

### **III. SAMUEL, SAUL & DAVID**

**I SAMUEL 16-31**

**& I CHRONICLES 10**

Samuel sent to anoint a new king

**<sup>1</sup>YHWH said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."**

**<sup>2</sup>Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And YHWH said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to YHWH.' <sup>3</sup>Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you will anoint for me the one whom I point out to you." <sup>4</sup>Samuel did what YHWH commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" <sup>5</sup>He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to YHWH; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.**

**<sup>6</sup>When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely YHWH's anointed is now before YHWH."**

**<sup>7</sup>But YHWH said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for YHWH does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but YHWH looks on the heart." <sup>8</sup>Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has YHWH chosen this one."**

**<sup>9</sup>Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has YHWH chosen this one." <sup>10</sup>Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "YHWH has not chosen any of these."**

This scene is a prophets' introduction to the story of David's rise to power, which begins in verse 14. As earlier with Saul, the prophet plays a critical role, underlining the conviction that it is YHWH who chooses the king.

Verse 1 picks up 15:35. Twice, in words spoken to Saul, Samuel has stated that God had decided to replace Saul as king:

Your kingdom will not continue;  
YHWH has sought out a man after his  
own heart; and YHWH has appointed  
him to be ruler over his people, be-  
cause you have not kept what YHWH  
commanded you.

– 1Samuel 13:14

YHWH has torn the kingdom of Israel  
from you this very day, and has given  
it to a neighbour of yours, who is bet-  
ter than you.

– 1Samuel 15:28

Samuel is told to go on a secret mission to anoint the one whom God has chosen to replace Saul. The private anointing parallels the initial anointing of Saul (9:1 - 10:16).

Jesse is a Judahite of the house of Perez (see 1Chronicles 2:3-12; Ruth 4:17-22), and the grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

The description of Jesse's eldest son, Eliab, reminds us of the description of Saul (see 9:2; 10:23). However, he is not the one chosen. 'YHWH' we are told, 'looks at the heart'(verse 7; see 13:14 above).

Though the young David's handsome appearance is highlighted, it is YHWH's choice that is the determining factor (verse 12).

Verse 13 is variously translated. It is essential to the story that the anointing be in secret (like that of Saul in 10:1), so some suggest that the Hebrew בְּקֶרֶב [b<sup>c</sup>qereb] is better rendered 'away from the presence', rather than 'in the midst'.

Compare Saul's experience of the Spirit in 10:6. David [דָּוִד] is named for the first time.

**<sup>11</sup>Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."**

**<sup>12</sup>He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. YHWH said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." <sup>13</sup>Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of YHWH came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.**

<sup>14</sup>The spirit of YHWH departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from YHWH began to haunt him. <sup>15</sup>Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. <sup>16</sup>Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre; and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play, and you will feel better." <sup>17</sup>So Saul said to his servants, "Find me someone who can play well, and bring him to me." <sup>18</sup>One of the servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skillful in playing, a man of valour, a warrior, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and YHWH is with him." <sup>19</sup>So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David who is with the sheep."

<sup>20</sup>Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a kid, and sent them by his son David to Saul. <sup>21</sup>And David came to Saul, and entered his service. Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer. <sup>22</sup>Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favour in my sight."

<sup>23</sup>And whenever the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take up the lyre and play it, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

Saul exercises the function of king till his death. Verse 14 underlines the fact that he does so without the aid of YHWH's spirit, which now favours David. Later writers have already highlighted actions of Saul that justify God's rejection of him: the offering of sacrifice (13:9), and the failure to kill Agag and destroy all the booty of his victory against the Amalekites (15:9). This earlier account begins here. We have to find why YHWH has given two such different spirits to the king and his young courtier.

Consistent with the view found throughout the Older Testament that God controls everything that happens, the evil spirit is described here as being 'from YHWH' (verse 14).

Those around Saul are concerned with his erratic moods and decide to try to cheer him up by finding someone to soothe him with music. Knowing nothing of the secret anointing already performed by Samuel, they engage the services of young David who plays the lyre [כַּנּוֹר, kinnōr] with skill.

When the king's 'servant' (courtier) says of David 'YHWH is with him' (verse 18), he is saying more than he (or Saul) realises.

The two armies are facing each other across the Valley of Elah (terebinth); the Israel army to the north and the Philistines to the south.

The story of Goliath and David is the stuff of folklore. The original story of David's rise to power is a more realistic one. It is of a warrior who outdid everyone in courage, and whose reputation on the field of battle was unsurpassed (see 18:6; and 16:14-23).

There are two versions of this folklore, intertwined in chapters 17-18. Goliath is described as about six foot nine inches tall and his armour weighs over 50ks. It is intended to leave no place for an opponent to strike (except his face!).



The valley of Elah runs east-west between Ekron on the north and Gath on the south.

**<sup>1</sup>The Philistines had gathered their armies for battle; they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephesdamim. <sup>2</sup>Saul and the Israelites gathered and encamped in the valley of Elah, and deployed themselves to engage the Philistines in battle. <sup>3</sup>The Philistines stood on a hill on the one side, and Israel stood on a hill on the other side, with a valley between them.**

**<sup>4</sup>And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath. (His height was four cubits and a span). <sup>5</sup>He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail. (The weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze.) <sup>6</sup>He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. <sup>7</sup>The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam. (Its blade weighed six hundred shekels of iron.) A shield-bearer went before him. <sup>8</sup>He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. <sup>9</sup>If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." <sup>10</sup>And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together."**

**<sup>11</sup>When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.**

[This version picks up at verse 32, and is the only version in the Septuagint Codex Vaticanus which lacks verses 12-31]

David joins the camp

<sup>12</sup>Now David was the son of an Ephrathite from Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. <sup>13</sup>The three eldest sons had followed Saul to the battle. (The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.) <sup>14</sup>David was the youngest; the three eldest followed Saul, <sup>15</sup>but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. <sup>16</sup>For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

<sup>17</sup>Jesse said to his son David, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers; <sup>18</sup>also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See how your brothers fare, and bring some token from them." <sup>19</sup>Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

<sup>20</sup>David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had commanded him. He came to the encampment as the army was going forth to the battle line, shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup>Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. <sup>22</sup>David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers.

<sup>23</sup>As he talked with them, the champion (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name) came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

<sup>24</sup>All the Israelites, when they saw the man, fled from him and were very much afraid. <sup>25</sup>The Israelites said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. The king will greatly enrich the man who kills him, and will give him his daughter and make his family free in Israel."

Verses 12-31 are not found in the Septuagint Codex Vaticanus. They offer an alternative introduction to David's involvement in the combat.

Jesse is introduced as 'an Ephrathite' (compare Micah 5:1 and Ruth 1:2).

David is sent by his father with some food for his brothers. This brings him to the field of battle as, once again, Goliath offers his challenge.

Saul's offer to give his daughter in marriage to anyone who can defeat Goliath is significant for the development of the plot. Twice he uses it in an attempt to rid himself of David (see 18:27 and 21).

David, offended that an ‘uncircumcised Philistine’ (see 14:6) should defy ‘the armies of the living God’ (verse 36) and so insult God himself, offers to fight Goliath and his offer is accepted.

Verse 32 picks up from verse 11 after the insertion of the alternative introduction to David.

**<sup>26</sup>David said to the men who stood by him, “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”**

**<sup>27</sup>The people answered him in the same way, “So shall it be done for the man who kills him.” <sup>28</sup>His eldest brother Eliab heard him talking to the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David. He said, “Why have you come down? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart; for you have come down just to see the battle.” <sup>29</sup>David said, “What have I done now? It was only a question.” <sup>30</sup>He turned away from him toward another and spoke in the same way; and the people answered him again as before. <sup>31</sup>When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him.**

**<sup>32</sup>David said to Saul, “Let no one’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” <sup>33</sup>Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth.” <sup>34</sup>But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, <sup>35</sup>I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. <sup>36</sup>Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.” <sup>37</sup>David said, “YHWH, who saved me from the lion and the bear, will save me from that Philistine.” So Saul said to David, “Go, and may YHWH be with you!”**

## David challenges Goliath

<sup>38</sup>Saul clothed David with armour; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. <sup>39</sup>David strapped Saul's sword over the armour, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." So David removed them. <sup>40</sup>Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup>The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. <sup>42</sup>When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. <sup>43</sup>The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with a stick?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup>The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field."

<sup>45</sup>But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of YHWH of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup>This very day YHWH will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, <sup>47</sup>and that all this assembly may know that YHWH does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is YHWH's and he will give you into our hand."

Saul clothes David in armour. It doesn't work – which helps make the point that it is faith in YHWH that will bring victory, not armour.

Verses 45-47 show David's trust in YHWH. We find echoes of David's words in the oracle of Zechariah:

Not by might, nor by power,  
but by my spirit, says YHWH  
of hosts.

– Zechariah 4:6

It is his zeal for YHWH that is highlighted (verse 46). Note that the Israelite force is called here by the sacred term 'assembly' [קָהָל, qāhāl; verse 47].



<sup>48</sup>When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

<sup>49</sup>David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

<sup>50</sup>So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand.

<sup>51</sup>Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. <sup>52</sup>The troops of Israel and Judah rose up with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.

<sup>53</sup>The Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. <sup>54</sup>David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

<sup>55</sup>When Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." <sup>56</sup>The king said, "Inquire whose son the stripling is." <sup>57</sup>On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. <sup>58</sup>Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

At this stage Jerusalem is still in the hands of the Jebusites (see 2Samuel 5). The tent is YHWH's at Nob (see 21:9), not David's.

Verses 55-58 belong to the alternative version (verses 12-31), as does 18:1-5. These verses are not found in the Septuagint Codex Vaticanus

**<sup>1</sup>By the time David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.**

**<sup>2</sup>Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup>Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. <sup>4</sup>Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armour, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. <sup>5</sup>David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.**

Apart from the reference to the 'ark of the covenant' (see 4:3-5), this is only the second time the word 'covenant' [בְּרִית, berit] is mentioned.

Jonathan will remain faithful to his love-commitment till his death, and David continues the commitment to Jonathan's family after Jonathan's death (see 2Samuel 1:25-26).

Saul puts David in charge of the army. The decision is a popular one among the people, and meets with the approval of the king's advisers.

Verse 6 translates the Septuagint of Codex Vaticanus. The Hebrew text is a jumble of different attempts to introduce the scene.

Saul is envious of the acclaim given to David.

Verses 10-11 are not in Codex Vaticanus, so were probably added later into the Hebrew text. The 'evil spirit' of verse 10 has been mentioned already in 16:14. So, too, David's playing the lyre to soothe Saul's bad humour (see 16:23).

Everything Saul does to David backfires. David goes from success to success because 'YHWH was with him' (verse 14; see 16:18).

'Love' in verse 16 carries its usual connotation of loyalty, fidelity. In context it has political connotations. They are looking to David for leadership (not to Saul).

**<sup>6</sup>Dancing women came out from all the cities of Israel to meet David with tambourines and celebration and lutes. <sup>7</sup>And the women sang to one another as they made merry, "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands." <sup>8</sup>Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?" <sup>9</sup>So Saul eyed David from that day on.**

**<sup>10</sup>The next day an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand; <sup>11</sup>and Saul threw the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.**

**<sup>12</sup>Saul was afraid of David, because YHWH was with him but had departed from Saul. <sup>13</sup>So Saul removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand; and David marched out and came in, leading the army. <sup>14</sup>David had success in all his undertakings; for YHWH was with him. <sup>15</sup>Although Saul, seeing his success, lived in fear of him, <sup>16</sup>all Israel and Judah loved David; for it was he who marched out and came in leading them.**

[<sup>17</sup>Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife; only be valiant for me and fight YHWH's battles." (For Saul thought, "I will not raise a hand against him; let the Philistines deal with him.") <sup>18</sup>David said to Saul, "Who am I and who are my kinsfolk, my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" <sup>19</sup>But at the time when Saul's daughter Merab should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.]

<sup>20</sup>Now Saul's daughter Michal had fallen in love with David. Saul was told, and saw it as an opportunity.

<sup>21</sup>Saul thought, "Let me give her to him that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him."

[Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall now be my son-in-law."]

<sup>22</sup>Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David in private and say, 'See, the king is delighted with you, and all his servants love you; now then, become the king's son-in-law.'" <sup>23</sup>So Saul's servants reported these words to David in private. And David said, "Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and of no repute?"

<sup>24</sup>The servants of Saul told him, "This is what David said."

<sup>25</sup>Then Saul said, "Thus shall you say to David, 'The king desires no bride-price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged on the king's enemies.'" (Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.)

In the Goliath story, Saul is said to have made a promise to give his daughter in marriage to anyone who could kill the Philistine (see 17:25). Verses 17-19, which are not found in Codex Vaticanus, appear to be a later interpolation, included in the Hebrew text to make a link back to this promise. Verse 19 leads into verses 20ff. It was Michal who married David, not Merab, who was the wife of Adriel.

Michal is Saul's youngest daughter (see 14:49). When Saul observes that his daughter, Michal, is in love with David, he plans to use this attraction as a 'snare'. The second part of verse 21 was added when verses 17-19 were added.

Aware of the fact that David cannot afford a bride-price, Saul puts a condition on the marriage that David kill a hundred Philistines. He is confident that David's desire for Michal will induce him to take up the wager, and meet his death.

Saul's plot fails, for David is successful. The king has to honour his word and David and Michal are married (verse 27).

We are seeing David's meteoric rise. He was introduced to the court as a court musician (16:18-19). He was promoted to be the king's personal weapon-bearer (16:21). In battle he became a hero of the people (18:6-8), and was promoted to be commander of a military unit (18:13). Now he is the king's son-in-law.

Becoming the king's son-in-law is not only one more proof that YHWH is with him, and that every plot of the king turns, therefore, to David's advantage, it also gives him a place in the royal family. This is something that David will use later to become king of Israel as well as king of Judah (see 2Samuel 3:12ff).

Recognising that YHWH is with David, and that his daughter Michal is in love with him, Saul fears for his throne. We are told that 'Saul was David's enemy from that time onward' (verse 29).

David's fame continues to grow (verse 30).

**<sup>26</sup>When his servants told David these words, David was well pleased to be the king's son-in-law.**

**Before the time had expired, <sup>27</sup>David rose and went, along with his men, and killed one hundred of the Philistines; and David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Saul gave him his daughter Michal as a wife.**

**<sup>28</sup>But when Saul realized that YHWH was with David, and that Saul's daughter Michal loved him, <sup>29</sup>Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy from that time onward.**

**<sup>30</sup>Then the commanders of the Philistines came out to battle; and as often as they came out, David had more success than all the servants of Saul, so that his fame became very great.**

**<sup>1</sup>Saul spoke with his son Jonathan and with all his servants about killing David. But Saul's son Jonathan was deeply fond of David, <sup>2</sup>and told him, "My father Saul is trying to kill you; therefore be on guard tomorrow morning; stay in a secret place and hide yourself. <sup>3</sup>I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you; if I learn anything I will tell you."**

**<sup>4</sup>Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul, saying to him, "The king should not sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have been of good service to you; <sup>5</sup>for he took his life in his hand when he attacked the Philistine, and YHWH brought about a great victory for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced; why then will you sin against an innocent person by killing David without cause?" <sup>6</sup>Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan; Saul swore, "As YHWH lives, he shall not be put to death." <sup>7</sup>So Jonathan called David and related all these things to him. Jonathan then brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.**

Saul's various schemes having failed, for the first time he declares openly his intention to kill David. We now see that David's life is in danger.

We know of Saul's daughter's love for David. Now we see the depth of his son's love (see 18:2-4).

Verses 2-3 are an attempt to combine two separate versions of the story. In one, Jonathan tells David to hide, and promises to talk with his father and report back to David. In the other he wants David to hide close by where he can overhear the conversation.

The essence of the story is that Jonathan convinces his father not to go ahead with his plans. Saul swears he will not kill David, and David is welcomed back into his service.

The reference to David's military prowess sets the scene for a deterioration of his relations with the king who attempts, unsuccessfully, to spear him (see 18:10-11).

On the 'evil spirit from YHWH' see 16:14-15.

Verses 11-17 demonstrate Michal's love for David. She assist him to escape, and has recourse to a lie (verse 17) to protect herself from her father's anger.

'Idol' (verse 13) translates t<sup>o</sup>rapim, figurines of Canaanite household gods (see Genesis 31:34 and Judges 17:4).

Michal explains her behaviour by making out that David threatened to kill her if she didn't let him escape.

**<sup>8</sup>Again there was war, and David went out to fight the Philistines. He launched a heavy attack on them, so that they fled before him.**

**<sup>9</sup>Then an evil spirit from YHWH came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand, while David was playing music.**

**<sup>10</sup>Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear; but he eluded Saul, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. David fled and escaped.**

**<sup>11</sup>That same night Saul sent officers to David's house to keep watch over him, planning to kill him in the morning. David's wife Michal told him, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."**

**<sup>12</sup>So Michal let David down through the window; he fled away and escaped. <sup>13</sup>Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed; she put a net of goats' hair on its head, and covered it with the clothes. <sup>14</sup>When Saul sent officers to take David, she said, "He is sick." <sup>15</sup>Then Saul sent the officers to see David for themselves. He said, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." <sup>16</sup>When the officers came in, the idol was in the bed, with the covering of goats' hair on its head. <sup>17</sup>Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this, and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go; why should I kill you?'"**

**<sup>18</sup>After he had escaped and was safely away, David went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. He and Samuel went and stayed in the settlement.**

**<sup>19</sup>When Saul was told that David was in the settlement at Ramah,<sup>20</sup>he sent messengers to arrest David. But when they saw the company of the prophets in a frenzy, with Samuel standing in charge of them, the spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also fell into a prophetic frenzy. <sup>21</sup>When Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they also fell into a frenzy. Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also fell into a frenzy.**

**<sup>22</sup>So Saul himself went to Ramah himself. When he came to the cistern of the threshing floor that was on the bare height he made inquiries: "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "They are at the settlement at Ramah." <sup>23</sup>As he approached the settlement at Ramah the spirit of God came upon him too, and he fell into a prophetic frenzy, until he came to the camps in Ramah. <sup>24</sup>He stripped off his clothes, and he too fell into a frenzy before Samuel. He lay naked all that day and all that night. Therefore it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"**

This story is another tradition to explain the saying: 'Is Saul also among the prophets'(verse 24; see 10:10-13). This scene takes place in the settlement where the company of prophets lived with their master, Samuel.

Here and in the earlier scene, the spirit shared by the prophets is connected with ecstatic behaviour. It is contagious, for the messengers cannot resist it, nor can Saul.

Clearly this scene must come from a different author to the author responsible for 15:35, which stated that Samuel would never see Saul again this side of the grave.

The Deuteronomists have included another independent tradition circulating about David in the years before he became king. It is about YHWH's spirit protecting David. In comparison with 10:10-13, it puts Saul in a bad light.



It is clearly no longer possible for David to be in Saul's presence.

That the fault is all Saul's and that YHWH is with David, even though he must leave the king's court, is underlined by the fact that David is helped by Michal (19:12), then Samuel (19:18) and now Jonathan, the one who would expect to succeed his father as king (see already 18:28-29; 19:1-7).

David sets up a situation that will make Saul's intention abundantly clear. He places his trust in the covenant that Jonathan has made with him (verse 8; see 18:3).

**<sup>1</sup>David fled from the settlement in Ramah. He came before Jonathan and said, "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin against your father that he is trying to take my life?" <sup>2</sup>He said to him, "Far from it! You shall not die. My father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me; and why should my father hide this from me? Never!" <sup>3</sup>But David also swore, "Your father knows well that you like me; and he thinks, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved.' But truly, as YHWH lives and as you yourself live, there is but a step between me and death." <sup>4</sup>Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you."**

**<sup>5</sup>David said to Jonathan, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and I am expected to sit with the king at the meal. Let me go and hide in the field until evening. <sup>6</sup>If your father misses me, say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city; for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' <sup>7</sup>If he says, 'Good!' it will be well with your servant; but if he is angry, then know that he is bent on evil. <sup>8</sup>Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a sacred covenant with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself; why should you turn me over to your father?"**

**<sup>9</sup>Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it was decided by my father that evil should come upon you, would I not tell you?" <sup>10</sup>Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"**

<sup>11</sup>“Come, Jonathan told David, let us go out into the field.” When they had gone out into the field together, <sup>12</sup>Jonathan said to David, “YHWH, the God of Israel, is my witness that when I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow as to whether he is well disposed toward David, I will send word to you in the field. <sup>13</sup>If my father intends to do you harm, I swear by YHWH that I will disclose it to you, and send you away, so that you may go in safety. May YHWH be with you, as he has been with my father. <sup>14</sup>If I am still alive, show me the faithful love of YHWH; but if I die, <sup>15</sup>never cut off your faithful love from my house, even if YHWH were to cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” <sup>16</sup>Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May YHWH seek out the enemies of David.” <sup>17</sup>Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life.

<sup>18</sup>Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow is the new moon; you will be missed, because your place will be empty. <sup>19</sup>On the day after tomorrow, you will be long gone. Go to the place where you hid yourself earlier, and remain beside that mound there. <sup>20</sup>I will shoot an arrow from beside the mound, as though I was aiming at a target. <sup>21</sup>When I will send my servant off to fetch the arrow, If I say to him, ‘Look, the arrow is on the near side of you, fetch it’, then you can come out, for, as YHWH lives, it is safe for you and there is no danger. <sup>22</sup>But if I say to the servant, ‘Look, the arrow is on the far side of you,’ then go; for YHWH has sent you away. <sup>23</sup>As for the matter about which you and I have spoken, YHWH is witness between you and me forever.” <sup>24</sup>So David hid himself in the field.

The implication underlying verses 12-17 is that David will one day be raised by YHWH to a position of power. Once again we hear: ‘May YHWH be with you’(verse 13; see 17:37; 20:13).

Verses 14-15 prove significant when Jonathan dies. David cares for his lame son (see 2Samuel 9:1). The Deuteronomists want to demonstrate that the survival of the house of Saul was a direct result of David’s fidelity to the covenant he had with Jonathan.

This time it is Jonathan who asks David to swear an oath to be faithful to the covenant that exists between them (verse 17).

In response to David’s request (see 20:5), Jonathan outlines a plan to let David know how things are between him and Saul (verses 18-23).

David's absence from the cultic meal is first thought by Saul to be the result of some ritual uncleanness, such as is described, for example, in Leviticus 15:16 (see the warnings in Leviticus 7:20-21).

When David is absent the second day, Saul's suspicions are aroused, and when Jonathan tries to excuse David, Saul accuses him of siding with the rebels.

Saul makes it clear to Jonathan that his succession to the throne is in peril so long as David lives. Jonathan remains faithful to his covenant.

**<sup>24</sup>When the new moon came, the king sat at the feast to eat. <sup>25</sup>The king sat as was his custom upon the seat by the wall. Jonathan sat opposite him, while Abner sat by Saul's side. David's place was empty. <sup>26</sup>Saul did not say anything that day; for he thought, "Something has happened; he must be unclean."**

**<sup>27</sup>But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was still empty. Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the feast, either yesterday or today?" <sup>28</sup>Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem; <sup>29</sup>he said, 'Let me go; for our family is holding a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favor in your sight, let me get away, and see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."**

**<sup>30</sup>Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? <sup>31</sup>For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be secure. Now send and bring him to me, for he will surely die." <sup>32</sup>Then Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" <sup>33</sup>But Saul threw his spear at him to strike him; so Jonathan knew that it was so intent upon evil as to put David to death. <sup>34</sup>Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day, for he was grieved for David, and because his father had disgraced him."**

## Parting of David & Jonathan

<sup>35</sup>In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David, and with him was a small boy. <sup>36</sup>He said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows that I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. <sup>37</sup>When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called after the boy and said, "Is the arrow not on the far side of you?" <sup>38</sup>Jonathan called after the boy, "Hurry, be quick, do not linger." So Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. (<sup>39</sup>The boy knew nothing; only Jonathan and David knew the arrangement.) <sup>40</sup>Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said to him, "Go and carry them to the city."

<sup>41</sup>As soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the mound and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He bowed three times, and they kissed each other, and wept with each other; David wept the more. <sup>42</sup>Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of YHWH, saying, 'YHWH will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.'" He got up and left; and Jonathan went into the city.

The plan agreed to between David and Jonathan (see 20:18-23) is carried out. It is clear that David must go into hiding.

The parting of the two friends expresses the depth of their mutual love. In spite of Saul's behaviour towards David, the covenant between the descendants of Jonathan and the descendants of David is secure.

The final sentence is numbered 21:1 in the Hebrew text, which puts the Hebrew version of chapter 21 one verse ahead of the Septuagint, Vulgate and most English translations, which we are following.

David leaves the service of Saul. The editors want to ensure that we see this, not as a failure in fidelity on David's part, but as brought about by Saul's determination to kill him.

As has been made clear in verse 31, to secure his dynasty Saul must kill David. This sets up the plot for the following chapters.

David flees to Nob, described later (22:19) as a 'city of priests'. It is the site of a significant sanctuary. We find out later that Ahimelek is the son of Ahitub (22:19), to whom we were introduced earlier as the son of Phinehas. This makes Ahimelek Eli's great-grandson (see 14:3).

David's concocted story safeguards his flight. It also protects the priest from any guilt in helping David.

In being given the 'holy bread' (verse 4), the 'Bread of the Presence' (verse 6), David is receiving God's blessing. This bread was displayed before YHWH as a 'commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever' (Leviticus 24:8). It was to be consumed by the priests. That David is allowed to have it is a sign of his special consecration.

Jesus refers to this scene in a discussion with the Pharisees (see Mark 2:25-26). The Gospel text associates this scene with Ahimelek's son, Abiathar (see 22:20). One explanation for the discrepancy is that Mark originally had 'Ab-Abiathar' (the father of Abiathar) and the first Ab was lost.

'Doeg the Edomite' (verse 7) links this scene with the following chapter. The fact that he is an Edomite forebodes ill.

David inherits Goliath's sword (verses 8-9; see 17:54).

**<sup>1</sup>David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelek. Ahimelek came trembling to meet David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?" <sup>2</sup>David said to the priest Ahimelek, "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment with the servants for a certain place.**

**<sup>3</sup>Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here." <sup>4</sup>The priest answered David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy bread. Provided that the servants have kept themselves from women, you can have it." <sup>5</sup>David answered the priest, "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?"**

**<sup>6</sup>So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which had been removed from before YHWH, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.**

**<sup>7</sup>Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before YHWH; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's runners.**

**<sup>8</sup>David said to Ahimelek, "Is there a spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste."**

**<sup>9</sup>The priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none here except that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."**

David at Gath and in the forest of Hereth

**21:10** David rose and fled that day from Saul; he went to King Akish of Gath.

**11** The servants of Akish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?"

**12** David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of King Akish of Gath. **13** So he changed his behaviour before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard.

**14** Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me? **15** Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

**22:1** David left there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; when his brothers and all his father's house heard of it, they went down there to him. **2** Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Those who were with him numbered about four hundred.

**3** David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. He said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come to you, until I know what God will do for me." **4** He left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

**5** The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left, and went into the forest of Hereth.

David flees from Judah and appears to want to disappear among the Philistines. However his plan misfires as he is recognised and taken before the king.

He manages to escape by pretending to be mad. He escapes to the cave at Adullam. His family know that they are not safe from Saul, so they join David (22:1) along with about four hundred discontents (22:2).

We are not told why he was confident his parents would be safe in Moab. One suggestion is that, as we are told in the book of Ruth, his great-grandmother was from Moab (see Ruth 4:13, 17).

We are introduced to Gad, David's seer (see 2Samuel 24:11). Through the seer God is calling David back to Judah where he hides in 'the forest of Hereth' (22:3).



Hearing that David and his followers were back in Judah raises for Saul the possibility of having to deal with a rebellion. He is verging on paranoia as he claims that 'all of you have conspired against me' (verse 8).

**6Saul heard that David and those who were with him had been located. Saul was sitting at Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height, with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. 7Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, you Benjaminites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? 8Is that why all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son has been in league with the son of Jesse, none of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today."**

Doeg the Edomite tells Saul what he witnessed at the sanctuary at Nob (see 21:7). Saul summons the priest Ahimelek and the rest of the priests from the sanctuary.

**9Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's servants, answered, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelek son of Ahitub; 10he inquired of YHWH for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."**

We learn here that Ahimelek, besides giving David food and the sword of Goliath, had also 'inquired of God for him' (verse 13).

**11The king sent for the priest Ahimelek son of Ahitub and for all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king. 12Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." He answered, "Here I am, my lord." 13Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, by giving him bread and a sword, and by inquiring of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today?"**

Saul has the priests killed and the sanctuary destroyed

**<sup>14</sup>Ahimelek answered the king, "Who among all your servants is so faithful as David? He is the king's son-in-law, and is quick to do your bidding, and is honoured in your house. <sup>15</sup>Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any member of my father's house; for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little." <sup>16</sup>The king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelek, you and all your father's house." <sup>17</sup>The king said to the guard who stood around him, "Turn and kill the priests of YHWH, because their hand also is with David; they knew that he fled, and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not raise their hand to attack the priests of YHWH. <sup>18</sup>Then the king said to Doeg, "You, Doeg, turn and attack the priests." Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests; on that day he killed eighty-five who wore the linen ephod. <sup>19</sup>Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; men and women, children and infants, oxen, donkeys, and sheep, he put to the sword.**

**<sup>20</sup>But one of the sons of Ahimelek son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. <sup>21</sup>Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of YHWH. <sup>22</sup>David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I am responsible for the lives of all your father's house. <sup>23</sup>Stay with me, and do not be afraid; for the one who seeks my life seeks your life; you will be safe with me."**

Ahimelek's explanation is convincing to everyone except the paranoid Saul. The only one to obey his orders is Doeg the Edomite who 'killed eighty-five priests' and utterly destroyed Nob (verses 18-19). Thus is fulfilled the words spoken by the man of God to Eli (1Samuel 2:27-36).

One of Ahimelek's sons escapes and goes to David, who accepts responsibility for what happened and assures Abiathar that he will be safe with David.

Saul, by his own action, has no priests to consult YHWH for him. The only priest left alive is Abiathar and he is with David. David is portrayed as the one who preserved the Yahwist cult for Israel. This is one more step in the rejection of Saul and the rise of David.



Keilah is close to the forest of Hereth (see map page 102). Following YHWH's instructions, David and his band defeat the Philistines and save Keilah.

Saul hears that David is in Keilah and decides to besiege the town and capture David.

David seeks to know YHWH's will by use of the Urim and the Thummim (compare 14:41) that were with the ephod that Abiathar had brought with him.

This is an example of the importance for David of having the priest (and so the ephod) with him. YHWH is with him, guiding him, and protecting him from Saul.

As a result of his inquiry he decides to leave the town. Saul has to call off the expedition.

**<sup>1</sup>David was told that the Philistines were fighting against Keilah, and robbing the threshing floors. <sup>2</sup>So he inquired of YHWH, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" YHWH said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah." <sup>3</sup>But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" <sup>4</sup>So David inquired of YHWH again. YHWH answered him, "Yes, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand." <sup>5</sup>So David and his men went to Keilah, fought with the Philistines, brought away their livestock, and dealt them a heavy defeat. Thus David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.**

**(<sup>6</sup>Now when Abiathar son of Ahimelek fled to David, he had gone down with David to Keilah with an ephod in his hand.) <sup>7</sup>When Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, he said, "God has given him into my hand; for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars." <sup>8</sup>Saul summoned the entire army to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. <sup>9</sup>When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to the priest Abiathar, "Bring the ephod here." <sup>10</sup>David said, "YHWH, the God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. <sup>11</sup>Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? YHWH, the God of Israel, I beseech you, tell your servant." YHWH said, "He will come down." <sup>12</sup>Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" YHWH said, "They will surrender you." <sup>13</sup>Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, set out and left Keilah; they wandered wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.**

**<sup>14</sup>David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but YHWH did not give him into his hand.**

**<sup>15</sup>Still David was afraid because Saul was on the march seeking to kill him.**

**Once, when David was in Horesh in the wilderness of Ziph, <sup>16</sup>Jonathan, Saul's son, set out and came to David at Horesh; there he encouraged him through YHWH. <sup>17</sup>He said to him, "Do not be afraid; for the hand of my father Saul will not find you; you will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows that this is so." <sup>18</sup>Then the two of them made a covenant before YHWH; David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.**

Though drawing on older material, the section from 23:14 to 24:23 is from the Deuteronomists. There are explicit connections with subsequent part of the Deuteronomists' narrative. 'Horesh' means 'forest' or 'wood'. It is located somewhere in the wilderness of Ziph (see map below). Ziph is on the watershed just as the land slopes down to the Dead Sea.

Once again we have a meeting of David with Jonathan. This time, Jonathan explicitly acknowledges that David will be king. He states that Saul, too, knows this. It is God's design that is being played out.



Some of the people of Ziph tell Saul where David is hiding, and offer to hand him over.

**<sup>19</sup>Then some Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "David is hiding among us in the strongholds of Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon. <sup>20</sup>Now, O king, whenever you wish to come down, do so; and our part will be to surrender him into the king's hand."**

**<sup>21</sup>Saul said, "May you be blessed by YHWH for showing me compassion!**

**<sup>22</sup>Go and make sure once more; find out exactly where he is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. <sup>23</sup>Look around and learn all the hiding places where he lurks, 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."**

In the meantime David and his men have moved south to Maon (see map opposite), deeper into the wilderness. Things look grim for David faced with Saul's army, but, by divine providence, Saul has to withdraw to fight against the Philistines.

**<sup>24</sup>So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.**

**<sup>25</sup>Saul and his men went to search for him. When David was told, he went down to a certain crag in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon. <sup>26</sup>Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, while Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them. <sup>27</sup>Then a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come; for the Philistines have made a raid on the land." <sup>28</sup>So Saul stopped pursuing David, and went against the Philistines. (it is for this reason that the place is called the Rock of Escape.)**

<sup>1</sup>David then went up from there, and lived in the strongholds of En-gedi. <sup>2</sup>When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the wilderness of En-gedi." <sup>3</sup>So he took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to look for David and his men in the direction of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. <sup>4</sup>He came to the sheepfolds beside the road, where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave. <sup>5</sup> David's men said to him, "This is the day of which YHWH said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David went and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. <sup>6</sup>Afterward David was stricken to the heart because he had cut off a corner of Saul's cloak. <sup>7</sup>He said to his men, "YHWH forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, YHWH's anointed, to raise my hand against him; for he is YHWH's anointed." <sup>8</sup>So David scolded his men severely and did not permit them to attack Saul. Then Saul got up and left the cave, and went on his way.

<sup>9</sup>Afterwards David also rose up and went out of the cave and called after Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. <sup>10</sup>David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of those who say, 'David seeks to do you harm'?" <sup>11</sup>This very day your eyes have seen how YHWH gave you into my hand in the cave; and some urged me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, 'I will not raise my hand against my lord; for he is YHWH's anointed.' <sup>12</sup>See, my father, see the corner of your cloak in my hand; for by the fact that I cut off the corner of your cloak, and did not kill you, you may know for certain that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are hunting me to take my life.

David goes to the caves that look down over En-gedi on the shore of the Dead Sea (see map page 106).

Saul has a considerably larger army, but he enters a cave 'to relieve himself', unaware that David and his men are hidden deeper inside the same cave. David's troops see this as a godsend. They refer in verse 5 to a divine promise that is not included anywhere in the text. David creeps up behind Saul and cuts off a corner of the king's cloak (verse 5). He puts the sanctity of the king's office above personal advantage (verse 6).

David shows Saul what he has done, as proof that Saul has no reason to fear him.

David is content to confide his cause to YHWH. He will not take on himself to avenge the treatment he is receiving from Saul.

It is clear from Saul's response that he knows that David is innocent (verse 17). He also knows that it is the will of YHWH for David to succeed him (verse 20; see 20:13-16).

He asks David to take an oath, similar to the one that David has already made in relation to Jonathan (see 20:42).

What we have here is a later re-telling of the story of David's sparing Saul's life. The older version is found in 26:1-25. This version stresses David's piety and portrays Saul in a degrading way, and as knowing the truth but still determined to hunt David down to secure control of the kingship for himself and for his family.

**<sup>13</sup>May YHWH judge between me and you! May YHWH avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you.**

**<sup>14</sup>As the ancient proverb says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you.**

**<sup>15</sup>Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A single flea? <sup>16</sup>May YHWH therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and you. May he see to it, and plead my cause, and vindicate me against you."**

**<sup>17</sup>When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Saul lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>18</sup>He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil. <sup>19</sup>Today you have explained how you have dealt well with me, in that you did not kill me when YHWH put me into your hands. <sup>20</sup>For who has ever found an enemy, and sent the enemy safely away? So may YHWH reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. <sup>201</sup>Now I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.**

**<sup>22</sup>Swear to me therefore by YHWH that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my father's house."** <sup>23</sup>So David swore this to Saul. Then Saul went home; but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

**<sup>25:1</sup>Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah.**

**<sup>1</sup>Then David got up and went down to the wilderness of Maon. <sup>2</sup>There was a man in Maon, whose property was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. <sup>3</sup>Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was clever and beautiful, but the man was surly and mean; he was a Calebite. <sup>4</sup>David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>Thus you shall salute him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favour in your sight; for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"**

**<sup>9</sup>When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited. <sup>10</sup>But Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are breaking away from their masters. <sup>11</sup>Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat that I have butchered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" <sup>12</sup>So David's young men made their way back, and on their return went and reported all this to him. <sup>13</sup>David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every one of them strapped on his sword; David also strapped on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.**

The Hebrew text speaks of the 'wilderness of Paran'. We are following the Greek Version. The wilderness of Paran is too far south for the action described here. On 'Maon' see 23:24. For its location see the map page 106.

'Nabal, in Hebrew means 'simpleton'. 'Caleb' means dog, but it can have the nuance of 'faithful servant'. We know a Caleb from the Exodus story where it was he and Joshua who were among the spies who were sent by Moses into Canaan. These two alone were faithful and so Caleb was given possession of land within the boundaries of southern Judah.

David sends messengers to Nabal. The fact that he has respected Nabal's land and property should earn him a hearing.

Nabal is a fool. Instead of responding with courtesy he rejects David and his request.

David then decides to act with force.

One of the young men informs Nabal's wife, Abigail, of her husband's inappropriate (and dangerous) stance.

She hurriedly, and without telling Nabal, sends ahead some provisions. She rides down on a donkey (verse 20), and we are told of David's determination to wipe out all Nabal's men. We are wondering what will happen when David and Abigail meet.

**<sup>14</sup>But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them. <sup>15</sup>Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; <sup>16</sup>they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. <sup>17</sup>Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil has been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill-natured that no one can speak to him."**

**<sup>18</sup>Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them on donkeys <sup>19</sup>and said to her young men, "Go on ahead of me; I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. <sup>20</sup>As she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, David and his men came down toward her; and she met them. (<sup>21</sup>Now David had been saying, "Surely it was in vain that I protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; but he has returned me evil for good. <sup>22</sup>May God do so and thus to David and more beside, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.")**

**<sup>23</sup>When Abigail saw David, she hurried and alighted from the donkey, fell before David on her face, bowing to the ground.**

**<sup>24</sup>She fell at his feet and said, "Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. <sup>25</sup>My lord, do not take seriously 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 servant, did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. <sup>26</sup>Now then, my lord, as YHWH lives, and as you yourself live, since YHWH has restrained you from bloodguilt and from taking vengeance with your own hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be like Nabal. <sup>27</sup>And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord.**

**<sup>28</sup>Please forgive the trespass of your servant; for YHWH will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of YHWH; and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. <sup>29</sup>If anyone should rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the Document of the Living under the care of YHWH your God; but the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling.**

**<sup>30</sup>When YHWH has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you prince over Israel, <sup>31</sup>my lord shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for having saved himself. And when YHWH has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant."**

As we listen to Abigail's brilliant speech we are clearly meant to hear YHWH speaking through her.

David is being warned against 'taking vengeance with your own hand' (verse 26).

'Nabal' means 'fool' (see Psalm 14:1).

In verses 28-31 we see the hand of the Deuteronomist. David is being assured that his dynasty is established (by YHWH) and that when he fights it is the battles of YHWH that he wages, not his own. The "Document of the Living" contains the names of all who live, being in communion with God (see Exodus 32:32; Daniel 12:1).

As we will see David does more than 'remember' Abigail (verse 31). She will play a part in the establishment of his house (see 25:39).



David discerns YHWH's inspiration in Abigail's words.

David sees YHWH's action in Nabal's death. The point of the narrative is that David is not to take vengeance into his own hands. YHWH will see to it that justice is done. Kingship requires dependence on YHWH.

Abigail becomes David's wife. David also took as his wife Ahinoam from nearby Jezreel (see Joshua 15:56). She will be the mother of David's first son, Amnon (see 2 Samuel 3:2). In the meantime Saul has given David's first wife to a man from Gallim (see Isaiah 10:30), a town near Gibeah. By giving Michal to another man, Saul is trying to weaken David's claim to the throne (see 2 Samuel 3:12-16).

<sup>32</sup>David said to Abigail, "Blessed be YHWH, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today!

<sup>33</sup>Blessed be your good sense, and blessed be you, who have kept me today from bloodguilt and from avenging myself by my own hand!

<sup>34</sup>For as surely as YHWH the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there would not have been left to Nabal so much as one male." <sup>35</sup>Then David received from her hand what she had brought him; he said to her, "Go up to your house in peace; see, I have heeded your voice, and I have granted your petition."

<sup>36</sup>When Abigail came to Nabal, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light. <sup>37</sup>In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him; he became like a stone. <sup>38</sup>About ten days later YHWH struck Nabal, and he died.

<sup>39</sup>When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be YHWH who has judged the case of Nabal's insult to me, and has kept back his servant from evil; YHWH has returned the evil-doing of Nabal back upon his own head." Then David sent word to Abigail that he would make her his wife. <sup>40</sup>When David's servants came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife." <sup>41</sup>She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, "Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." <sup>42</sup>Abigail got up hurriedly and rode away on a donkey; her five maids attended her. She went after the messengers of David and became his wife.

(<sup>43</sup>David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both of them became his wives. <sup>44</sup>Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.)

<sup>1</sup>Some Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "David is in hiding on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon." <sup>2</sup>So Saul rose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, with three thousand chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. <sup>3</sup>Saul encamped on the hill of Hachilah, which is opposite Jeshimon beside the road. But David remained in the wilderness. When he learned that Saul had come after him into the wilderness, <sup>4</sup>David sent out spies, and learned that Saul had indeed arrived. <sup>5</sup>Then David set out and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David saw the place where Saul lay, with Abner son of Ner, the commander of his army. (Saul was lying within the encampment, while the army was encamped around him.)

<sup>6</sup>Then David said to Ahimelek the Hittite, and to Joab's brother Abishai son of Zeruah, "Who will go down with me into the camp to Saul?" Abishai said, "I will go down with you." <sup>7</sup>So David and Abishai went to the army by night; there Saul lay sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the army lay around him. <sup>8</sup>Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand today; now therefore let me pin him to the ground with one stroke of the spear; I will not strike him twice." <sup>9</sup>But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him; for who can raise his hand against YHWH's anointed, and be guiltless?" <sup>10</sup>David said, "As YHWH lives, it must be YHWH who strikes him down; either he will die; or he will go down into battle and perish. <sup>11</sup>YHWH forbid that I should raise my hand against YHWH's anointed; but now take the spear that is at his head, and the water jar, and let us go." <sup>12</sup>So David took the spear that was at Saul's head and the water jar, and they went away. No one saw it, or knew it, nor did anyone awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from YHWH had fallen upon them.

This is the older of two versions. In both accounts some people from Ziph report to Saul that David is hiding on the hill of Hachilah (verse 1; see 23:19). In both accounts Saul has 'three thousand chosen men' (verse 2; see 24:2). In both accounts David could have killed Saul, but refuses to harm 'YHWH's anointed' (verse 10; see 24:6).

In this present account we hear of 'Ahimelek the Hittite' (verse 6). This is the only time he appears in the Bible. We are also introduced to Abishai. He and his brother Joab (and a third brother, Asahel; see 2Samuel 2:18) will become leaders in David's army. They are David's nephews, being sons of David's older sister Zeruah (see 1Chronicles 2:16).

The story highlights YHWH's action in the episode.

'Abner' (verse 14) is Saul's first cousin (see 14:50), and the commander of Saul's army (see 17:55).

**<sup>13</sup>Then David went over to the other side, and stood on top of a hill far away, with a great distance between them. <sup>14</sup>David called to the army and to Abner son of Ner, saying, "Abner! Will you not answer?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you that calls to the king?" <sup>15</sup>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 soldiers came in to destroy your lord the king. <sup>16</sup>This thing that you have done is not good. As YHWH lives, you deserve to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, YHWH's anointed. See now, where is the king's spear, or the water jar that was at his head?"**

**<sup>17</sup>Saul recognized David's voice, and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?"**

**David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king." <sup>18</sup>And he added, "Why does my lord pursue his servant? For what have I done? What guilt is on my hands? <sup>19</sup>Now therefore let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is YHWH who has stirred you up against me, may he accept an offering; but if it is men, may they be cursed before YHWH, for they have driven me out today from my share in the heritage of YHWH, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' <sup>20</sup>Now therefore, do not let my blood fall to the ground, away from the presence of YHWH; for the king of Israel has come out to seek my life, like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains."**

The final words of verse 19 prepare the reader for the following scene where David leaves Judah and goes to a foreign land, a land under the patronage of 'other gods'.

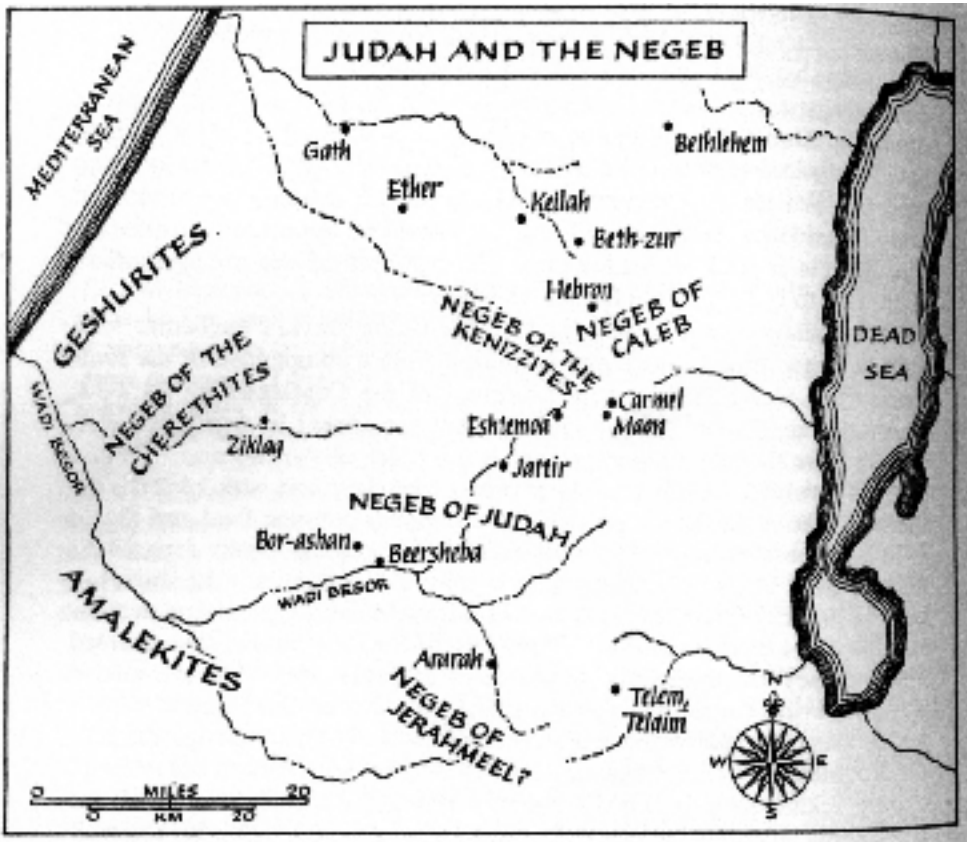
David spares Saul again

<sup>21</sup>Then Saul said, "I have done wrong; come back, my son David, for I will never harm you again, because my life was precious in your sight today; I have been a fool, and have made a great mistake." <sup>22</sup>David replied, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and get it." <sup>23</sup>YHWH rewards everyone for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for YHWH gave you into my hand today, but I would not raise my hand against YHWH's anointed. <sup>24</sup>As your life was precious today in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of YHWH, and may he rescue me from all tribulation."

<sup>25</sup>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.

As in the earlier account, Saul appears to recognise his fault (see 24:16-22), and to give David his blessing.

Saul and David part, never to see each other again.



Unlike his earlier account of a meeting with king Achish of Gath (see 21:10-15), here David is welcomed. The Philistine king, Achish (see 21:10), judges it to be in his own interests to befriend this band.

We heard earlier of David's marriage to Abigail and Ahinoam (see 25:42-43).

In exile among the Philistines, David was given Ziklag by Achish, Philistine king of Gath, as a reward for his presumed loyalty (27:6). David will use Ziklag as his base of operations in a campaign against various groups who threatened the southern borders of Judah, while giving the impression that he is raiding the land of Judah for the Philistines (see map page 116).



**<sup>1</sup>David said in his heart, "I shall perish any day now by the hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than to 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."**

**<sup>2</sup>So David set out and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to King Achish son of Maoch of Gath. <sup>3</sup>David stayed with Achish at Gath, he and his troops, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. <sup>4</sup>When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought for him.**

**<sup>5</sup>Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favour in your sight, let a place be given me in one of the outlying towns, so that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" <sup>6</sup>So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. (For this reason Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.)**

**<sup>7</sup>The length of time that David lived in the country of the Philistines was one year and four months.**

<sup>8</sup>Now David and his men went up and made raids on the Geshurites and the Amalekites. (Though the land was inhabited from Telem to Shur and on towards Egypt;

<sup>9</sup>David, when he struck the land, left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing.) When he returned and brought the booty back to Achish,

<sup>10</sup>Achish would ask, "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 Kenizzites." (<sup>11</sup>David left neither man nor woman alive to be brought back to Gath, thinking, "They might tell about us, and say, 'David has done so and so.'" Such was his practice all the time he lived in the country of the Philistines.)

<sup>12</sup>Achish trusted David, thinking, "He has made himself utterly abhorrent to his people Israel; therefore he will always be my servant."

<sup>28:1</sup>In those days the Philistines gathered their forces for war, to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You know, of course, that you and your men are to go out with me in the army." <sup>2</sup>David said to Achish, "Very well, then you shall know what your servant can do." Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

We are told that David spent his time in the Philistine town of Ziklag on skirmishes to the south against Judah's enemies. He tricked Achish into thinking that he was attacking Judah and Judah's friends. This encouraged Achish to think that David was cutting himself off from Israel, and, in so doing, was making himself more and more reliant on the Philistine king.

David is establishing a base for his later role as king of Israel. Those responsible for the narrative are explaining that, though David did leave Judah at one time to become a vassal of a Philistine king, he never attacked Judah. See msp page 116 for various areas in the Negeb of Judah. On the contrary he used his position to attack Judah's enemies.

David's position is precarious. Achish is organising for a war against Israel and requires David's support. David has no choice but to accede. His response, however, is purposely ambiguous. He is, once again, trusting in YHWH.

We hear again that Samuel had died (see 25:1).

Saul is encamped on Mount Gilboa, one of the mountains overlooking the plain of Jezreel to its north. The Philistines are encamped at Shunem on the southern slopes of the mountain.

Saul is desperate to divine God's plan, but nothing is working for him (verse 6). In spite of the fact that he 'had expelled all mediums from the land' (verse 3; see Deuteronomy 18:10-12), he decides to divine the future by inquiring of a 'medium at Endor', a town in the plain of Jezreel. This is one more reason justifying God's rejection of Saul.

She conjures up the ghost of Samuel, and realises that the disguised stranger is, in fact, the king himself.



<sup>3</sup>Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his city. Saul had expelled the mediums and the wizards from the land. <sup>4</sup>The Philistines assembled, and came and encamped at Shunem. Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa. <sup>5</sup>When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. <sup>6</sup>When Saul inquired of YHWH, YHWH did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets. <sup>7</sup>Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her." His servants said to him, "There is a medium at Endor."

<sup>8</sup>So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, with two companions. They came to the woman by night. And he said, "Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you."

<sup>9</sup>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?" <sup>10</sup>But Saul swore to her by YHWH, "As YHWH lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing."

<sup>11</sup>Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" He answered, "Bring up Samuel for me." <sup>12</sup>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!"

<sup>13</sup>The king said to her, "Have no fear; what do you see?" The woman said to Saul, "I see a god coming up from the earth." <sup>14</sup>He said to her, "What is his appearance?" She said, "An old man is coming up; he is wrapped in a robe." So Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.

<sup>15</sup>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; so I have summoned you to tell me what I should do." <sup>16</sup>Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since YHWH has turned from you and become your enemy? <sup>17</sup>YHWH has done to you just as he spoke by me; for YHWH has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbour, David. <sup>18</sup>Because you did not obey the voice of YHWH, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore YHWH has done this thing to you today. <sup>19</sup>Moreover YHWH will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; YHWH will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines."

<sup>20</sup>Immediately Saul fell full length on 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. <sup>21</sup>The woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified, she said to him, "Your servant has listened to you; I have taken my life in my hand, and have listened to what you have said to me. <sup>22</sup>Now therefore, you also listen to your servant; let me set a morsel of bread before you. Eat, that you may have strength when you go on your way." <sup>23</sup>He refused, and said, "I will not eat." But his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he listened to their words. So he got up from the ground and sat on the bed. <sup>24</sup>Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house. She quickly slaughtered it, and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened cakes. <sup>25</sup>She put them before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

Samuel reminds Saul of the fact that YHWH has rejected him because of his failure to carry out YHWH's instructions in the war against the Amalekites (see 15:19, 28).

The woman's sympathetic care for Saul is a beautiful touch in light of the fact that Saul is going to his death.



The Philistine army gathered at Aphek (see map page 119; and 4:1). This is obviously before they came to Shunem (see 28:4). The commanders recognise David among Achish's troops, and refuse to let him come with them. They suspect he will turn on them and be their adversary [𐤀𐤓𐤕𐤍, śātān, verse 4]. They recall the cry that met David earlier after his routing of the Philistines (verse 5; see 18:7; 21:12).

In this way providence arranged things so that David did not have to fight against his own people.

**<sup>1</sup>Now the Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, while the Israelites were encamped by the fountain that is in Jezreel. <sup>2</sup>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, <sup>3</sup>the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of King Saul of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years? Since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day." <sup>4</sup>But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him; and said to him, "Send the man back, so that he may return to the place that you have assigned to him; he will not go down with us to battle, or else he may become an adversary to us in the battle. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here? <sup>5</sup>Is this not David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?"**

**<sup>6</sup>So Achish called David and said to him, "As YHWH 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 until today. Nevertheless the lords do not approve of you. <sup>7</sup>So go back now; and go peaceably; do nothing to displease the lords of the Philistines." <sup>8</sup>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 should not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" <sup>9</sup>Achish replied 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.' <sup>10</sup>Now then rise early in the morning, you and the servants of your lord who came with you, and go to the place that I appointed for you. As for the evil report, do not take it to heart, for you have done well before me. Start early in the morning, and leave as soon as you have light." <sup>11</sup>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.**

**<sup>1</sup>Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negeb and on Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag, burned it down, <sup>2</sup>and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great; they killed none of them, but carried them off, and went their way. <sup>3</sup>When David and his men came to the city, they found it burned down, and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. <sup>4</sup>Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept, until they had no more strength to weep. (<sup>5</sup>David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel.) <sup>6</sup>David was in great danger; for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in spirit for their sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in YHWH his God.**

**<sup>7</sup>David said to the priest Abiathar son of Ahimelek, "Bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. <sup>8</sup>David inquired of YHWH, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" He received the answer, "Pursue; for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue."**

**<sup>9</sup>So David set out, he and the six hundred men who were with him. They came to the Wadi Besor.**

**<sup>10</sup>David went on with the pursuit, he and four hundred men; two hundred stayed behind, too exhausted to cross the Wadi Besor.**

David and his army left Aphek and made the 100ks march back to Ziklag (see 27:8). In his absence Ziklag was left without defenders. The Amalekites had razed the town to the ground and taken the women and children, including David's two wives (verse 5; see 25:43-44; 27:3).

Those who were left in the town turned on David whom they blamed for what had happened.

Once again (see 23:9-12) David used the ephod to discern God's will. Strengthened by the result he headed off in pursuit. He left a third of his army on the north bank of the Besor and crossed over with four hundred men.



Once again divine providence favours David. He picks up a starving Egyptian who was among the Amalekite raiders.

**<sup>11</sup>In the open country they found an Egyptian, and brought him to David. They gave him bread and he ate, they gave him water to drink; <sup>12</sup>they also gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, his spirit revived; for he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights.**

For a map of the Negeb see page 116.

Having looked after him he gets him to lead him to the Amalekite camp.

**<sup>13</sup>Then David said to him, "To whom do you belong? Where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite. My master left me behind because I fell sick three days ago. <sup>14</sup>We had made a raid on the Negeb of the Cherethites and on that which belongs to Judah and on the Negeb of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag down." <sup>15</sup>David said to him, "Will you lead me to this raiding party?" He said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me, or hand me over to my master, and I will lead you to them."**

David catches the Amalekite army by surprise, attacking them at first light. The only ones to escape that day were the cavalry.

**<sup>16</sup>So he led him down, they were spread out all over the ground, eating and drinking and dancing, because of the great amount of spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. <sup>17</sup>David attacked them from first light until the evening. Not one of them escaped, except four hundred young men, who mounted camels and fled. <sup>18</sup>David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken; and David rescued his two wives. <sup>19</sup>Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken; David brought back everything. <sup>20</sup>David also captured all the flocks and herds, and drove them before him; and they said "This is David's plunder'.."**

David retook everything taken by the raiders, including his wives.

**<sup>21</sup>Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the Wadi Besor. They went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him. When David drew near to the people he greeted them. <sup>22</sup>Then all the corrupt and worthless 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 that we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and children, and leave."**

**<sup>23</sup>But David said, "You shall not do so, my brothers, with what YHWH has given us; he has preserved us and handed over to us the raiding party that attacked us. <sup>24</sup>Who would listen to you in this matter? For the share of the one who goes down into the battle shall be the same as the share of the one who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike." <sup>25</sup>From that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel; it continues to the present day.**

**<sup>26</sup>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 YHWH"; <sup>27</sup>it was for those in Bethel, in Ramoth of the Negeb, in Jattir, <sup>28</sup>in Aroer, in Siphmoth, in Eshtemoa, <sup>29</sup>in Racal, in the towns of the Jerahmeelites, in the towns of the Kenites, <sup>30</sup>in Hormah, in Bor-ashan, in Athach, <sup>31</sup>in Hebron, all the places where David and his men had roamed.**

When David and his men joined those who had stayed behind at the Wadi Besor, David insisted that it was YHWH who had achieved the victory for them (verse 23), and that those left behind should receive their share of the spoils (verses 24-25).

On verse 24, see Numbers 31:27; Joshua 22:8.

Since the Amalekites had also raided towns in southern Judah (see 30:14), David 'sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders of Judah' (verse 26).

The stage is being set for David's anointing at Hebron (2Samuel 2:4).

The first book of Samuel ends with the death of Saul and his sons, including Jonathan. Ishbaal is not numbered among those killed, nor is Abner, the commander-in-chief of the army. We will hear later that they still command the high country of Ephraim (see 2Samuel 2:8-9).

On 'Astarte' (verse 10) see 7:3.

According to Gershon Galil in his *The Chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah* (Leiden, 1996), likely dates for the reign of Saul are 1025-1005BC.

The death of Saul on Mount Gilboa spreads Philistine influence to the country north and east of the Valley of Jezreel (verse 7).

On Jabesh-gilead see 1Samuel 11:1-11.



**<sup>1</sup>Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and many fell on Mount Gilboa. <sup>2</sup>The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. <sup>3</sup>The battle pressed hard upon Saul; the archers found him, and he was badly wounded by them. <sup>4</sup>Then Saul said to his armour-bearer, "Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, so that these uncircumcised may not come and thrust me through, and make sport of me." But his armour-bearer was unwilling; for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. <sup>5</sup>When his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died with him. <sup>6</sup>So Saul and his three sons and his armour-bearer died together on the same day. <sup>7</sup>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 towns and fled; and the Philistines came and occupied them.**

**<sup>8</sup>The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. <sup>9</sup>They cut off his head, stripped off his armour, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to the houses of their idols and to the people. <sup>10</sup>They put his armour in the temple of Astarte; and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. <sup>11</sup>But when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, <sup>12</sup>all the valiant men set out, travelled all night long, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. They came to Jabesh and burned them there. <sup>13</sup>Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.**

Introduction to the Books of Chronicles

The death of Saul marks the end of the First Book of Samuel. The Second Book is the story of King David. As noted on page 22 the division between the First and Second Books of Samuel is an arbitrary one.

Two centuries after the Deuteronomists had composed their narrative, an anonymous author (we will refer to him as the Chronicler) revisited the story of the kings.

The first nine chapters of 1Chronicles consist of genealogies drawn from the Pentateuch and the writings of the Deuteronomists. Already we see evidence of the Chronicler's special interest in Judah.

The rest of 1Chronicles (chapters 10-29) re-tells the story of King David. Though he draws on the narrative of Second Samuel, he has his own special focus (see the Introduction, page 27). In the following chapters we will compare the texts from Second Samuel and First Chronicles, the better to see the different perspectives of the Deuteronomists and the Chronicler.

In chapter 10, the Chronicler recounts the death of Saul. He repeats the account as found in 1Samuel 31, with two small modifications. In verse 10 the Deuteronomists state:

They put his armour in the temple of Astarte; and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

In 1Chronicles 10, verse 10 we read:

**They put his armour in the temple of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.**

There is a respectful nobility in the Deuteronomists' account of the death of Israel's first king (see page 125). Though there was plenty of criticism of Saul throughout the narrative (necessary to justify what the Deuteronomists saw as God's action in rejecting Saul), nothing negative is said in the account of Saul's death. This is not the case in the account given by the Chronicler, who writes (1Chronicles 10:13):

**So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to YHWH in that he did not keep the command of YHWH; moreover, he had consulted a medium, seeking guidance, <sup>14</sup>and did not seek guidance from YHWH. Therefore YHWH put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.**