

## 1 Samuel Chapter 26

**1 Samuel 26:1 "And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, [which is] before Jeshimon?"**

Some critics have suggested that chapters 24 and 26 are duplicate accounts of one event in which "David" spared Saul's life.

although the details of the two accounts are far too different so they can be considered variants of one occurrence.

"Hill of Hachilah ... Jeshimon":

See note on 23:19.

We see in this, a striking similarity to the other time that the Ziphites revealed to Saul where David was.

1 Samuel 23:19 "Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which [is] on the south of Jeshimon?"

This does not however, mean that Saul kept his oath that he made to David earlier.

Saul had spells when he was insane.

He always showed his madness in hate for David.

**1 Samuel 26:2 "Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph."**

"Three thousand chosen men":

See 24:2.

The three thousand men were the same amount he had with him before, but that is not unusual.

That is the number he kept at readiness with him all the time.

**1 Samuel 26:3 "And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which [is] before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness."**

To the wilderness; the very same place where the Ziphites suggested David was.

"But David abode in the wilderness; and not in the hill of Hachilah, but was in the wilderness of Ziph itself.

"And he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness; he understood, by some information he had, that Saul had set out from Gibeah, and he was coming to seek for him into the wilderness of Ziph.

Perhaps Jonathan had given him intelligence; however, he was not quite certain, as appears by what follows.

It appears from this that David was in the wilderness.

He was not fleeing from Saul.

Probably, David was living in relative safety at this time.

He sent scouts out in every direction for safety.

It appears that one of them came in and told David that Saul was trying again, to find him and kill him.

Verses 4-25: This incident is similar to the one (in 1 Sam. Chapter 24), but here David was in greater danger because Saul's army surrounded him.

Both of these incidents proved that David was not out to get Saul; he was as threatening as a "flea" (see 24:14).

**1 Samuel 26:4 "David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed."**

To observe if he was coming or come, and where he was, that he might not be surprised by him.

For though David knew the LORD was and would be his protection, he thought it proper to be upon his guard, and to make use of means for his safety.

"And understood that Saul was come in very deed":

That he was most certainly come, and come to some certain place; which he himself went to reconnoiter (1 Sam. 26:5).

When they brought word to David that Saul was in the area, David sent out spies to specifically tell him what they were doing and where.

**1 Samuel 26:5 "And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him."**

“Saul lay”:

Saul was sleeping in an apparently invulnerable place.

He had his commander beside him, inside the camp, surrounded by his entire army.

“Abner”:

See note on 14:50.

In the first instance, Saul had come into the cave where David and his men were camped.

This time, Saul is in his camp with his men gathered around him for protection.

It seems the captain of the host, Abner, was lying very near to Saul.

Perhaps this precaution was because of the other incident.

Saul felt he was safe from harm because the 3,000 men were encamped around him.

**1 Samuel 26:6 "Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee."**

“Ahimelech the Hittite”:

Mentioned only here, he was one of the many mercenaries who formed a part of David’s army.

“Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab”:

See note on 2 Sam. 2:18.

He joined with Ahimelech in going down with David into the camp of Saul.

This would take a very brave man to go down in the middle of 3,000 men.

David asks both Abishai and Ahimelech to go with him, but only Abishai volunteers to go.

His loyalty to David is above an ordinary soldier.

**1 Samuel 26:7 "So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him."**

"Saul" regularly kept his "spear stuck in the ground":

By his head (compare 18:10-11; 19:10; 20:33), which symbolized his royal authority.

"David" first took the king's spear, and then returned it (verses 12, 22), in deference to the will of God (compare verses 23-24).

Once again, he respected duly established government (Rom. 13:1; Eph. 6:5-8), and spared the king's life (see the note on 24:4-6).

We see that David waited until they were asleep.

He and Abishai slipped by those posted to watch, and even slipped through the circle of men surrounding Saul.

This spear, near the head of Saul, was the emblem of his authority.

This trench he was in should have given some protection as well.

It is as if the LORD has caused them to be in a deep sleep.

**1 Samuel 26:8 "Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not [smite] him the second time."**

Seeing Saul was fast asleep and a spear so near him.

"God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day":

Or at this time; probably it was night.

"Now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear":

With Saul's own spear, which was stuck in the ground at his bolster.

Abishai remembered that David would not put forth his hand to stay him before, even when he had an opportunity.

Since now another occurred, he did not move it to him to do it, but begged leave to do it himself.

Which he might think would be granted, since there was such a remarkable hand of Providence in it, which seemed to direct to such a step.

"Even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time":

Signifying, that he would give such a fatal blow or thrust, that the spear should pierce through him, and fasten him to the ground, that there would be no need to repeat it.

Abishai thought that the LORD had set this up so they could kill Saul and leave.

He says to David, "If you do not want to kill him, let me do it":

Abishai thinks with one blow from the spear, he can kill Saul and they can get away.

The mention of the one blow is explaining he would not even have to wake the others, when he kills Saul.

**1 Samuel 26:9 "And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?"**

"The Lord's anointed":

See note on 24:6.

David was taught, no doubt, by the prophet Samuel and looked upon the person of Saul as made sacred and inviolable by the royal anointing.

Through the anointing Saul had become the possession of Jehovah so only Jehovah, could lawfully take away that sacred life.

This he elaborates in the next verse.

It is possible that these exalted sentiments respecting the Divine rights of kings were not uttered by David while standing in the dark night among Saul's soldiers by the sleeping king, but subsequently, when he and Abishai were talking the incident over together.

Again, David refuses to kill Saul.

He has respect for the office of king, because Saul was ordained of God for that position.

He is saying, the men might not punish you, but you would be guilty before God.

**1 Samuel 26:10 "David said furthermore, [As] the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish."**

"As the LORD liveth":

An oath usually associated with life-or-death matters.

The sovereign God would decide when, where, and how Saul would perish, not David.

David is depending upon the LORD to kill him as He did Nabal.

David expresses, that under no circumstances, will he kill Saul.

He is leaving that entirely up to God.

He may die of old age or he may die in battle, but it is up to God when he dies.

**1 Samuel 26:11 "The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that [is] at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go."**

The Oriental spear had, and still has, a spike at the lower extremity, intended for the purpose of sticking the spear into the ground when the warrior is at rest.

This common custom of Arab sheiks was also the practice of the Hebrew chiefs.

"At his bolster":

Literally, "at his head".

Perhaps Saul as a sovereign had the distinguished luxury of a bolster carried for him.

A "cruse of water" is usually, in warm climates, kept near a person's couch, as a drink in the night time is found very refreshing.

Saul's cruse would probably be of superior materials, or more richly ornamented than common ones, and therefore by its size or form could be easily distinguished.

**1 Samuel 26:12 "So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw [it], nor knew [it], neither awaked: for they [were] all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them."**

"The spear and the cruse of water":

Like the corner of Saul's robe (24:4), these were taken as proof that David had Saul's life in his hand (verse 16).

"A deep sleep from the LORD":

As with Adam (in Gen. 2:21 and Abraham in Gen. 15:12), the LORD caused Saul to be unaware of what was taking place around him.

We remember the spear was right by Saul's head.

We must also, realize the spear was a symbol of Saul's authority.

It is as if they have stripped him of his authority.

The sleep, as we said before, was a deep sleep from the LORD that had fallen on them all.

This was the LORD's way of showing that Saul's authority has been removed.

**1 Samuel 26:13 "Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off; a great space [being] between them:"**

To a hill on the other side, opposite to Hachilah, where Saul was laying encamped; or "passed over the passage".

The valley that lay between the two hills, and perhaps passed over a brook that ran into the valley, which is not unusual; so Josephus says, that he went over a brook and then came to the top of a mountain.

"And stood on the top of a hill afar off":

He chose the top of an hill, that his voice might be heard at a distance, as it might in a clear air, and still night.

And to be afar off, that he might the better make his escape, should another attempt be made to pursue him.

"A great space being between them which was a large valley that lay between the two hills.

**1 Samuel 26:14 "And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who [art] thou [that] criest to the king?"**

To the army of Saul with a loud voice, that he might be heard.

"And to Abner the son of Ner":

Particularly to him, because he was the general of the army.

"Saying, answerest thou not, Abner?":

It seems he had called to him more than once, and he had returned no answer; perhaps not being thoroughly awake, or not knowing whose voice it was, and from whence it came.

"Then Abner answered and said, who art thou that criest to the king?":

But it does not appear that David had called to the king, but only to the people, and to Abner their general.

Therefore, may be better rendered, "by the king"; that is, near him, or "before him", in his presence.

Kimchi and Ben Melech explain it, upon the king, or over him; and the Targum is, at the head of the king.

The meaning is how he could act such a part as to call so loud within the king's hearing, as to disturb the king's rest, and awake him out of his sleep.

In this particular place, the voice carried for a good way.

David has moved out of the camp to this hill to speak to Saul and his right hand man, Abner.

When the voice of David rings out from the mountain they awake and Abner inquires, who this is that is crying out to Saul?

**1 Samuel 26:15 "And David said to Abner, [Art] not thou a [valiant] man? and who [is] like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord."**

Or a man, a man of great fame for courage and valor, a man of great authority, who had the next post in the army under Saul, but had not behaved like a man worthy of his character and office.

"And who is like to thee in Israel?":

None that bare so great a name, or was in so high an office and which therefore should have been careful to have acted according to both.

"Wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king?":

Taken care to have set a guard about his person while he slept; which perhaps was neglected through a contempt of David and his men, as having no fear of them.

"For there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord":

That is, there had been one in the camp that night, who had entered there with that view to have destroyed him, had he an opportunity, and which did offer.

This was true of Abishai, who no doubt went down with David into the camp with that intent.

Though David did not, and therefore he says, "one of the people", not more.

For though two went in but only one with that view.

David observes to them the danger the king was in and his carefulness of him to preserve his life, to whom only it was owing, and the negligence of Abner, and those under his command.

**1 Samuel 26:16 "This thing [is] not good that thou hast done. [As] the LORD liveth, ye [are] worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD'S anointed. And now see where the king's spear [is], and the cruse of water that [was] at his bolster."**

Yea, it was very bad, a great fault, and very blameworthy, if he had neglected to set a watch over the king, whose business it was as a general.

The words are expressed in a figure that is called "meiosis", in which less is said than what was really intended.

"As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed":

If a watch was set, and these had fallen asleep, and neglected their duty, or had deserted their post; which to do was a capital crime, and deserving of death; wherefore he does not say this of Abner, but of the watch.

"And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster":

Which he then held up as proofs and evidences of the truth of what he said, that one had been in the camp and had carried these off, and who could as easily have destroyed the king as to have taken these away.

As he came hither with intent to destroy him, and would have done it, had he not been prevented by David.

All which likewise plainly proved the negligence of Abner, in not setting a watch about his master, or the negligence of the watch that was set.

David directs his statement to the negligence of Abner in protecting the king from harm.

Abner was the commander of Saul's army.

He was supposedly, the greatest of Saul's soldiers.

The question is, if he is that strong and brave, how did David and Abishai slip into the camp and take the king's spear?

Of course we know that it was the LORD.

Abner cannot answer this.

**1 Samuel 26:17 "And Saul knew David's voice, and said, [Is] this thy voice, my son David? And David said, [It is] my voice, my lord, O king."**

The account is most natural throughout. (1 Sam. 26:7), speaks of the enterprise being undertaken "by night," when the soldiers of Saul had fallen into "a deep sleep" (1 Sam. 26:12).

When David on his return stood on the opposite ridge, it was still, no doubt, it was the dawn of early morning.

So Saul speaks of hearing that voice of David so well known to him, and which once he so dearly loved.

He could not as yet discern the figure of his former friend.

Saul has heard that voice so many times before.

He recognizes the voice of David.

He loves David, when the evil spirit sent from God is not tormenting him.

He even speaks of David as his son here.

Saul is aware that David could have killed him this second time and he did not.

Verses 18-19:

David did not believe himself guilty of wrongdoing but acknowledged the possibility that God was behind Saul's attacks.

He was ready to repent of any transgression, an attitude that again revealed his humility.

**1 Samuel 26:18 "And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil [is] in mine hand?"**

He is suggesting that it was both below him to do it, and against his interests.

For David was his servant, and he would gladly have continued in his service, and done his business, but he drove him from it, and pursued him as a traitor, when he had not been guilty of any offence to his knowledge.

"For what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?":

What crime had he committed, that he was pursued after this manner, and his life sought for?

What had he done worthy of death?

Having a clear conscience, he could boldly ask these questions.

**1 Samuel 26:19 "Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if [they be] the children of men, cursed [be] they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods."**

“If the LORD ... the children of men”:

David set forth two possibilities for why Saul was pursuing him.

First, David had sinned against the LORD.

If that was the case, he was willing to offer a sacrifice for atonement.

Second, evil men had caused Saul’s hostility toward David.

If that were the case, these men should be judged.

“The inheritance of the LORD”:

I.e., the land of Israel (compare 2 Sam. 20:19; 21:3).

“Go, serve other gods”:

David’s exile from the land was virtually equivalent to forcing him to abandon the worship of the LORD, for there were no sanctuaries to the LORD outside of Israelite territory.

This is a very good question?

Why is Saul trying to destroy David?

Certainly, it is not for any harm that David has ever done to Saul.

David has been faithful to Saul.

He and Saul have actually had the same enemy (the Philistines).

David knows that his heart is right with Saul, and especially with the LORD.

He challenges Saul to examine what has caused him to be intent on killing David.

We know that it is jealousy, because Saul knows the LORD is taking the kingship away from him and giving it to David.

David asks Saul to seek the LORD's will in this.

If he has sinned; the LORD will accept an offering for the sin.

David also speaks a curse on the people who influence Saul to do wrong.

**1 Samuel 26:20 "Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains."**

“Flea ... partridge”:

The flea represents something that was worthless and the partridge something that was impossible to catch.

Saul was wasting his time with his pursuit of David.

David is saying, here, that his little army of six hundred men are small compared to this hand-picked army of three thousand of Saul's men.

It is like a hunter with a gun, who goes out in combat against an animal who has no weapon.

Only the LORD, Himself, has kept David from death.

**1 Samuel 26:21 "Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."**

“I have sinned”:

Sas in 24:17, Saul confessed his sin and wrongdoing.

Although Saul may have been sincere, he could not be trusted and David wisely did not accept his invitation to return with him.

“I have played the fool”:

Saul had been foolish in his actions toward David, as had Nabal.

Even though Saul acknowledged his sin in hunting down David (as in 24:17), David feared for his life (27:1).

Saul was so consumed with keeping the throne that he lost touch with reality.

The return of David, at this point, would have been an impossibility, because of the women that was involved.

David had taken two wives and then Saul had torn Michal away and given her to another man for a wife.

Saul's promises are not to be trusted either.

He had sworn with an oath before the LORD before, and yet he came against David again.

At the moment he might feel remorse, but his jealousy causes these outbursts against David.

This is probably not true repentance on Saul's part, but an admission of their bungling their attempt to kill David.

**1 Samuel 26:22 "And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it."**

And which perhaps was his scepter, which David therefore would not keep, lest it should be thought or said that he had deprived him of an ensign of his royalty, and be interpreted as a token of his design to seize his crown and throne.

"And let one of the young men come over and fetch it":

Notwithstanding the acknowledgment Saul had made of his sin and folly, David did not choose to carry the spear to him.

Not caring to trust him, and put himself into his hands, lest the evil spirit should return and come upon him suddenly, and alter his disposition and carriage.

Or would he send any of his men with it, whose lives were dear to him, lest they should be seized as traitors, but desires one of Saul's men might be sent for it.

The exciting thing here is the authority of the king was in David's hand.

He allows this emblem of authority to be returned to Saul.

It is as if it is by David's permission that Saul's authority is restored.

This really shows that the true power and authority are in David's hand.

**1 Samuel 26:23 "The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into [my] hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed."**

Or recompense every man that deals justly and faithfully with others, as he had done with Saul.

Or the LORD, who is just and faithful to his promises, reward the men that act the good and upright part; and this was a prayer of faith; for David doubted not that, though Saul might fail, yet God could not.

For the LORD delivered thee into my hand this day; or "into a hand" into the hand of Abishai, who had it in his power to slay him, when he went and took the spear that was at his bolster, and would have done it, but David suffered him not.

"But I would not stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed; nor suffer another to stretch forth his hand against him; so careful and tender was he of his life.

"Righteousness":

Is a gift from God.

It means the person is in right standing with the LORD.

David recognizes that his power, strength, righteousness, and faithfulness are of the LORD.

It is the LORD who delivered Saul into the hands of David.

In the end, it is the LORD who is the judge.

He it is that brings one down and lifts another up.

David would not lift his hand against Saul in respect for the office that the LORD had anointed Saul to.

David has tremendous respect for the LORD.

**1 Samuel 26:24 "And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation."**

Or "magnified"; and made great account of, as being the life of the king of Israel, and the Lord's anointed, and so spared.

"So let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD":

He does not say in the eyes of Saul, as it should have been by way of retaliation, and as it might have been expected he would have said.

But he had no dependence on Saul, nor expected justice to be done him by him.

But he prays that his life might be precious in the sight of LORD, and taken care of, and protected by him, as he believed it would.

"And let him deliver me out of all tribulation":

For as yet he did not think himself quite out of it, notwithstanding all that Saul had said.

But believed the LORD would deliver him in due time; from him alone he looked for it, and on him he depended.

David realizes the divine protection of his life by the LORD.

David had not harmed Saul, because of his spiritual conviction.

David asks the LORD for even more divine protection, because of his spiritual convictions.

David places his safety in the hands of the LORD.

It is the LORD who is the Deliverer of us all.

**1 Samuel 26:25 "Then Saul said to David, Blessed [be] thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great [things], and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place."**

"Still prevail":

Saul recognized the certain success of David's future as Israel's king (24:20).

It is interesting to me, that even though Saul says all of these wonderful things, the spirit within David will not allow him to place himself in the hands of Saul.

Saul does, in a sense, speak a blessing on David.

He does not really keep his word however. Saul is totally consumed by the evil spirit.

His heart would still desire to be rid of David so he and his family could remain king.

## **1 Samuel Chapter 26 Questions**

1. Who reported to Saul where David was?
2. How many men did Saul have with him?
3. Where was David, when he realized Saul had come after him?
4. Who was there to protect Saul?
5. Where was Saul sleeping?

6. Who did David ask to go with him into Saul's camp?
7. Who agreed to go?
8. When did David come into Saul's camp?
9. Where was Saul's spear?
10. Why did Abishai think he should kill Saul?
11. What was David's answer to Abishai's request to kill him?
12. Why did David not want him killed?
13. Who does David believe will smite Saul?
14. What did David take from Saul?
15. Why did this not wake Saul's men?
16. What did Saul's spear symbolize?
17. What was the LORD showing in the removal of Saul's spear?
18. Where did David go, before he cried out to Saul?
19. Who did David direct his message to?
20. How had Saul recognized David in the dark?
21. What does David ask Saul?
22. Who does David say is to be cursed?
23. Who is Saul's and David's mutual enemy?
24. What does David call himself in verse 20?
25. What does Saul reply to David?
26. What did David tell Saul to do, to get his spear back?
27. "Righteousness" is a \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.
28. What does it mean?
29. What does David realize in verse 24?
30. Where did they each go, after this meeting?