins a new chapter, here to bring First Samuel to a tragic close though with a gesture of hope at the very end. The verb *lachim* ('fought') is used with the preposition *l-*, literally as "fought to Israel" which indicates the intensity of the battle. The Israelites suffered heavy losses while retreating to the high ground of Mount Gilboa where Saul will make his final stand.

Vs. 2: And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

Davaq is the verb for "overtook" (cf. 14.22) suggestive of clinging after as Saul and his sons retreated to the height of Gilboa. With the deaths of Saul's two sons, (cf. 14.49 for Malchishua), the scene is set for the death of Saul. Surely his must have been thinking of his encounter with the medium of Endor the night before, that he would be with Samuel for all eternity, an unpleasant prospect. However, it would be offset by being with his slain sons and army.

Vss. 3-4: The battle pressed hard upon Saul, and the archers found him; and he was badly wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and thrust me through with it lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not; for he feared greatly. Therefore Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

Kavad is the verb for "pressed hard" (cf. 15.30 as 'honored'), the general idea being one of weight, here with the preposition *'el-*, "pressed hard to." It is similar to *davaq* in the previous verse.

During these last minutes of Saul's life he called the Philistines "uncircumcised," a term of contempt for those who were non-Israelites, noted last in 17.36 with reference to Goliath of Gath.

Halal is the verb for "make sport of" noted last in 21.13. At this point most of the Israelites has been slain.

Vss. 5-6: And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. Thus Saul died and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men on the same day together.

"On the same day together" completes the tragedy yet sets the stage for David to become king of Israel. At this juncture, David was unaware of the battle's outcome though he had intimations it would not work out well for Israel. Although in Second Samuel David is careful to reverence Saul, secretly he was relieved and used this occasion to attempt reconciliation with a view toward consolidating his authority.

Vss. 7-8: And when the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley and those beyond the Jordan saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. On the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

The “men of Israel” could refer to those who fled the Philistines out of fear and watched events unfold on the other side of Mount Gilboa, and those “beyond the Jordan” can refer to those who are further afield. At once they spread word about Saul’s defeat...loss of their first king...which made them flee. Nothing is said to where they went, most likely to bordering lands more or less at peace with Israel, while others joined David. Perhaps some even fled to the protection of King Achish who had been sympathetic to David. Possession of their cities by the Philistines meant that the Israelites had little or no chance of returning. They would have to recuperate and figure out a way to do this. Many must have had in mind memory of the Philistines’ capture of the ark of the Lord and subsequent re-capture of it. To reproduce that event, if you will, seemed an impossibility.

Vs. 9: And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and to the people.

The Philistines took their victory in part as revenge against David having slain their champion, Goliath of Gath and the humiliation of having to return the ark of the Lord noted in the last verse. *basar* is the verb for “to carry the good news” (cf. 4.17). Note that such *basar* goes first to the Philistines’ “idols” and then to the people, *hatsav* meaning the former which derives from the verbal root (same spelling) meaning to labor, to fashion (cf. 20.34 for another meaning). Chances are they had in mind Dagon whose image was smashed on the floor of their temple because of the presence of the ark of the Lord (cf. 5.4).

Vs. 10: They put his armor in the temple of Ashteroth; and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

Ashteroth is first mentioned in 7.3. Perhaps the Philistines wished to put Saul’s armor in the temple of Dagon but decided against it since according to 5.5, people who enter the temple “do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.” In other words, that custom was still in effect. Most likely the body of Saul was stripped naked for all to see and intended to remain there until it turned into a skeleton.

Now with Israel’s first king slain, the Philistines had to contend with David. They got word much earlier that Samuel had anointed him and knew he would be a formidable opponent. If they could get him out of the way, Israel would be firmly in their grip.

Vss. 11-13: But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, all the valiant men arose and went all night and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-Shan; and they came to Jabesh and burnt them there. And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead (cf. 11.9) were saved from Nahash the Ammonite by Saul, his first military victory, and never forgot this, a gesture that would please David as king. This loyalty is manifest with their night journey to Beth-Shan. The inference is that these men secretly stole away Saul’s body under the cover of night or just before dawn. With this noble gesture, the book of First Samuel comes to a conclusion.

+ The End +