

1 Samuel Chapter 27

1 Samuel 27:1 "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: [there is] nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand."

“By the hand of Saul”:

In direct contrast to Saul’s word that David would prevail (26:25), David thought that Saul would ultimately kill him.

This anxious thinking and the fear that fell upon him explain David’s actions in this chapter.

God had told him to stay in Judah (22:5), but he was afraid and sought protection again among the Philistine enemies of Israel (compare 21:10-15).

Even though the encounters with Saul had been victorious for David, he still felt that sometime Saul would be able to capture him.

There was just so much area here for David to hide in and Saul knew of those places.

Perhaps, David was a little afraid that Saul's cruelty might cause him to finally kill Saul.

David did not want to do this, because Saul was anointed of God.

Now David has two wives to think of, as well as himself.

He believes Saul will forget him if he goes to another country to live.

David would rather face his enemies the Philistines, than to chance killing Saul.

Verses 2-3:

If this is the same “Achish” (as in 21:10), it is unclear why David found favor with him this time and not previously.

Perhaps Achish was so impressed with David’s cleverness that he was willing to overlook his previous deception.

Or maybe David’s “battalion” of 600 fighting men appealed to him because they would be obligated to ally with Achish in battle.

At any rate, David's time with the Philistines kept him safe from Saul and allowed him to learn Philistine battle techniques and culture that would help him later.

1 Samuel 27:2 "And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that [were] with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath."

From the place where he was.

"And he passed over":

The borders of land of Canaan.

"With the six hundred men that were with him":

Having neither lost any, nor had any added to him, since he was at Keilah (1 Sam. 23:13).

"Unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath":

Whether this was the same Achish David was with before (1 Sam. 21:10), is not certain.

It seems as if he was not the same, since he is described as the son of Maach, as if it was to distinguish him from him, though it is not improbable that he was the same person.

Some was thinking that he is described not from his father, but from his mother, which her name was Maacha.

The circumstances of David were now very much altered from what they were when he went to Gath before.

Then he went secretly, now openly; then as a person unknown, now as well known; then alone, now with six hundred men; then when discovered he was seized by the princes of Gath, and brought before the king, and was driven from his presence.

But now he came either at the invitation of Achish, hearing how he had been treated by Saul.

And thinking to attach him to his interest, and make him more and more the enemy of Saul.

And so free himself from a very powerful one, and of whose wisdom and prudence, and military skill, and courage, and valor, he might hope to avail himself.

David sent an embassy to him, to treat with him about his coming into his country, and settlement in it, and terms to mutual satisfaction were agreed upon.

David had sought and found refuge with Achish of Gath.

The last time that David was here, he did not have the 600 men and their families with them.

Now they are a force to be reckoned with.

The king showed more respect for David this time.

1 Samuel 27:3 "And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, [even] David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife."

“Two wives”:

His third wife, Michal, had been temporarily given to another man by Saul (cf. 25:44).

The fact that they all had their families with them, made it evident they had moved from their homeland to Gath.

David brought both of his wives as well.

David's wife, Michah, was given by Saul to another man.

David had married Abigail after God killed Nabal.

We have not learned much about Ahinoam at this point, except that she was from Jezreel.

She and Abigail will be captured in a war with the Amalekites and David will rescue them.

She is also the mother of David's first son, Amnon.

Verses 4-7:

To ask a king for land was common practice.

David may have had mixed motives, desiring to simultaneously have authority over a territory and remove himself from Gath and the king's oversight.

1 Samuel 27:4 "And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him."

“He sought no more again for him”:

Saul was no longer able to pursue David since he was out of the land of Israel.

It was not so much that David had fled to Gath that stopped Saul from pursuing him.

It was the fact that David, all of his men and their families have gone to Gath.

Saul would not invade the Philistines to chase David down either.

For the time being, Saul feels that he is not threatened by David.

1 Samuel 27:5 "And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?"

“The royal city”:

I.e., Gath.

David requested a city of his own in the country so that he could be free from the constant surveillance to which he was exposed in Gath, and so that he could avoid the pagan influence of the Philistine city.

It is not explained in detail, why Achish allowed David to live in peace with the Philistines.

We do however; know that the Philistines were enemies of Saul.

They might have thought that David would help them fight Saul.

It could have, also been a fear of David.

They knew that something had caused David and his 600 men to be able to avoid capture by Saul's chosen 3,000 men.

David speaks of himself as servant to Achish in the verse above.

We know it would have been a great expense to care for this large mass of people with David.

Part of the request for a city, was so David and his men could support their families themselves.

Other than that, they would not be constantly watched by Achish's men.

Verses 6-7:

David resided in “Ziklag” until the death of Saul (2 Sam. 1:1-4).

The city was in the southern part of the land, and by all rights, it belonged to “Judah” rather than to Philistia.

Ziklag was later captured and controlled by the Philistines, but they never occupied the city.

They left its inhabitants, descendants of Simeon, to live there.

1 Samuel 27:6 "Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day."

“Ziklag”:

This was a city located about 13 miles northwest of Beer-sheba that had been an Israelite possession (Joshua 15:31; 19:5), but was then under Philistine control.

“Unto this day”:

Ziklag became a part of Judah and was still so at the time of the writing of Samuel, which is clearly in the post-Solomonic, divided kingdom era.

This seemed to be a very good idea by Achish, and he gave David and his men Ziklag.

Ziklag was a town in the Negeb.

It was originally in the south country of Judah.

Up until the time of the Babylonian captivity, it remained part of Judah.

1 Samuel 27:7 "And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months."

“Full year and four months”:

For 16 months David was able to deceive Achish concerning his actions.

He remained there until after Saul’s death when he moved to Hebron (2 Sam. 1:1; 2:1-2).

This seemed to be a time of peace and rest from war.

The scholars all argue about the time that David was in the land of the Philistines.

It is not important the length of time for our study here.

We do know that it was a period of rest.

Verses 8-12:

David’s reports led Achish to believe that David was raiding Israelite territories.

In reality, David was raiding Philistine territories according to the instructions given to Joshua (Joshua 6:17, 21).

In this, David remained loyal to Israel, while gaining Achish's trust, displaying the future king's cleverness as he outwitted an enemy king who wished to harm God's people.

1 Samuel 27:8 "And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those [nations were] of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt."

"Geshurites ... Gezrites ... Amalekites":

These peoples lived in southern Canaan and northern Sinai.

"Shur ... Egypt":

See note on 15:7.

The Geshurites lived in the high country.

The Amalekites, Gezrites, and the Geshurites were Bedouins, who were wanderers.

1 Samuel 27:9 "And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish."

"Left neither man nor woman alive":

David left no survivors from his raids in order that Achish might not learn the true nature of his desert exploits (see verse 11).

This attack was strictly to sustain his men and their families.

Of course, the groups mentioned were heathen people and God had told the Israelites long ago to destroy them off the land.

The animals were saved as food and industry for David's men.

When David returned to Achish, it was probably to share the spoil with Achish.

When you have just received a gift, it is difficult to find fault with the gift giver.

1 Samuel 27:10 "And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites."

“Judah ... Jerahmeelites ... Kenites”:

The regions south of the hill country centering around Beer-sheba.

This region was far enough away from Gath so that Achish would be remain ignorant of any of David's movements.

David implied to Achish that the hostility of Judah toward David was continuing to increase, while in fact he was gaining the appreciation and loyalty of Judah toward himself by raiding their wilderness neighbors.

Achish thought David was more securely his servant as his own people turned against him (verses 2-4), but just the opposite was true.

The question that is asked of David by Achish is where he had fought today?

It seemed the raids on the evil people occurred often.

The people David mentioned above are of Judah.

The Kenites were in alliance with Judah.

David did not tell exactly the truth here.

1 Samuel 27:11 "And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring [tidings] to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so [will be] his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines."

How David had fallen upon these people, and destroyed great numbers of them, and carried off their substance; which would have given great offence to Achish, and caused him to have driven him out of his country once more.

Though Abarbanel is of the opinion that these Geshurites were haters and enemies of Achish, therefore were smitten and spoiled by David.

Or otherwise it would have been such a piece of perfidy, rebellion, and ingratitude, as most have made the name of David to stink, since it could not but be known sooner or later.

But being the enemies of Achish, no notice was taken of it afterwards, nor inquiry made about it, nor was any complaint made of it, by any of their neighbors.

Nor does he suppose they were all cut off, and much less that this was done that it might not be told in Gath what destruction he had made.

But that the sense is that he did not carry the captives to Gath, to be disposed of there.

For they would have told from whence they came, and so have contradicted what David said.

And what he would have Achish understand, as if he had been out against and smote some of the cities of Judah, that he might place the greater confidence in him.

Which end would not have been answered, if he had brought any of them to Gath.

And so, the words may be read without the supplement we make, "spared neither man nor woman alive to bring to Gath":

And so could tell no tales.

"Saying, lest they should tell on us, saying, so did David":

In such and such places, such numbers of people he destroyed, and such quantities of cattle and goods he carried off.

"And so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines":

This is what may be expected will be done by him in one place or another, as long as he stays here; nothing will be heard but of desolation and destruction, in some part of the country of the Philistines or another.

Or among those that were tributaries to them; so that it was not safe that he should be allowed to abide in it.

David killed all the people, so they would not be able to come and report to Achish, that they were not from Judah at all.

David knew the Philistine would have to attack him if they knew who he had killed.

David was dwelling in the land of the Philistines, but they were his enemies.

1 Samuel 27:12 "And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever."

"David" pretended allegiance to "Achish" while fighting the enemies of Judah.

The time spent in Ziklag would give him valuable military and diplomatic experience for the time when he would become king.

It would also increase the number of his forces (compare 1 Chron. 12:1-7).

David had Achish believing that the people he killed were Israelites.

Achish knew the hatred would be turned to David if he had killed his own people.

Achish felt that David would fight with him against the Israelites.

He felt safe while David lived near him.

He felt that David could not go home now, so he would have David to serve him.

1 Samuel Chapter Questions

1. In verse 1, what did David say in his heart?
2. Where did David go?
3. What does the author believe were some of the reasons David gave himself for doing this?
4. How many men went with David?
5. Who was king of Gath at this time?
6. Who were the wives of David?
7. What did it prove, when they all had their wives with them?
8. Who is Abigail?
9. What are the few things we know about Ahinoam?
10. Who killed Nabal?
11. What is the name of David's first son?
12. Why did Saul stop pursuing David?
13. What did David ask Achish for?
14. What advantage would this be to Achish?
15. What advantage would this be to David?
16. What did Achish give David?
17. How long does verse 7 say that David stayed here?
18. Who did David and his men attack?
19. All three groups of people were _____.
20. Who did David and his men kill?

21. What did they take away with them?
22. Who did David share the spoil with?
23. What question did Achish ask David?
24. Who did David tell Achish, that he had attacked?
25. Why did someone not report on David?
26. Why did Achish feel safe, while David lived near him?