

## FIRST SAMUEL

7. Where was Saul when the Ziphites went to him? \_\_\_\_\_
8. In what wilderness was David hiding when the Ziphites returned? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What name was given to the place where David escaped? \_\_\_\_\_
10. To what place did David finally flee? \_\_\_\_\_

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 24

Vv. 1-7 *David spares Saul's life.* David was hiding in a cave in En-gedi when Saul came to rest in the open mouth of the cave. As Saul slept, David crept forward and cut off the bottom of his robe. When Saul left the cave, David ran after him to identify himself and to show him how he could have killed him if he had so desired.

Vv. 9-15 *David pleads for his life.* David rightfully judged that many men had spoken false words about him and his relationship to Saul. He therefore asked Saul to listen to him and not to the false reports. He also asked that the Lord judge between Saul and himself.

Vv. 16-22 *Saul accepts David's plea.* Saul knew that what David said was true. He admitted that David was more righteous than he and assured David that he would no longer pursue him. Saul then went home, but David and his men stayed in the stronghold of Judah.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Let God lead.* David was not willing to take matters into his own hands to get rid of Saul. He knew, of

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course, that if he killed Saul that he would himself become king. He would come to the throne under these circumstances with a shadow of guilt over him. He therefore was willing to wait until in God's providence Saul's reign would end. We need to learn this lesson of patiently following the Lord in all of our endeavors.

2. *Let the Lord judge.* David asked Saul to let God judge between the two of them. David knew that the Lord's judgment would be right. This is where all our judgment should originate.
3. *"Overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:21b). David's goodness in sparing Saul's life overwhelmed Saul and caused him to realize that he had been wrong in trying to take his life. He therefore assured David that he would no longer pursue him. He also asked David to make a covenant that David would not kill Saul's descendants. David was willing to make this covenant, and the pursuit was over for the time being.

Saul's Life Spared by David, 24:1-22.

### *David Spares Saul's Life. 24:1-7*

And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of En-gedi.

2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

3 And he came to the sheepecotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him

as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the Lord.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way.

1. *Who told Saul where to find David? 24:1*

No mention is made of the party or parties who told Saul that David was over in En-gedi. Since the Ziphites had informed Saul on previous occasions, they were probably the ones who gave this information to Saul. Again Saul may have left certain of his servants in the land of Judah to keep him informed of David's whereabouts. Although Saul was forced to leave the area himself in order to drive out the invading Philistines, he did not want to lose contact with David.

2. *What were the "rocks of the wild goats? 24:2*

Wild goats ran on the sides of the cliffs which dropped down to the Dead Sea from the mountain of Judah in the vicinity of En-gedi. It was in one of these caves on the west side of the Dead Sea just a little farther to the north that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found by a goat-herd. The man was looking for some of his lost animals when he came upon the mouth of one of these caves. Thinking that perhaps his animals were down in the cave, he himself entered it and found the sealed earthen vessels which contained the fabulous scrolls which have been acclaimed as the most important archaeological discovery of recent times. As far as Bible lands are concerned, wild goats made many tracks only a foot wide all through this area. This expres-

sion should not be taken as a proper name for some particular rocks, but as a general term applied to the rocks of the location on account of the number of goats which are to be found in the region.

3. *Why was David in a cave? 24:3*

Since caves were throughout the length and breadth of the area, they afforded a natural hiding place for David and his band of 600 men. The men of Israel hid themselves in the caves earlier when the Philistines attacked their land (I Samuel 13:6). Lot had asked permission to hide in a cave when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed (Genesis 19:30). Probably David and his men went into the caves to sleep, finding this to be a more secure place to hide than out in the open field.

4. *Why did Saul come into the cave? 24:3*

It is said that Saul went into the cave "to cover his feet." The exact meaning of this expression is debated, and some take it to be a euphemism. The expression occurs also in Judges 3:24 when Eglon's servants were afraid to disturb him as they thought he had gone into his chamber "to cover his feet." Those who understand this as a euphemism believe that it describes Saul's performing the necessities of nature, since it was a custom in the East to cover the feet at such a time. The Peshitta, an ancient version of the Bible, translates this Hebrew phrase as meaning "to sleep." What follows seems to favor this. David must have gone into the cave to rest, and Saul found the spot to be suitable to his needs as well.

5. *How did David's men view the situation? 24:4*

David's men thought that this was an opportune time for David to kill Saul. They said, "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee . . ." No record is made of David's ever having received a prophecy that God would deliver Saul into his hand. David was not out to kill Saul, although Saul accused him of lying in wait for him (I Samuel 22:8, 13). Gad, the prophet, was with David,

but there is no record of his having brought such an announcement to David. David's men must have therefore been referring to their interpretation of God's providences. It appeared to them that God had been saying through the transpiring events that eventually David would prevail over Saul. They could see no outcome of the situation except that David would overcome Saul and succeed him on the throne.

6. *What was David's view? 24:5*

David did nothing more than to arise and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe while he was sleeping. Afterward his conscience hurt him about this. He looked upon Saul as God's anointed. David had great respect for God's anointed leaders, and he was ashamed of the fact that he had humiliated Saul by marring his robe.

*David Pleads for His Life. 24:8-15*

8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and *some* bade *me* kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the Lord's anointed.

11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

12 The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness pro-

ceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

15 The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

7. *Why did David dare to show himself? 24:8*

David trusted God to protect him, but he did not want to take foolish risks. Still he felt the circumstances favored his speaking to Saul directly. He could demonstrate the fact that he had not been lying in wait for Saul. In his hand he had a piece of Saul's robe which he had cut off, and this would be evidence of the fact that he could have killed Saul if he had wanted to do so. Armed with this bit of evidence, David thought that he could prevail upon Saul to listen to reason and to leave the area and stop his attempt to kill David.

8. *Why did David ask that God judge between them? 24:12*

David did not want to condemn his king and pass judgment upon him. He simply explained to Saul that he had cut off his skirt and did not kill him. This was a demonstration of the fact that there was neither evil or transgression in David's hand. He explained that he had not sinned against Saul. On the other hand he said that Saul was hunting him to kill him. David also was expressing his avowed purpose of letting God work out the difficult situation. David would not lift up his own hand to harm Saul. He was waiting for the Lord to avenge him of the evil which had been done to him.

9. *What ancients had given this proverb? 24:13*

The Hebrew word behind our word *ancients* signifies those who are from the east country. The word appears in Ezekiel 47:8 and must be a reference to the forefathers

who had originated in the Mesopotamian valley. In later Israelite history, Solomon is compared to the wise men of the East. At that time it was said that Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all the children of the east country (I Kings 4:30). The saying which David quoted must have been well known, and it is reminiscent of Jesus' statement that we shall know men by their fruits. Jesus said, "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (Matthew 6:17). David knew that if he performed the wicked deed he would be considered a wicked man. He did not want to be in this class.

10. *Why did David call himself a dead dog?* 24:14

David was referring to himself as being one of no account. He was from the lowly shepherd's home in Bethlehem of Judah. His father was not a very important man in Israel. David's reference to himself in this lowly figure was similar to Saul's humility as he was introduced to Samuel. Saul had said that he was a member of the smallest tribe of Israel and that his father was the least of all the families of the tribe (I Samuel 9:21). Such language is customary among Orientals. Usually they are a very humble people, and we take David's expression to be a sincere effort to subject himself to the rightful claims of his king.

*Saul Accepts David's Plea.* 24:16-22

16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

17 And he said to David, Thou *art* more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

21 Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

11. *Why did Saul weep? 24:16*

Saul was ashamed of himself. He could hardly believe that it was David speaking to him. He had to ask him if it were really his voice that he was hearing. Saul admitted that David was more righteous than himself. He realized that David had rewarded good for evil. David's judgment of the situation was correct. He really did not need to wait for a further indication from God of His judgment in the matter. Saul knew what the judgment would be.

12. *Why did Saul conclude that David would be king? 24:20*

As events were transpiring, it was quite evident that Saul could not prevail over David. It was therefore evident to Saul as well as to many others that David was destined to be the sole leader of the people of Israel. It is doubtful that Saul knew that Samuel had anointed David to be king. Jonathan had reached the conclusion earlier (I Samuel 23:16). Even the Philistines had greeted David with a reference to their belief that he was king of Israel. The servants of Achish asked him, "Is not this David, the king of the land?" (I Samuel 21:11). These people surely would have no knowledge of the anointing at Bethlehem at the hands of Samuel the prophet. They must have

reached this conclusion from the song that they had heard the people singing one to another in their dances as they said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Samuel 21:11b).

13. *What favor did Saul ask of David? 24:21*

Saul asked David to enter into a covenant with him that was similar to the covenant existing between Jonathan and David. He asked David to swear to him that he would not kill his heirs. He prayed that David would not blot his name out of the national records of Israel and from his father's line. The Gibeonites asked for such vengeance to be reeked upon the house of Saul because Saul had tried to exterminate them. Their vengeance was only a partial extermination, but they did ask that seven of Saul's sons be delivered to them in order that they might hang them up in Gibeon (II Samuel 21:6). Egyptian kings quite often treated their successors in this way. They defaced the monuments so that there would be no permanent record left of their predecessors, and killed all the family of the former king to prevent any future glory from accruing to the house. David entered into this agreement with Saul. He had no evil intentions towards him.

14. *Where was the hold? 24:22*

David must have returned to the mountain heights. A different Hebrew word is used in I Samuel 22:5 to signify a stronghold. At that time David was seeking refuge in Mizpeh of Moab. Since Moab was outside the borders of Israel, Gad brought God's directive to David and told him to spend his time in the land of Israel. By staying inside the borders of the country, he would not only demonstrate to his people that he was upright in his actions, but he would also be afforded what protection they could give him. David's returning to the stronghold in Judah is indicative of the fact that he did not think that Saul's good intentions towards him would be long-lasting. Had he

thought that Saul would be favorably inclined towards him over a long period of time, he might have returned with him to Gibeah.

15. *On what two occasions did David spare Saul's life?*

24:26

Saul was called from his pursuit of David to drive the Philistines from the border of Israel. When Saul returned from this expedition, he again hunted for David, this time in the wilderness of En-gedi. It so happened that David and his men were hiding in a cave. Saul entered the mouth of that cave, and slept there. David's men were elated, because it appeared that Jehovah had delivered David's enemy into his hand. All David would do, however, was to cut the skirt from Saul's robe, privily. Even this small act weighed upon David's conscience. When Saul arose and left the cave, David kept his men from harming him, and asserted that he was loyal to the king, Jehovah's anointed. This touched even Saul's heart; and he repented over the evil that he had plotted against David, swearing that he would not do so any more. Saul then returned to his capital, but David and his men went up into a stronghold.

On another occasion, David sent spies and found out Saul's camp. This was after Saul had promised not to pursue David. David found the camp sleeping. He asked who would go over into Saul's camp. Abishai wanted to kill Saul while he was sleeping, saying that he would not need the second thrust of his spear. David again spared Saul's life, however, and took only his spear and a cruse of water, both of which were at the head of the sleeping Saul. Then, David went to a high hill a little distance off and shouted to the sleeping pursuers. He chided Abner for not having kept more careful watch over Saul, Jehovah's anointed. Saul recognized David's loyalty to the king and promised the second time not to pursue David any longer. Each of the two men then went his way.

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CHAPTER 24 IN REVIEW

1. How many men did Saul take to catch David? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What name was given to the area where Saul went? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where was David hiding? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What did David's men urge him to do to Saul? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What part of Saul's clothing did David cut? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What ancient proverb did David quote? \_\_\_\_\_
7. By what figures did David allude to himself? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What did Saul do when he recognized David? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Where did Saul go after leaving David? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Where did David go after Saul left? \_\_\_\_\_

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 25

- V. 1 *The death of Samuel.* The grand prophet of God finally reached the end of his earthly pilgrimage. He was buried in his home at Ramah. Although mention is made of David's activities, it is not specified that he was able to be in Ramah at the time of Samuel's burial. Since he went farther south after Samuel died, he probably felt he had lost a great friend and that he should get farther away from Saul.
- Vv. 2-13 *Nabal's shameful treatment of David.* David had befriended Nabal by protecting his flocks from time to time. He therefore felt that he had a right to ask for some consideration at the time of the shearing. Nabal was churlish, however, and refused to send any provisions to David. David thus determined to fight against Nabal.