

# 1 Samuel 23 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
[1 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

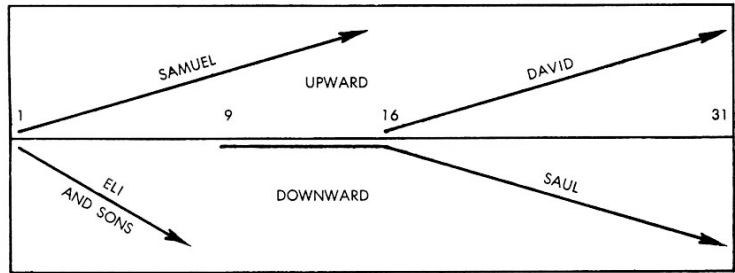
TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1 Chronicles 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

**Legend:** B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.

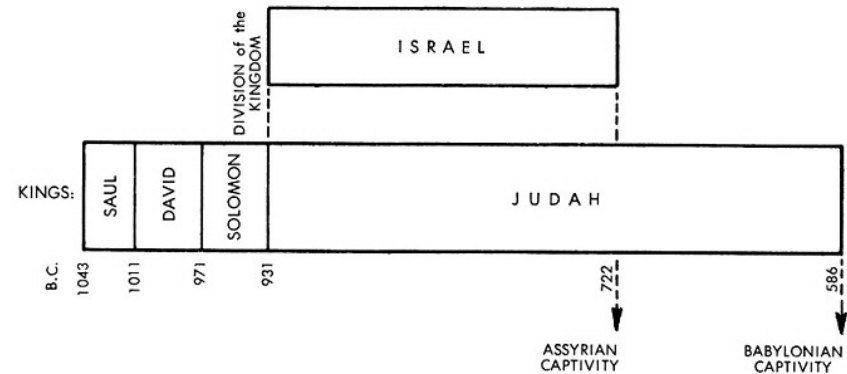
The Ryrie Study Bible

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Map on Left [ESV Global Study Bible](#), on right [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#)  
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Overlappings in 1 Samuel



First Three Kings of Israel

1	9	16	31
SAMUEL —prophet, priest, judge	SAUL —man after man's heart	DAVID —man after God's heart	
—birth —childhood —judgeship	—choice —reign —rejection	—anointing —pursuit —exile	

Main Characters in 1 Samuel

MAPS TRACING

DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL

1 SAMUEL 19-24

Below is a summary from the [ESV Global Study Bible](#) of 18 places David fled

[Click to Enlarge](#)

The following notes are modified from ESV notes to include the related Scriptures.

David's growing reputation fueled Saul's jealousy which soon flamed into a desire to murder David (1Sa 19:9-10).

- (1) David fled from Saul in Gibeah (1Sa 19:9-10) and then from his home (1Sa 19:11-17)
- (2) After Saul tried unsuccessfully to kill him in his home, he fled to Samuel at Naioth in Ramah (1Sa 19:18)
- (3), Saul sought David in Naioth of Ramah, but the Spirit saved him (1Sa 19:19-24), and he fled back to meet Jonathan in Gibeah where Jonathan sent an "arrow-gram" warning David of Saul's determination to kill him (1Sa 20:1-42)
- (4). David then fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob where he collected food and Goliath's sword. (1Sa 21:1-9)
- (5), David briefly sought refuge in the Philistine city of Gath (1Sa 21:10-15) (see Ps 56:1-13 and Ps 34:1-22)
- (6) David then escaped to set up headquarters at the cave of Adullam where his army swelled to 400 men. (1Sa 22:1-2)
- (7), In order to protect his parents from harm, David left them in the care of the king of Moab at Mizpah (1Sa 22:3-4)
- (8) and went to live in "the stronghold", the cave of Adullam (1Sa 22:1, 4) (see Ps 142:1-7)
- (9). Prophet Gad warns David and he went to the forest of Hereth (1Sa 22:5)
- (10) and then left to rescue nearby Keilah from some Philistine raiding parties. (1Sa 23:1-5)
- (11) When David heard that Saul was coming to Keilah, he and his 600 men fled Keilah. (1Sa 23:9-13) David relocated to the wilderness of Ziph (1Sa 23:14)
- (12) After the men of Ziph betrayed David to Saul (1Sa 23:19-20), David and his men went to live in the wilderness of Maon (1Sa 23:24-25) and narrowly escaped capture there by Saul (1Sa 23:26-28)
- (13) . Fleeing the strongholds of Engedi (1Sa 23:29) David again evaded capture by Saul and refused an opportunity to take Saul's life. (1Sa 24:1-22)
- (14) After Samuel's death (1Sa 25:1) David went to the wilderness of Paran (1Sa 25:1)
- (15). While he was there, David was again betrayed to Saul by the men of Ziph and refused another opportunity to take Saul's life. (1Sa 26:1-25)
- (16) Finally, David and his men sought refuge with Achish, the king of Gath (1Sa 27:1-12)

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Below is another map from the Holman Bible Atlas ([digital book](#); [Hardcover](#))

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**1 Samuel 23:1 Then they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are plundering the threshing floors."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:1 κα πηγγ λη τ Δαυιδ λ γοντες δο ο λλ φυλοι πολεμο σιν ν τ Κεϊλα κα α το διαρπ ζουσιν καταπατο σιν το ς λω

LXE 1 Samuel 23:1 And it was told David, saying, behold, the Philistines war in Keila, and they rob, they trample on the threshing-floors.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the

threshingfloors.

NET 1 Samuel 23:1 They told David, "The Philistines are fighting in Keilah and are looting the threshing floors."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:1 It was reported to David: "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and raiding the threshing floors."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:1 Now they told David, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:1 When David was told, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors,"

NLT 1 Samuel 23:1 One day news came to David that the Philistines were at Keilah stealing grain from the threshing floors.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:1 Now they told David, "The Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are robbing the threshing floors."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:1 News was then brought to David, 'The Philistines are besieging Keilah and plundering the threshing-floors'.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:1 David received information that the Philistines were attacking Keilah and plundering the threshing floors.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:1 And they declare to David, saying, 'Lo, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are spoiling the threshing-floors.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:1 David was asked, "Did you know that the Philistines are fighting against Keilah? They are robbing the threshing floors."

- **Keilah:** city in western foothills of tribe of Judah. Jos 15:44 Ne 3:17,18
- **plundering the threshing floors:** Lev 26:16 De 28:33,51 Jdg 6:4,11 Mic 6:15
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Threshing Floor

## PHILISTINES PLUNDERING KEILAH'S THRESHING FLOORS

[Don Anderson's](#) titles for chapter 23 - "Learning to Look to God," "From Fear to Faith," "Betrayed."

[Paul Apple](#) titles the chapter "GOD SPECIALIZES IN ENGINEERING NARROW ESCAPES INTRODUCTION" adding that this is a "Dangerous form of Hide and Seek; David hiding with his loyal band of followers (now about 600 men); Saul seeking to destroy him with all the power and resources of the military at his command as well as intelligence gathering resources Have you ever been in a tight spot ... questioning God's ability to deliver; Finding grace to help just in the nick of time. 1Sa 23:1-14 NARROW ESCAPE #1 – TRAPPED IN KEILAL -- WHEN GOD LEADS US INTO DANGER, HE PROVIDES THE PATH OF ESCAPE. 1Sa 23:15-18 ASIDE: ENCOURAGING COVENANT BETWEEN DAVID AND JONATHAN. 1Sa 23:19-29 NARROW ESCAPE #2 – CLOSE CALL IN WILDERNESS OF MAON (BETRAYED BY THE ZIPHITES) – THE LORD CAN PROVIDENTIALLY INTERVENE EVEN WHEN OUR ENEMIES HAVE US SURROUNDED

**Alan Redpath** points out that "At this point in his experience, David wrote at least three psalms: the 27th, the 31st, and the 54th. Others may also have been written at this time but these three sum up the spiritual conflict that was going on in his heart. They

show what was shaping his life to make him a man of God." **"My times are in Thy hand"** (Ps 31:15), and that means that in this moment of adversity and trial, David knew that all the question marks of his life were in the hand of God. **He knew it was impossible to be in God's hand and in the enemy's hand at the same time. The gloom begins to disappear and fear departs as faith emerges in glorious triumph. This man is rising out of his testing and adversity to learn to put his utter dependence on the Lord. If you begin with God, your enemies grow small.** "If you begin with the enemy, you may never reach God. If you begin with Him, the problems begin to dwindle. If you begin with the problems, you never get through to God. Think of that and apply it to your life, in your adversity and testing." (See [The Making of a Man of God - Life of David - 137 page PDF](#))

**Gene Getz** points out, "Following David's period of deep distress and fear which caused him to take matters into his own hands and woefully make a mess of things, **he emerged from the cave of Adullam a different man** While hiding there from Saul, he had many quiet hours to think and reflect on his bizarre and deceitful behavior. It was there he no doubt had a unique encounter with his Lord." (Borrow [David: God's man in faith and failure](#))

"How are thy servants blessed,  
O Lord, How sure is their defense.  
Eternal wisdom is their guide,  
Their help omnipotence."  
-- Joseph Addison

**Then** - David was apparently still in the forests of Hereth ([#9 on map above](#))

**John Davis** - While in the Hebron area, word came to David that the Philistines were planning a campaign in the Shephelah against the city of Keilah which was located northwest of Hebron, about thirteen miles east of the Philistines' stronghold of Gath. This raid was to take place in the early summer, since they planned to "rob the threshingfloors" (v. 1). The spiritual maturity and sensitivity of David were evident in the fact that he immediately inquired of the Lord before undertaking this war in spite of the fact that such defense would have been perfectly legitimate. (Borrow [Israel : from conquest to exile : a commentary on Joshua-2 Kings](#))

**they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah** ("fortress") - Who is **they**? His men? [See map #10 above](#) for Keilah, located about 3-4 miles SE of Adullam, about 20 miles SW of Jerusalem and W of Hebron. The Philistines who David had just fled from was now raiding this town in Judah, the close proximity to Philistia making Keilah extremely vulnerable to aggression by the Philistines. The town would have been especially attractive to the Philistine raiders in the harvest season which would provide food for the Philistine army. There is a television show called "Better Call Saul," which would have be apropos for Keilah under Philistine attack, but Saul was more obsessed with killing David than he was with defending Keilah!

**Plundering** ([shasah](#) - carrying off spoil from) **the threshing floors** - This signifies that the Philistines were stealing the harvested grain the Keilahites needed for sustenance.

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**Fighting** (making war)([03898](#)) [lacham](#) means to do battle, fight, engage in combat, wage war -- against Egyptians (Ex 1:10), against Israel (Nu 21:1, 23, 25, 22:11; Josh 9:2); against Israel's enemies (Josh 10:29). Of Yahweh fighting for His people (Ex 14:14, Ex 14:25, Ex 17:9-10, Dt 1:30, Dt 3:22, Josh 10:14, Jer 21:5, Neh 4:14, 2 Chr 20:29) In doing so, Yahweh often calls into His service not only Israel, but also the elements of nature (Josh 10:11; Josh 24:7; Jdg 5:20). Nevertheless, the Israelites must also join the battle and fight with the Lord. Even though their land has been deeded to them as an inheritance, they must conquer it in battle (Ex 23:27-33). **W E Vine** - While the word is commonly used in the context of "armies engaged in pitched battle" against each other (Num. 21:23; Josh. 10:5; Judg. 11:5), it is also used to describe "single, hand-to-hand combat" (1 Sam. 17:32-33). Frequently, God "fights" the battle for Israel (Deut. 20:4). Instead of swords, words spoken by a lying tongue are often used "to fight" against God's servants (Ps. 109:2). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary](#))

**Plundering** ([08154](#)) [shasah](#) means to spoil or plunder of both land and objects usually that which belonged to Israel and usually allowed by God as divine judgment for sins against which they had been clearly warned but from which they refused to repent. It can also refer (as in this passage) to the people who do the plundering. It is notable that if the plunderers plundered more than God allowed, they too would be plundered!

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**ISBE - KEILAH** - ("fortress") - Keilah was a border town in Judah, about twelve miles from the Philistine city of Gath and some ten miles west of the forest of Hereth where David and his men were camping (1Sa 22:5). A city of the [Shephelah](#) mentioned (Josh 15:44) along with Nezib, Aehzib and Mareshah. Among those who repaired the walls of Jerusalem was "Hashabiah, the ruler of half the district of Keilah, for his district. After him repaired their brethren, Bavvai the son of Henadad, the ruler of half the district of Keilah" (Neh 3:17,18).

**David and Keilah:** It is, however, from the story of the wandering of David that we have most information regarding this place. It

was a city with gates and bars (1 Sam 23:7). The Philistines came against it and commenced robbing the threshing-floors. David, after twice inquiring of Yahweh, went down with his 600 men (1 Sam 23:13) and "fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and slew them with great slaughter." Saul hearing that David and his men were within a fortified town "summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men" (1 Sam 23:8). Then David asked Abiathar the priest to bring him an ephod, and he inquired of Yahweh whether, if Saul came, the men of Keilah would surrender him to save that city; hearing from Yahweh, "They will deliver thee up," he and all his men escaped from Keilah and went into the wilderness. The reputed strength of Keilah is confirmed by its mention in 5 tablets in the Tell el-Amarna Letters under the name of Kilts (qilti, Petrie) with Gedor, Gath, Rabbah and Gezer.

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#### QUESTION - [What is the significance of Keilah in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Keilah is mentioned sixteen times in the Bible, all in the Old Testament (**ED**: 18x/16v - Jos. 15:44; 1 Sam. 23:1; 1 Sam. 23:2; 1 Sam. 23:3; 1 Sam. 23:4; 1 Sam. 23:5; 1 Sam. 23:6; 1 Sam. 23:7; 1 Sam. 23:8; 1 Sam. 23:10; 1 Sam. 23:11; 1 Sam. 23:12; 1 Sam. 23:13; 1 Chr. 4:19; Neh. 3:17; Neh. 3:18). In one instance, Keilah is a personal name, and in the others it is a place name. The meaning of the name *Keilah* is "fortress" or "citadel."

A man named Keilah is mentioned in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 4:19. Every other time, *Keilah* refers to a geographical location. Although there are fifteen other uses, they occur in only three passages.

The place Keilah is first mentioned in Joshua 15:44 as one of the Canaanite cities that was allotted to Judah when the Promised Land was first being [conquered](#) and divided among the tribes.

Keilah is also mentioned twice in Jeremiah 3:17–18 where those who repaired the wall around Jerusalem are listed. Here Keilah is a district. Two leaders are mentioned, each of them over "half the district of Keilah."

Keilah is mentioned twelve times in 1 Samuel 23:1–14. Before he became king and when he was fleeing from Saul, [David](#) led a band of about 600 men who served to protect him and to help other Israelites in need. Keilah, a fortified city in the Judean plain, was being terrorized by the Philistines and was in need of help.

"Now they told David, 'Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors'" (1 Samuel 23:1ESV). David inquired of the Lord twice about going to Keilah (verses 2a and 4a), and twice the Lord promised victory over the Philistines (verses 2b and 4b). "And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah" (verse 5, ESV).

The report of David's rout of the Philistines reached [King Saul](#), and, thinking he had David trapped, Saul immediately "summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men" (1 Samuel 23:8, ESV). In Keilah, David consulted with Abiathar the priest and asked God if David and his men were safe in Keilah (verses 9–11). The Lord's response was that David and his men were not safe. Saul would come down to the city, and the people of Keilah would surrender David into Saul's hands (verse 12). "Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go" (verse 13, ESV). Saul gave up his plan to besiege Keilah but continued to search for David. "And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand" (verse 14, ESV).

This passage illustrates how David relied on God's leading in his day-to-day decisions and his desire to help his fellow countrymen. In 1 Samuel 23:1–12, David prays no fewer than four times. And David does not act until he knows the Lord's will in the matter. Amazingly, the people of Keilah were disloyal to David, even after he had saved them. They were even willing to betray David into the hands of his enemy. In spite of this, David did not take vengeance on Keilah. He simply left before it became an issue.

In contrast to David's four prayers, Saul does not pray at all. Rather, he assumes the circumstances that seemed favorable to him were proof of God's blessing and that he was following God's leading (1 Samuel 23:7). He had convinced himself that murdering David was God's will, but God thwarted those evil plans and preserved David's life. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Samuel 23:2 So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah."**

κα πατ ξεις ν το ς λοφ λοις το τοις κα σ σεις τ ν Κεϊλα

LXE 1 Samuel 23:2 And David enquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said, Go, and thou shalt smite these Philistines, and shalt save Keila.



KJV 1 Samuel 23:2 Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

NET 1 Samuel 23:2 So David asked the LORD, "Should I go and strike down these Philistines?" The LORD said to David, "Go, strike down the Philistines and deliver Keilah."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:2 So David inquired of the LORD: "Should I launch an attack against these Philistines?" The LORD answered David, "Launch an attack against the Philistines and rescue Keilah."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:2 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:2 he inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:2 David asked the LORD, "Should I go and attack them?" "Yes, go and save Keilah," the LORD told him.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:2 David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:2 David consulted Yahweh, 'Shall I go and fight these Philistines?' Yahweh replied to David, 'Go and fight the Philistines and save Keilah.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:2 So he consulted the LORD, inquiring, "Shall I go and defeat these Philistines?" The LORD answered, "Go, for you will defeat the Philistines and rescue Keilah."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:2 And David asketh at Jehovah, saying, 'Do I go? -- and have I smitten among these Philistines?' And Jehovah saith unto David, 'Go, and thou hast smitten among the Philistines, and saved Keilah.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:2 David asked the LORD, "Should I go and attack these Philistines?" "Go," the LORD told David, "attack the Philistines, and save Keilah."

- **inquired:** 1Sa 23:4,6,9-12 30:8 Nu 27:21 Jos 9:14 Jdg 1:1 2Sa 5:19,23 1Ch 14:10 Ps 32:8 Pr 3:5,6 Jer 10:23
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID SEEKS YAHWEH'S WORD ON KEILAH

**So - So** means "and for this reason" or "therefore". What reason? The Philistines were raiding and plundering Keilah is David's reason. In short, in a time of adversity watch what David does! And keep the context in mind -- David is a man on the run himself and yet he is not so inwardly focused that he does not seek to help others in distress.

**THOUGHT** - There is certainly a good lesson in David's response for all of us, for adversity tends too often to cause us to hold back help or even withdraw from aiding others in their adversity. "*I have enough bad news in my life right now, so I don't need your bad news to compound bad news and complicate my life!*" David's bad news did not blind him to the bad news of his fellow Israelites, those for whom he was the "king in training" and would one day reign over. David considered others at Keilah as more important than himself! Who does that sound like? (Rhetorical of course - see Php 2:3-5+).

**David inquired of the LORD** - How did he inquire? Recall he had a priest Abiathar who had an ephod (cf 1Sa 23:6) so it is conceivable that God's will was sought using the Urim and Thummim. This is the David we have come to love, the man after God's own heart, who again (after the Nob nightmare and Gath madness) is seeking His LORD. Clearly David is again in fellowship and communion with the LORD. He has recognized his sins and their consequences and confessed and repented, now going in his heart and mind toward the LORD, instead of previously away from the LORD and to self. We can all identify with this scenario!

Is prayer my first or my last resort?

God wants us to pray before we do anything at all.

**Warren Wiersbe** notes that "David paused to determine the will of God, a practice every leader needs to imitate, for it's easy for our own personal interests to get in the way of God's will." ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**THOUGHT** - Do you hear that wise advice President \_\_\_\_\_ of the USA? What if every major decision of

the President were undertaken like David undertook this endeavor? Just wishing "In God We Trust" would be a real time practice!

**Don Anderson** - At this particular time David didn't know anything of his great future except by faith. In fact, it didn't look too bright right now, but God was shaping his life. He was learning to look to the Lord. We too are going to share a throne with the King of Kings one day, but right now we have to live toward that day by faith. This is our training and preparation time

**TSK Note** - Had not David loved his country, and been above all motives of private and personal revenge, he would have rejoiced in this invasion of Judea, as producing a strong diversion in his favour, and embroiling his inveterate enemy. In most cases, a man with David's wrongs would have joined with the enemies of his country, and avenged himself on the author of his calamities; but he thinks of nothing but succouring Keilah, and using his power and influence in behalf of his brethren.

**Saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?"** - How did David seek Him? The text does not say, but presumably by words in prayer. Alternatively he may have used the ephod as in 1Sa 23:9-11. One has to wonder what the outcome would have been had David inquired earlier "Shall I go to Nob for bread and weapons?"

**And the LORD (Jehovah - Yahweh) said to David, "Go and (launch) attack the Philistines and deliver (save, rescue) Keilah** - Yahweh answers David affirmatively but exactly how He communicated is not stated. Clearly David is back on the straight and narrow path of holiness or otherwise God would not have answered for Psalm 66:18 says "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear."

**THOUGHT**- So God is "deaf" so to speak to our cries if we have unconfessed sin! Is God answering your prayers? Are you making sure you keep short accounts by frequent confession (1Jn 1:9+)? That is a good practice to assure that He even "hears" or listens to our prayers!

**Luis Palau** makes an interesting observation: "If David had applied this same principle to his domestic life, how different his family history might have been. David committed his military decisions to the Lord but he neglected to consult God regarding marriage. He simply didn't pray about the women in his life. And that severely crippled his effectiveness for God. This has happened to many people, not just to David. People will pray about a job, a church, unsaved relatives, and the Sunday School lesson, but when it comes to choosing a girlfriend or a boyfriend, they think, That's my choice. God doesn't have to be involved, so they refuse or carefully neglect to speak to the Lord about this portion of their lives. In Proverbs we read, 'Above all that you guard, watch over your heart, for out of it are the sources of life' (Proverbs 4:23)."

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## Pray First

David inquired of the Lord. — 1 Samuel 23:2

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 23:1-5

When my husband and I supervise our son's piano practice sessions, we begin by asking God to help us. We pray first because neither my husband nor I know how to play the instrument. Together, all three of us are coming to understand musical mysteries such as the meaning of "staccato" and "legato" and when to use the piano's black keys.

Prayer becomes a priority when we realize that we need God's help. David needed God's assistance in a dangerous situation as he considered fighting the Philistines in the city of Keilah. Before engaging in battle, "David inquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?'" (1 Sam. 23:2). God gave His approval. However, David's men admitted that the enemy forces intimidated them. Before a single sword was lifted against the Philistines, David prayed again. God promised him the victory he later claimed (v.4).

Does prayer guide our lives, or is it our last resort when trouble strikes? We sometimes fall into the habit of making plans and then asking God to bless them, or praying only in moments of desperation. God does want us to turn to Him in moments of need. But He also wants us to remember that we need Him all the time (Prov. 3:5-6). By: Jennifer Benson Schuldt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear God, please guide me as I walk through this life. Help me not to act only by my own wisdom, but to seek Your will in every situation.

God wants us to pray before we do anything at all.

**1 Samuel 23:3** But David's men said to him, "**Behold**, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?"



BGT 1 Samuel 23:3 καὶ ἐπὶ πάντες οἱ ἀνδρες τοῦ Δαυὶδ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁμολογούσας ὅτι φοβοῦμεθα καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πορευθῆμεν εἰς Κεῖλα ἐστὶ σκελετὸν πολλῶν ἐσπορευσάμεθα

LXE 1 Samuel 23:3 And the men of David said to him, Behold, we are afraid here in Judea; and how shall it be if we go to Keila? Shall we go after the spoils of the Philistines?

KJV 1 Samuel 23:3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

NET 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him, "We are afraid while we are still here in Judah! What will it be like if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?"

CSB 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him, "Look, we're afraid here in Judah; how much more if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!"

ESV 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?"

NIV 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!"

NLT 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said, "We're afraid even here in Judah. We certainly don't want to go to Keilah to fight the whole Philistine army!"

NRS 1 Samuel 23:3 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?"

NJB 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him, 'We are already afraid here in Judah; how much more, then, if we go to Keilah to fight the Philistine troops!'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:3 But David's men said to him: "We are afraid here in Judah. How much more so if we go to Keilah against the forces of the Philistines!"

YLT 1 Samuel 23:3 And David's men say unto him, 'Lo, we here in Judah are afraid; and how much more when we go to Keilah, unto the ranks of the Philistines?'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:3 David's men told him, "We're afraid of staying here in Judah. How much more afraid do you think we'll be if we go to Keilah against the Philistine army?"

- **Behold:** 1Sa 23:15,23,26 Ps 11:1 Jer 12:5
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID'S MEN FEAR PHILISTINES

**But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah** - Apparently they are still in the forest of Hereth (1Sa 22:5). They did not trust the LORD's instructions and thus were not eager to obey.

Fear Can Cause Us to Question God's Leading  
-- Paul Apple

**Gene Getz** comments that "From a human perspective we can understand why these men were so fearful. First, they weren't first-class soldiers. In fact, they were classified **"3-D"** (Compare ["4-F"](#)) -- Scripture records that 'Everyone who was in **D**istress, and everyone who was in **D**ebt, and everyone who was **D**iscontented (1Sa 22:2 - gathered to join David in the cave of Adullam.'" (Borrow [David: God's man in faith and failure](#))

**How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines**- If you think we are afraid now, just charge us to go against the Philistines and you will see real fear! This is not a good attitude with which to enter battle. NLT paraphrases their intent = "We certainly don't want to go to Keilah to fight the whole Philistine army!"

**1 Samuel 23:4 Then David inquired of the LORD once more. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:4 κα προσθετο Δαυιδ ρωτσαι τι δι το κυρ ου κα πεκρθη ατ κ ριος κα επεν πρς ατ ν ν στηθι κα κατ βηθι ες Κεϊλα τι γ παραδωμι το ς λοφλους ες χερς σου

LXE 1 Samuel 23:4 And David enquired yet again of the Lord; and the Lord answered him, and said to him, Arise and go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into thy hands.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:4 Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

NET 1 Samuel 23:4 So David asked the LORD once again. But again the LORD replied, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:4 Once again, David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him: "Go at once to Keilah, for I will hand the Philistines over to you."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:4 Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:4 Once again David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:4 So David asked the LORD again, and again the LORD replied, "Go down to Keilah, for I will help you conquer the Philistines."

NRS 1 Samuel 23:4 Then David inquired of the LORD again. The LORD answered him, "Yes, go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:4 So David consulted Yahweh again and Yahweh replied, 'Be on your way; go down to Keilah, since I shall give the Philistines into your power.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:4 Again David consulted the LORD, who answered, "Go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your power."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:4 And David addeth again to ask at Jehovah, and Jehovah answereth him, and saith, 'Rise, go down to Keilah, for I am giving the Philistines into thy hand.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:4 David asked the LORD again, and the LORD answered him. He said, "Go to Keilah. I'm giving you the power to defeat the Philistines."

- yet again: 1Sa 28:6 Jdg 6:39
- for I will: Jos 8:7 Jdg 7:7 2Sa 5:19 2Ki 3:18
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID'S SECOND INQUIRY OF YAHWEH

**Then** - Because of the hesitancy and trepidation of his men. David knows that soldiers entering battle afraid of the enemy is not a good recipe for victory.

**David inquired of the LORD once more** - In light of the state of the fear in the hearts of his men, a second request is reasonable. Here we see the patience of God in helping work through our fears.

**And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand"**([yad](#) - Lit - "hand" = give into hand is idiom that speaks of give over to another's power) - Now the LORD not just to go, but promised victory over the Philistines. This is a message that should calm the fear in the hearts of his men. It is also teaching his men that David depends on and trusts in the LORD of hosts. This is the old "giant slayer" they knew before.

**1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:5 κα πορεθη Δαυιδ κα ο νδρες ο μετ ατο ες Κεϊλα κα πολμησεν ν το ς λοφλοις

κα φύγον κ' προσ που α το κα π γαγεν τ κτ νη α τ ν κα π τάξεν ν α το ς πληγ ν μεγ λην κα σώσεν Δαυιδ το ς κατοικο ντας Κεϊλα

LXE 1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men with him went to Keila, and fought with the Philistines; and they fled from before him, and he carried off their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter, and David rescued the inhabitants of Keila.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

NET 1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines. He took away their cattle and thoroughly defeated them. David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:5 Then David and his men went to Keilah, fought against the Philistines, drove their livestock away, and inflicted heavy losses on them. So David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:5 And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah. They slaughtered the Philistines and took all their livestock and rescued the people of Keilah.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:5 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines and carried off their cattle and inflicted a great defeat on them. Thus David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:5 David then went with his men to Keilah and fought with the Philistines. He drove off their cattle and inflicted a severe defeat on them, and thus rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:5 And David goeth, and his men, to Keilah, and fighteth with the Philistines, and leadeth away their cattle, and smiteth among them -- a great smiting, and David saveth the inhabitants of Keilah.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:5 David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines, drove off their livestock, and decisively defeated them. So David rescued the people who lived in Keilah.

- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Motley Men Growing into Mighty Men of David!

## DAVID OBEYS AND DEFEATS THE ENEMY

**So** - This conjunction means "and for this reason" or "therefore" and speaks of David and his men's trust in and obedience to the Word of the LORD (now that David had brought a second word from the LORD, a word of sure victory)

**David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines** - The men followed David and obeyed Yahweh, traveling about 10 miles from the forest of Hereth to the city of Keilah where they engaged the Philistine contingent.

When the child of God is in the will of God,  
he may expect the help of God.  
-- Warren Wiersbe

**and he led away their livestock and struck them with** (heavy losses) **a great slaughter** - Obedience brought blessing, like it always does! (Are you obeying?) The result of their obedience was victory over a strong and fearful enemy. Isn't that always God's formula for the blessed life? The **livestock** presumably was spoil David now took from the Philistines (David's little band would have prime rib tonight!)

**THOUGHT** - This verse sounds out a vital Biblical truth like a broken record repeating the same song [Trust and Obey](#) for there is no other way to be happy (blessed) in Jesus than to TRUST AND OBEY!"

**Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah** - Note the juxtaposition of man's responsibility (**David delivered**) and God's

sovereignty, provision and power (**I will give the Philistines into your hand**) This is an illustration of the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)". The effects of this victory would be to increase David's faith in the promises of Yahweh and would increase the trust and loyalty the men would have for David as their leader. This is also evidence that even though he had gone to King Achish, a Philistine, his true loyalty was to the people of Israel.

**1 Samuel 23:6 Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:6 καὶ γένητο ὅτι φύγεῖν Ἀβιάθαρ υἱοῦ Ἀβιμελεχ πρὸς Δαυὶδ καὶ αὐτὸς μετὰ Δαυὶδ εἰς Κεῖλα κατὰ βῆλον ἐφουδὸς ὅτι χεῖρα αὐτοῦ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:6 And it came to pass when Abiathar the son of Achimelech fled to David, that he went down with David to Keila, having an ephod in his hand.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

NET 1 Samuel 23:6 Now when Abiathar son of Ahimelech had fled to David at Keilah, he had brought with him an ephod.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:6 Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, and he brought an ephod with him.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:6 When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:6 (Now Abiathar son of Ahimelech had brought the ephod down with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)

NLT 1 Samuel 23:6 Now when Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he brought the ephod with him.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:6 When Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he came down with an ephod in his hand.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:6 When Abiathar son of Ahimelech took refuge with David, he went down to Keilah with the ephod in his hand.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:6 Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, who had fled to David, went down with David to Keilah, taking the ephod with him.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:6 And it cometh to pass, in the fleeing of Abiathar son of Ahimelech unto David, to Keilah, an ephod came down in his hand.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:6 When Ahimelech's son Abiathar fled to David at Keilah, Abiathar brought a priestly ephod with him.

- **when Abiathar:** 1Sa 22:20
- **an ephod:** 1Sa 14:3,18,36,37 Ex 28:30,31
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 30:7-8 Then David said to **Abiathar** the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "**Please bring me the ephod.**" So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 8 **David inquired of the LORD**, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all."



Ephod is outer garment held by shash & covering blue robe  
(Urim & Thummim - square over his chest)

## ABIATHAR FLED WITH THE EPHOD

Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he came down with an ephod([epod](#)) in his hand - Abiathar though surely fearful of Doeg's sword was resourceful and thus carried off from Nob an ephod that represented to David the divine presence, and was used by him to inquire of the will of the Lord (1Sa 23:9; 1Sa 30:7–8).

**Ephod** ([0646](#)) [epod](#) is a masculine noun that means something girt, a sacred vestment was made by a skilled workman and worn originally by the high priest (Ex. 28:4) and was embroidered with divers colours. Afterwards it was worn by the ordinary priest (1Sa 22:18), and characteristic of his office (1Sa 2:18, 28; 14:3). From the historical books we learn that ephods were worn by persons other than the high priest and was even worn by David (2Sa 6:14). It was made of fine linen, and consisted of two pieces, which hung from the neck, and covered both the back and front, above the tunic and outer garment (Ex. 28:31), an apron-like garment suspended from shoulder straps that draped over the robe and extended from the chest down to the thighs (Ex 28:4, 6–14, 25–28; 29:5; 39:2–7). Gideon made an ephod which was an idolatrous cultic object (Jdg 8:27) In Hos 3:4 it is one of the sacred items the sons of Israel will lose access to for a period of time (because of disobedience). The breastplate, with the Urim and Thummim, was attached to the ephod. The ephod in some contexts was clearly associated with the presence of God or those who had a special relationship with God and as in 1Sa 23:9 was in some way a source of divine guidance,

**New Bible Dictionary** - A sacred vestment originally worn by the high priest and made of “gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen—the work of a skilled craftsman” (Exod 28:6–14; 39:2–7). It was held together front and back by two shoulder pieces at the top and a girdle band around the waist. On each shoulder piece was an onyx stone engraved with six names of the tribes of Israel. Attached to the ephod by chains of pure gold was a breastplate containing twelve precious stones. The blue robe of the ephod was worn underneath, having a hole for the head and extending to the feet, with a hem alternating with gold bells and pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet (28:31–35; 39:22–26).

**NAVE's summary** - A sacred vestment worn by the high priest. Described, Ex. 28:6-14, 31-35; 25:7. Making of, Ex. 39:2-26. Breastplate attached to, Ex. 28:22-29. Worn by Aaron, Ex. 39:5. Used as an oracle, 1Sa 23:9, 12; 30:7, 8. An inferior, was worn by the common priests, 1Sa 22:18; by Samuel, 1Sa 2:18; David, 2Sa 6:14. It was called Coat, Ex. 28:40; 29:8; 39:27; 40:14; Lev. 8:13; 10:5. Made by Gideon, became an idolatrous snare to Israel, Judg. 8:27; 17:5; 18:14. Prophecy concerning the absence of the Ephod from Israel, Hos. 3:4.

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### Theodore Epp - BEWARE OF CIRCUMSTANCES! 1 Samuel 23:6-14

We learn from this chapter that people who intend evil can also speak of the Lord and His work in a very pious way.

Saul was told that David had delivered Keilah, and he said, "God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars" (1 Sam. 23:7).

This was Saul speaking, a man who had been so disobedient to God that the Spirit of God had departed from him. He was a man who, no matter how he prayed, received no answer from God because his heart was not right toward God.

Yet here he was saying that God had delivered David into his hands. We must always be careful of our interpretation of circumstances.

On a number of occasions I have counseled with different persons who were very obviously following a selfish path. Their one strong argument was that the circumstances favored the course they wanted to take; but it was obvious to me, at least, that they

were viewing circumstances in a false light.

I was able to check the subsequent history of some of these people and found them miserable in heart with no joy in the Lord. If our wills are not wholly submitted to the Lord, we are bound to misinterpret the circumstances around us.

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 16:25).

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Abiathar in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Along with [Zadok](#), Abiathar served as one of the chief priests during David's reign as king. Abiathar's name means "father of excellence" or "father of abundance" in Hebrew.

Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech, who served as a priest at Nob (1 Samuel 21:1; Mark 2:26) until he and the other priests were murdered by King Saul (1 Samuel 21:1–19). Being the only son of Ahimelech to escape the massacre at Nob, Abiathar fled to David and was promised protection by the future king (1 Samuel 21:20–23).

Because Abiathar served David and acted as priest for all of David's men in hiding, he was made high priest along with Zadok once David began his reign as king (1 Chronicles 15:11). This was a natural role for him to take on, as he had kept the ephod and administered the [Urim and Thummin](#) when David sought direction from the Lord (1 Samuel 23:6; 30:7).

When [Absalom](#) rebelled against his father and attempted to usurp the throne, Abiathar remained loyal to David. Abiathar was among those who fled the capital city with David (2 Samuel 15:24). Zadok and the Levites carried the ark of the covenant, "and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city" (2 Samuel 15:24). Although David admired the loyalty and faithfulness of the priests, he ordered them to return to the city with the ark. This proved helpful because they were then able to send word to David about Absalom's plans (2 Samuel 15:27–29; 17:15–16). David was restored to his throne and Abiathar to his priestly office.

Things changed as David's son [Solomon](#) took the throne. Abiathar was not loyal to the new king. [Adonijah](#), another one of David's sons, put himself forward as king with the help of [Joab](#) (one of David's nephews) and Abiathar (1 Kings 1:5, 7). Once the threat from Adonijah was neutralized, King Solomon dealt with the conspirators. One of Solomon's actions was to remove Abiathar from the priestly office. This fulfilled the Lord's word of judgment over Eli and his descendants, which impacted Abiathar since he was related to Eli (1 Samuel 3:12–14; 1 Kings 2:27). It was only because of the priest's loyal service to David that Solomon did not kill him. Solomon told Abiathar, "Go back to your fields in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not put you to death now, because you carried the ark of the Sovereign LORD before my father David and shared all my father's hardships" (1 Kings 2:26). Zadok replaced Abiathar as priest under Solomon (1 Kings 2:35).

Abiathar lived most of his life in faithful service to the Lord, but he did not finish well. Instead of siding with the rightful king of Israel (2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:17), Abiathar assisted one of David's rebellious sons who desired to rule. He allowed earthly matters to become his focus, which cost him the priestly office. Like Abiathar, we can easily get caught up in worldly schemes and lose sight of God's plan. Rather than seeking our own way or chasing what seems politically expedient, we should seek to faithfully follow God. Then, when our time on earth is done, we can state with the apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful" (2 Timothy 4:7NLT). [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Samuel 23:7 When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:7 καὶ πηγγύη τὸ Σαουλ τὴν καὶ Δαυὶδ εἰς Κεῖλα καὶ εἶπεν Σαουλ πρᾶκεν αὐτὸν θεοῦ εἰς χεῖρ μου τὴν ποκ κλεισται ἐσελθὼν εἰς τὴν θύραν καὶ μόχλιν

LXE 1 Samuel 23:7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keila: and Saul said, God has sold him into my hands, for he is shut up, having entered into a city that has gates and bars.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

NET 1 Samuel 23:7 When Saul was told that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he has boxed himself into a corner by entering a city with two barred gates."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:7 When it was reported to Saul that David had gone to Keilah, he said, "God has handed him over to me, for he has trapped himself by entering a town with barred gates."



ESV 1 Samuel 23:7 Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:7 Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, "God has handed him over to me, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:7 Saul soon learned that David was at Keilah. "Good!" he exclaimed. "We've got him now! God has handed him over to me, for he has trapped himself in a walled town!"

NRS 1 Samuel 23:7 Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, "God has given him into my hand; for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:7 When word was brought to Saul that David had gone to Keilah he said, 'God has delivered him into my power: he has trapped himself by going into a town with gates and bars.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:7 When Saul was told that David had entered Keilah, he said: "God has put him in my grip. Now he has shut himself in, for he has entered a city with gates and bars."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:7 And it is declared to Saul that David hath come in to Keilah, and Saul saith, 'God hath made him known for my hand, for he hath been shut in, to enter into a city of doors and bar.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:7 When Saul was told that David went to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hands. He has trapped himself by going into a city which has a gate with a double door held shut by a bar."

- **God:** 1Sa 23:14 24:4-6 26:8,9 Ps 71:10,11
- **shut:** Ex 14:3 15:9 Jdg 16:2,3 Job 20:5 Lu 19:43,44
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL'S SPIES REVEAL DAVID IS IN KEILAH

**When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah** - Gibeah to Keilah is about an 18-19 mile trip. Saul undoubtedly had spies throughout the land to keep him apprised of David's whereabouts.

**Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand** - What a difference in perspective between a king rejected and a king anointed. David inquired of Yahweh and God answered that He would deliver the enemy into his hand. Saul killed 85 priests of the LORD and now presumes to think that these providential circumstances indicate that this same LORD had given David into his hand. Saul is clearly not in touch with the LORD and has no clue as to His will.

**THOUGHT** - Can you see the principle in this section? Is Saul in the will of God? Of course not! Does Saul know God's will ("**God has delivered him into my hand.**") Of course not! So here is the timeless principle - If you are out of the will of God, you are ignorant of the ways of God! You can mark that one down in stone for future reference! See The Will Of God.

**Theodore Epp** makes a great point - Saul said, 'God has delivered into my hand, for he is shut in by entering into a town that has gates and bars.' This was Saul speaking, a man who had been so disobedient to God that the Spirit of God had departed from him. We must always be careful of our interpretation of circumstances. If our wills are not wholly given over to the Lord, we are bound to misinterpret the circumstances surrounding us.'

**for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars**- This description may indicate there was only a "front door" so to speak to the city with no "back door," no "escape hatch" for David! Saul thinks David has made a tactical blunder and these circumstances have entrapped and surely doomed him! Notice Saul's lack of gratitude that David had just defended one of Saul's cities! This man has a very dark heart!

**1 Samuel 23:8 So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:8 καὶ παρ᾽ ἡγγίλεν Σαουλ παντὶ τῷ λαῷ ἐς πλεμον καταβαίνειν εἰς Κεῖλα συνχεῖν τὸν Δαυὶδ καὶ τὸς υἱοὺς αὐτοῦ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:8 And Saul charged all the people to go down to war to Keila, to besiege David and his men.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

NET 1 Samuel 23:8 So Saul mustered all his army to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:8 Then Saul summoned all the troops to go to war at Keilah and besiege David and his men.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:8 And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:8 And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:8 So Saul mobilized his entire army to march to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:8 Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:8 Saul called all the people to arms, to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:8 Saul then called all the people to war, in order to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:8 And Saul summoneth the whole of the people to battle, to go down to Keilah, to lay siege unto David and unto his men.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:8 So Saul called together all the troops to go to war and blockade Keilah, where David and his men were.

- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL SEEKS TO LAY SIEGE TO KEILAH

**So Saul summoned all the people** (NIV - All his forces; NLT - his entire army; NET - mustered all his army) **for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege** ([tsur](#); Lxx - [sunecho](#) - press in and around, hem in) **David and his men** - Note the adjective "**all**" indicating Saul is going for an all out attack against David, which he is sure will bring about his enemy's death. He is not going to send down a small raiding party but his entire army! He is thinking "*I've got that slippery son of Jesse this time!*" Saul will surround and lay siege to Keilah until he captures David. Surrounding the city would make it impossible for David to escape. Even if Saul could not fight his way into the city, he could lay a siege around it and starve David and his men until they were forced to surrender.

**Warren Wiersbe** - So intense was Saul's hatred that he did not thank God for David's victory, but instead came to fight the victor himself. And the men of Keilah did not protect their deliverer; rather, they tried to turn him over to Saul! How wicked is the human heart untouched by the grace of God! (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#) )

**Besiege** (harass, attack) ([06696](#)) [tsûr/sur](#) has the basic meaning to enclose or to confine. It conveys the ideas of to lay siege, to secure, to tie up or bind (2Ki 5:23, Ezek 5:3, Dt 14:25), to surround. The most common meaning of tsûr is to lay siege, usually to a city, by surrounding it and cutting off its supplies. To "encircle and enclose a fortified area as an aggressive military strategy to defeat a city or nation." The word does not necessarily denote an actual battle but emphasizes taking control of a city. For example, David's men besieged Rabbah (2Sa 11:1; 1Chr. 20:1); Nadab laid siege to Gibbethon (1Ki. 15:27) Omri to Tirzah (1Ki. 16:17). Saul attempted to surround David at Keilah (1Sa 23:8). The Assyrians under Ben-Hadad besieged Samaria (1Ki. 20:1; 2Ki. 6:24f). Shalmaneser V laid siege against Samaria (725BC 2Ki 18:9) which fell after three years (722 BC). Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem in 597 BC (2Ki. 24:11) and 588BC (Jer. 32:2; 37:5). Instructions to Israel regarding siege tactics appear in Dt. 20:12, 19. 2Sa 20:15 describes the strategy of building ramps to overtake a walled city.

**1 Samuel 23:9 Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:9 κα γινω Δαυιδ τι ο παρασιωπ Σαουλ περ ατο τν κακ αν κα επεν Δαυιδ πρ ς Αβιαθαρ τν ερ α προσ γαγετ εφουδ κυρ ου

LXE 1 Samuel 23:9 And David knew that Saul spoke openly of mischief against him: and David said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod of the Lord.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

NET 1 Samuel 23:9 When David realized that Saul was planning to harm him, he told Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod!"

CSB 1 Samuel 23:9 When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:9 David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:9 When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:9 But David learned of Saul's plan and told Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod and ask the LORD what he should do.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:9 When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to the priest Abiathar, "Bring the ephod here."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:9 David, however, was aware that Saul was plotting evil against him, and said to Abiathar the priest, 'Bring the ephod.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:9 When David found out that Saul was planning to harm him, he said to the priest Abiathar, "Bring forward the ephod."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:9 And David knoweth that against him Saul is devising the evil, and saith unto Abiathar the priest, 'Bring nigh the ephod.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:9 When David learned that Saul was planning to harm him, he told the priest Abiathar, "Bring the ephod."

- **David:** Jer 11:18,19 Ac 9:24 14:6 23:16-18
- **Bring:** 1Sa 23:6 1Sa 14:18 1Sa 30:7 Nu 27:21 Jer 33:3
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID FOREKNEW SAUL'S PLOT

**Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him - [Forewarned is forearmed](#).** Clearly David's knowledge here is not just Saul's usual evil toward him, but the knowledge that there is now a specific plan to take him out. How did David know? He may have heard from God. Or he may have had men loyal to him in Saul's court. Think about it -- if Saul was mustering his entire army, surely there was someone who loved David and would get the message to him some 18-19 miles away (only 1 day's journey by foot, even faster by horseback or mule).

**John MacArthur** - A person's involuntary response to the unexpected is a more reliable indicator of his character than his planned reaction to a situation he anticipates. It is when we are caught off guard that our true character is most likely to show itself.

**so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod ([epod](#)) here** - David is surely thankful that Abiathar brought the ephod from Nob.

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**F B Meyer - 1 Samuel 23:9 He said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.**

David was passing through one of the most awful experiences of his life, when his men spoke of stoning him instead of taking up his cause. How many times in this chapter we are informed that David inquired of the Lord! Some three or four times the appeal for direction was renewed, as though he were fearful to stir one step by the light of his own unaided wisdom. In that changeful life of his, it must have been extremely difficult to set the Lord always before him, and await Divine direction. Many a time his circumstances might seem to demand immediate action rather than prayer; and the rude soldiery must have insisted on their voice being heard rather than a priest's; but David was not deterred by one or the other, and still held to his practice of consulting the Urim and Thummim stone, set in the ephod; which was probably a splendid diamond, flashing with God's distinct "Yes," or growing cloudy and

dark with His definite “No.”

Let us inquire of the Lord. The answer will surely come, if we wait for it. If we are not sure of, it, let us still wait, for it will come— not so early as to save us from using our faith, not so late as to permit us to be overwhelmed. Direction will come in the growing conviction of duty, in the drift of circumstances, in the advice of friends, in the perceptions of a sanctified judgment. None that wait on God can be ashamed. Whether our duty be to arise and pursue, to sit still, or to escape— “the meek He will guide in judgment; the meek He will teach His way.” He gives, us a white stone in which a name is written, which only they know who receive.

**1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:10 κα ε πεν Δαυιδ κ ριε θε ς Ισραηλ κο ων κ κοεν δο λ ς σου τι ζητε Σαουλ λθε ν π Κεϊλα διαφθε ραι τ ν π λιν δι μ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:10 And David said, Lord God of Israel, thy servant has indeed heard, that Saul seeks to come against Keila to destroy the city on my account.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

NET 1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, your servant has clearly heard that Saul is planning to come to Keilah to destroy the city because of me.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, "LORD God of Israel, Your servant has heard that Saul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:10 David said, "O LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:10 Then David prayed, "O LORD, God of Israel, I have heard that Saul is planning to come and destroy Keilah because I am here.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:10 David said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:10 David said, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul is preparing to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:10 David then said: "O LORD God of Israel, your servant has heard a report that Saul plans to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:10 And David saith, 'Jehovah, God of Israel, Thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul is seeking to come in unto Keilah, to destroy the city on mine account.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:10 Then David said, "LORD God of Israel, I have actually heard that Saul is going to come to Keilah and destroy the city on account of me.

- **destroy the city:** 1Sa 23:8 22:19 Ge 18:24 Es 3:6 Pr 28:15 Ro 3:15,16
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID'S PREFACES HIS INQUIRY TO YAHWEH

**Then** - Don't miss this strategic "then," for in the background of knowledge that Saul is plotting evil against him, David THEN goes to God, his Refuge and Strength.

**David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account** - Saul is a madman who doesn't just want to kill David, but anyone he thinks may have befriended David, so again the entire city of Keilah is at risk, as was a reality at the city of Nob.

**1 Samuel 23:11 "Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:11 ε ποκλεισθ σεται κα ν ν ε καταβ σεται Σαουλ καθ ς κουσεν δο λ ς σου κ ριε θε ς Ισραηλ π γγειλον τ δο λ σου κα ε πεν κ ριος ποκλεισθ σεται

LXE 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the place be shut up? And now will Saul come down, as thy servant has heard? Lord God of Israel, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, It will be shut up.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.

NET 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the leaders of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, please inform your servant!" Then the LORD said, "He will come down."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the citizens of Keilah hand me over to him? Will Saul come down as Your servant has heard? LORD God of Israel, please tell Your servant." The LORD answered, "He will come down."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, please tell your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant." And the LORD said, "He will."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the leaders of Keilah betray me to him? And will Saul actually come as I have heard? O LORD, God of Israel, please tell me." And the LORD said, "He will come."

NRS 1 Samuel 23:11 And now, will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, I beseech you, tell your servant." The LORD said, "He will come down."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:11 Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? Yahweh, God of Israel, I beg you, let your servant know.' Yahweh replied, 'He will come down.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:11 Will they hand me over? And now: will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, tell your servant." The LORD answered, "He will come down."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:11 Do the possessors of Keilah shut me up into his hand? doth Saul come down as Thy servant hath heard? Jehovah, God of Israel, declare, I pray Thee, to Thy servant.' And Jehovah saith, 'He doth come down.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:11 Will the citizens of Keilah hand me over to him? Will Saul come here as I have heard? LORD God of Israel, please tell me." "He will come," the LORD answered.

- **And the Lord:** Ps 50:15 Jer 33:3 Mt 7:7,8
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID'S QUESTIONS YAHWEH'S AFFIRMATION

**Will the men of Keilah surrender (betray) me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard?** - Will the people he has just delivered from the Philistines demonstrate their ingratitude by delivering David to Saul? David identifies himself as Yahweh's **servant**, something Saul never said! Presumably he used the ephod again and some think this entailed the use of the Urim and Thummim but that is somewhat conjectural because the only specific mention of Urim in 1 Samuel is in 1Sa 28:6 which says "Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by **Urim** or by prophets."

**O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down-** Yahweh answers just the first of David's two questions. How did God answer? Was it through use of the ephod (although that mode of communication is mysterious to us today). "Regardless of how God communicated then, He communicates with us through his Word, and with illumination in our souls and joy as we walk in His will." (Anderson)

**1 Samuel 23:12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you."**

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KJV 1 Samuel 23:12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.

NET 1 Samuel 23:12 David asked, "Will the leaders of Keilah deliver me and my men into Saul's hand?" The LORD said, "They will deliver you over."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:12 Then David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?" "They will," the LORD responded.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:12 Again David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:12 Again David asked, "Will the leaders of Keilah betray me and my men to Saul?" And the LORD replied, "Yes, they will betray you."

NRS 1 Samuel 23:12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" The LORD said, "They will surrender you."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:12 David then went on to ask, 'Will the notables of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?' Yahweh replied, 'They will hand you over.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:12 David then asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah deliver me and my men into the grasp of Saul?" And the LORD answered, "Yes."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:12 And David saith, 'Do the possessors of Keilah shut me up, and my men, into the hand of Saul?' And Jehovah saith, 'They shut thee up.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:12 "Will the citizens of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?" David asked. "They will hand you over," the LORD answered.

- **surrender:** Heb. shut up, Ps 31:8
- **They will:** 1Sa 23:7 Ps 62:1 118:8 Ec 9:14,15 Isa 29:15 Heb 4:13
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID REPEATS HIS FIRST QUESTION

**Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you** - Keep in mind that the men of Keilah were members of the tribe of Judah, in effect, "family members" of David who had just delivered them! But David is not naive and is concerned that his Judean brethren might turn him over to Saul's wrath! Praise God David sought the wisdom from the LORD Who alone knows the beginning and the end and everything in between (Isa 41:22,23). Just a thought to ponder -- What would have happened had David not sought the LORD, thinking the men of Keilah would never surrender him to Saul for he (David) had delivered them from the Philistines.

**Wiersbe** - Do not expect everybody you help to appreciate what you have done. Do you appreciate what others have done for you? (Borrow [With the Word](#))

**Arthur Pink** - "And the Lord said, 'They will deliver thee up.' This must have been saddening to David's heart for base ingratitude wounds deeply. Yet, let us not forget that the kindness of other friends, whom the Lord often unexpectedly raises up, counterbalances the ingratitude and fickleness of those we have served." ([Life of David - chapter 11](#))

**Howard Vos** has a slightly different comment than Pink - "The inhabitants would give up to save themselves. This revelation sounds like horrible ingratitude after what David had just done for them. But no doubt, the memory of the Nob massacre was fresh in the minds of the people of Keilah. They knew Saul was perfectly capable of pulling down the walls, burning the city, and killing all of its inhabitants. David and his force, which had now grown to 600, withdrew from Keilah and wandered about." (Borrow [1, 2 Samuel : Bible Study Commentary](#))

**Don Anderson** - The treachery of the people of Keilah was like that of Judas. David had risked his life to save the town from the Philistines. You would think that they would be grateful, but evidently they had no sense of honor. They would do the thing they



though best for their own self-interest. We can really sit back and talk about how awful they are, but not so fast. Judas and the people are not the only ones who betray the rightful king. In business and social life, there comes almost every day opportunities to stand for Christ against his enemies. But how often for fear of man or in the hope of gaining favor or making money will a child of God, like a coward, betray the Lord by an act or by a laugh, or worst of all, by silence when he should speak. Guilty, anyone?

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### Henry Blackaby - Thanks a Lot!

Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you."<sup>1</sup> Samuel 23:12 (NASB)

Have you ever done something nice for someone and then had them turn against you? It hurts, doesn't it? It happened to David. As he was fleeing for his life, with King Saul's army in hot pursuit, he became aware of a city under attack by the Philistines. As if they didn't have enough to worry about, David and his army stopped long enough to help the town of Keilah repel its enemy. The problem was, Saul was still after him. David might have been safe within the walls of Keilah, but he received word from God that the people he had just risked his neck to help were going to betray him! So David was forced to escape again and try to make up for lost time.

How do you respond when people you have helped are hateful in return? Did you stand up for a friend who was being criticized or bullied? Then, when you were under attack and needed a friend, he turned on you! Maybe you've gone out of your way to be kind to someone, only to find out she's been gossiping about you behind your back. Have you ever made a big sacrifice to help out a friend, and your thoughtfulness was never even acknowledged? How do you respond in times like these? David just moved on. He didn't waste valuable time fretting over the ingratitude of others. He trusted that God knew about his kindness, and God did, indeed, reward him.

Don't be discouraged if people are not always thankful for what you do for them. All you need to be concerned about is what God wants to do in you. Let God deal with those who have not treated you as they should. The Father is working to produce a godly character in you, and he will see to it that your kindness is rewarded. (Borrow [The experience : a devotional and journal : day by day with God](#))

**1 Samuel 23:13 Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:13 καὶ ἐν τῇ Δαυὶδ καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες οὗ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἑτετρακισιοὶ καὶ ἑλθόντες ἐκ Κεῖλα καὶ πορεύοντο· οὐκ ἐπορεύθησαν κατὰ Σαουλ· πηγγύλη τι διασώσεται Δαυὶδ ἐκ Κεῖλα καὶ οὐκ ἐν τῷ ἐξελθεῖν

LXE 1 Samuel 23:13 And David arose, and the men with him, in number about four hundred, and they went forth from Keila, and went whithersoever they could go: and it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keila, and he forbore to come.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth.

NET 1 Samuel 23:13 So David and his men, who numbered about six hundred, set out and left Keilah; they moved around from one place to another. When told that David had escaped from Keilah, Saul called a halt to his expedition.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:13 So David and his men, numbering about 600, left Keilah at once and moved from place to place. When it was reported to Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he called off the expedition.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:13 Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:13 So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:13 So David and his men-- about 600 of them now-- left Keilah and began roaming the countryside. Word soon reached Saul that David had escaped, so he didn't go to Keilah after all.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:13 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:13 At this, David made off with his men, about six hundred in number; they left Keilah and went where they could. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he abandoned the expedition.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:13 So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and wandered from place to place. When Saul was informed that David had escaped from Keilah, he abandoned the expedition.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:13 And David riseth -- and his men -- about six hundred men, and they go out from Keilah, and go up and down where they go up and down; and to Saul it hath been declared that David hath escaped from Keilah, and he ceaseth to go out.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:13 So David and his men, about six hundred in all, left Keilah. They went wherever they could go. Then Saul was told, "David has escaped from Keilah!" So he gave up the campaign.

- **six hundred:** 1Sa 22:2 25:13 30:9,10
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID'S ENLARGED FORCES LEAVE THE FORTRESS

**Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah** (means "fortress"), **and they went wherever they could go** - David listened to the words of the LORD. They left and began roaming the countryside. In other words, they did not stay in one place for very long, lest Saul discover their location and surprise attack.

**When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit**- So much for Saul's "word" that the LORD had delivered David into his hands.

[Anderson](#) comments that "A guided life is dependent upon a clean heart. If we ask for wisdom and want it for the purpose of continuing in the will of God, He will give it to us. But on the other hand, if we want it so that we might sit in judgement and decide whether we want to do the will of God or not, then God will not show us.

**THOUGHT** - As Jesus put it "If anyone is **willing to do His will**, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." (John 7:17) If we do not do the will He has revealed, rest assured, we are not going to see the next step He would have for us to take in the will of God. Once again this distills down to trust and obey His revealed will and He will reveal His will!

**1 Samuel 23:14 David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:14 κα κ θισεν Δαυιδ ν τ ρ μ ν Μασερεμ ν το ς στενο ς κα κ θητο ν τ ρ μ ν τ ρει Ζιφ ν τ γ τ α χμ δει κα ζ τει α τ ν Σαουλ π σας τ ς μ ρας κα ο παρ δωκεν α τ ν κ ριος ε ς τ ς χε ρας α το

LXE 1 Samuel 23:14 And he dwelt in Maserem in the wilderness, in the narrow passes; and dwelt in the wilderness in mount Ziph, in the dry country. And Saul sought him continually, but the Lord delivered him not into his hands.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

NET 1 Samuel 23:14 David stayed in the strongholds that were in the desert and in the hill country of the desert of Ziph. Saul looked for him all the time, but God did not deliver David into his hand.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:14 David then stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul searched for him every day, but God did not hand David over to him.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:14 And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:14 David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:14 David now stayed in the strongholds of the wilderness and in the hill country of Ziph. Saul hunted him day after day, but God didn't let Saul find him.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:14 David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but the LORD did not give him into his hand.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:14 David stayed in the desert, in the strongholds; he stayed in the mountains, in the desert of Ziph; Saul kept looking for him day after day, but God did not deliver him into his power.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:14 David now lived in the refuges in the desert, or in the barren hill country near Ziph. Though Saul sought him continually, the LORD did not deliver David into his grasp.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:14 And David abideth in the wilderness, in fortresses, and abideth in the hill-country, in the wilderness of Ziph; and Saul seeketh him all the days, and God hath not given him into his hand.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:14 David lived in fortified camps in the desert, and he lived in fortified camps in the mountains of the desert of Ziph. Saul was always searching for him, but God didn't let him capture David.

- **Hill** : Ps 11:1-3
- **the wilderness**: Jos 15:24,55
- **Saul**: 1Sa 27:1 Ps 54:3,4 Pr 1:16 4:16
- **but God**: 1Sa 23:7 Ps 32:7f 37:32,33 Ps 54:3,4 Pr 21:30 Jer 36:26 Ro 8:31 2Ti 3:11 4:17,18
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The Barren, Rugged Wilderness of Judea!

## DAVID STAYS IN STRONGHOLDS AND STRONG ARMS OF YAHWEH

David stayed in the wilderness ([midbār](#); Lxx = [eremos](#)) in the strongholds ([metsad](#); Lxx = [eremos](#)), and remained in the hill country in the wilderness ([midbār](#)) of Ziph - [See #11 on map](#) above. The town of Ziph lay about 4 miles south of Hebron. The wilderness of Ziph was the wilderness area that surrounded the city.

**And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand** - Note another one of the great uses of the phrase "but God!" Saul sought, but Jehovah kept safe. Saul's incessant desire to kill David reminds us of the Jewish religious leaders who were plotting and seeking an opportunity to kill the Son of David! (cf Mt 26:4, 16)

**Warren Wiersbe** - It was important that David live, for it was he who would deliver Israel, establish the kingdom in glory, and become the father of Christ in the flesh (Ro. 1:3). Satan used Saul to seek to kill David, but God was too strong for the enemy. As long as David sought the mind of the Lord, God gave him protection and victory. (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#) )

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**Strongholds** ([04679](#)) ([metsad](#)) means fastness, stronghold, fortress, and could be man-made or natural defenses that made it difficult for an enemy to access and would provide a place for refugees, etc. - "wilderness strongholds" - 1Sa 23:14, "strongholds at Horesh" - 1Sa 23:19 and "the strongholds of Engedi" - 1Sa 23:29. The righteous will have a refuge in "the **impregnable** ([metsad](#)) rock!" (Isa 33:16) 1 Chr. 11:7 - "David dwelt in the **stronghold**; (JERUSALEM) therefore it was called the city of David."

**Gilbrant** - In Jdg. 6:2, this defended area in the mountain is distinguished from caves that served the same purpose (Ezek. 33:27). Yet, as evidenced in the accounts of David hiding himself from Saul in strongholds located in the hilly wilderness of Judah, it is likely that such strongholds were caves. If these were not references to caves, then other natural elements of the land such as clefts, dense woods, ravines and boulders must be in view (see 1 Sam. 23:14, 19, 29; Isa. 33:16). The remaining references indicate a constructed fortress of some sort. After David had conquered the Jebusites who dwelt in Jerusalem (previously, Jebus), 1 Chr. 11:7 says that he "took up residence in the fortress, and so it was called the city of David" (NIV). The entire walled city here was called a stronghold. One final use of [metsādh](#) occurs in 1 Chr. 12:8, 16. While David was banished from the presence of Saul, warriors from the various tribes joined with him in established wilderness strongholds. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Metsad** - 11x - **impregnable(1), stronghold(3), strongholds(7)**. Jdg. 6:2; 1 Sam. 23:14; 1 Sam. 23:19; 1 Sam. 23:29; 1 Chr. 11:7; 1 Chr. 12:8; 1 Chr. 12:16; Isa. 33:16; Jer. 48:41; Jer. 51:30; Ezek. 33:27

**Wilderness** ([04057](#)) [midbār](#) means wilderness or desert, an open area of land which is sparsely populated and is generally dry in

climate. The term applies to areas which are dry deserts as well as open grazing lands. Midbār is used to describe three types of country in general: pastureland (Joshua 2:22; Psalm 65:12; Jeremiah 23:10), uninhabited land (Dt. 32:10; Job 38:26; Pr 21:19; Jeremiah 9:1), and large areas of land in which oases or cities and towns exist here and there. The **wilderness of Judah** has at least a half-dozen cities in it. The **wilderness of Jordan** (the alluvial plain) contains cities, and the wilderness of Sinai has within it a number of oases. midbār is also used figuratively (Hosea 2:5; Jeremiah 2:31). The largest tracts called midbār are **Sinai**, the **Negeb**, the **Jordan Valley**, and the **Arabian desert**. Specific wilderness areas are: **Beer-sheba** (Genesis 21:14), **Paran** (Genesis 21:21; Numbers 10:12; Numbers 12:16; Numbers 13:3, 26; 1 Samuel 25:1), **Sin** (Exodus 16:1; Ex 17:1; Nu 33:11-12), **Sinai** (Numbers 1:19, etc; Exodus 19:1-2; Leviticus 7:38); **Zin** (Numbers 13:21 etc.; Deut. 32:51; Joshua 15:1), **Bethaven** (Joshua 18:12), **Judah** (Judges 1:16; Psalm 63 title), **Ziph** (1 Samuel 23:14; 1 Samuel 26:2), **Maon** (1 Samuel 23:24-25), **Gibeon** (2 Samuel 2:24), **Damascus** (1 Ki 19:15), **Edom** (2 Kings 3:8), **Jeruel** (2 Chron. 20:16) **Shur** (Exodus 15:22; Exodus 16:1; Numbers 1:19 etc.), **Etham** (Numbers 33:8), **Kedemoth** (Deut. 2:26), **Tekoa** (2 Chron. 20:20), **Kadesh** (Psalm 29:8; Psalm 63 title), and **Egypt** (Ezekiel 20:35). The wilderness is often described negatively as without grapes, fountains, pools of water, rivers, pleasant places—or as in a notable statement: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:19). (Earl Kalland in [TWOT](#) - online)

**Uses of midbar in Samuel, Kings, Chronicles** - 1Sa 4:8; 1Sa 13:18; 1Sa 17:28; 1Sa 23:14; 1Sa 23:15; 1Sa 23:24; 1Sa 23:25; 1Sa 24:1; 1Sa 25:1; 1Sa 25:4; 1Sa 25:14; 1Sa 25:21; 1Sa 26:2; 1Sa 26:3; 2Sa 2:24; 2Sa 15:23; 2Sa 15:28; 2Sa 16:2; 2Sa 17:16; 2Sa 17:29; 1 Ki. 2:34; 1 Ki. 9:18; 1 Ki. 19:4; 1 Ki. 19:15; 2 Ki. 3:8; 1 Chr. 5:9; 1 Chr. 6:78; 1 Chr. 12:8; 1 Chr. 21:29; 2 Chr. 1:3; 2 Chr. 8:4; 2 Chr. 20:16; 2 Chr. 20:20; 2 Chr. 20:24; 2 Chr. 24:9; 2 Chr. 26:10

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**Michael Andrus on Wilderness Experiences of David** - The wilderness has many faces and takes many forms. We have seen at least six different kinds of trials in this short period of David's life—that of physical deprivation, fear and shame, difficult relationships, family responsibility, false guilt, and betrayal.

The wilderness can be a difficult place—lonely, fearful, and threatening. But it can also be a wonderful experience, where the distractions of a busy life are minimal, where we are often alone with God, and where we find that the faith we say we believe really is true. When we accept grief and distress as faith's frequent companions, then our faith becomes our bedrock. And that bedrock births the authority to lead, which is, of course, God's plan all along.

**Gene Edwards** writes of David's sufferings in a powerful fictional account called [A Tale of Three Kings - A Study of Brokenness \(borrow book\)](#). One of David's rebel band, now an old soldier, tells a questioning young man how David's rule started.

*The clearest memory I have of my king, when we lived in the caves, is that his was a life of submission.....David taught me losing, not winning. Giving, not taking. He showed me that the leader, not the follower, is inconvenienced. David shielded us from suffering; he did not mete it out////David had authority, but I don't think that fact ever occurred to him. We were six hundred no-goods with a leader who cried a lot. That's all we were!*

But that was a lot. I would rather be a no-good following a leader like David than to be a general in Saul's army. Edwards calls David "**the greatest hymn writer and the greatest comforter of broken hearts this world shall ever know**." With a bowed head and a grateful heart, I thank God for the wilderness experiences of David, which help make my wilderness experiences tolerable and even profitable.

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**G Campbell Morgan - 1 Sa 23:14** (Borrow [Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#))

Thus the historian declares a great fact about the history of David. He was the object of Saul's bitter hatred, but he was perfectly safe in the keeping of God. The scores of happenings recorded in the chapter reveal the difficulty of David's position. Saul, still nominally king, was devoting all his strength to the persecution of this man, while the affairs of the kingdom were in the most hopeless confusion. While David in exile was most certainly the popular idol of the people, their fickleness was manifested in the despicable treachery of both the Keilites and the Ziphites. David, with the true spirit of patriotism, waged war against the Philistines. It is yet evident that his exile and persecution were telling upon him, and nervous fear was at work in his heart. Nevertheless, his trust in God triumphed at this time, and to Him he made his appeal in this hour of trial. In that hour of communion he learned that the Divine government would not mean that he would be free from persecution, but it did mean that he would be delivered therefrom. To be in the will of God among men who disobey that will, is inevitably to be persecuted. They will ruthlessly seek to harm and destroy. But they are powerless. God will never deliver His servants ultimately into the hands of His enemies. There came the hour when great David's greater Son was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, but that deliverance was into the pathway that led to final victory.

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Many scholars believe Ps 63 was written during David's flight from Saul

- 1 (A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.)  
O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly;  
My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee,  
In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- 2 Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary,  
To see Thy power and Thy glory.
- 3 Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life,  
My lips will praise Thee.
- 4 So I will bless Thee as long as I live;  
I will lift up my hands in Thy name.
- 5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,  
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.
- 6 When I remember Thee on my bed,  
I meditate on Thee in the night watches,
- 7 For Thou hast been my help,  
And in the shadow of Thy wings I sing for joy.
- 8 My soul clings to Thee;  
Thy right hand upholds me.
- 9 But those who seek my life, to destroy it,  
Will go into the depths of the earth.
- 10 They will be delivered over to the power of the sword;  
They will be a prey for foxes.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God;  
Everyone who swears by Him will glory,  
For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.

## EXPOSITION OF PSALM 63

SEE ALL NOTES IN [Spurgeon's commentary](#)

**Verse 1. O God, thou art my God;** or, O God, thou art my Mighty One. The last Psalm left the echo of power ringing in the ear, and it is here remembered. Strong affiance bids the fugitive poet confess his allegiance to the only living God; and firm faith enables him to claim him as his own. He has no doubts about his possession of his God; and why should other believers have any? The straightforward, clear language of this opening sentence would be far more becoming in Christians than the timorous and doubtful expressions so usual among professors. How sweet is such language! Is there any other word comparable to it for delights? *Meus Deus*. Can angels say more?

**Early will I seek thee.** Possession breeds desire. Full assurance is no hindrance to diligence, but is the mainspring of it. How can I seek another man's God? but it is with ardent desire that I seek after him whom I know to be my own. Observe the eagerness implied in the time mentioned; he will not wait for noon or the cool eventide; he is up at cockcrow to meet his God. Communion with God is so sweet that the chill of the morning is forgotten, and the luxury of the couch is despised. The morning is the time for dew and freshness, and the psalmist consecrates it to prayer and devout fellowship. The best of men have been betimes on their knees. The word early has not only the sense of early in the morning, but that of eagerness, immediateness. He who truly longs for God longs for him now. Holy desires are among the most powerful influences that stir our inner nature; hence the next sentence,

**My soul thirsteth for thee.** Thirst is an insatiable longing after that which is one of the most essential supports of life; there is no reasoning with it, no forgetting it, no despising it, no overcoming it by stoical indifference. Thirst will be heard; the whole man must yield to its power; even thus is it with that divine desire which the grace of God creates in regenerate men; only God himself can satisfy the craving of a soul really aroused by the Holy Spirit. My flesh longeth for thee; by the two words soul and flesh, he denotes the whole of his being. The flesh, in the New Testament sense of it, never longs after the Lord, but rather it lusteth against the spirit; David only refers to that sympathy which is sometimes created in our bodily frame by vehement emotions of the soul. Our corporeal nature usually tugs in the other direction, but the spirit when ardent can compel it to throw in what power it has upon the other side. When the wilderness caused David weariness, discomfort, and thirst, his flesh cried out in unison with the desire of his soul.

**In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is** A weary place and a weary heart make the presence of God the more desirable: if there be nothing below and nothing within to cheer, it is a thousand mercies that we may look up and find all we need. How frequently have believers traversed in their experience this dry and thirsty land, where spiritual joys are things forgotten! and how truly can they testify that the only true necessity of that country is the near presence of their God! The absence of outward comforts

can be borne with serenity when we walk with God; and the most lavish multiplication of them avails not when he withdraws. Only after God, therefore, let us pant. Let all desires be gathered into one. Seeking first the kingdom of God—all else shall be added unto us.

**Verse 2. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.** He longed not so much to see the sanctuary as to see his God; he looked through the veil of ceremonies to the invisible One. Often had his heart been gladdened by communion with God in the outward ordinances, and for this great blessing he sighs again; as well he might, for it is the weightiest of all earth's sorrows for a Christian man to lose the conscious presence of his covenant God. He remembers and mentions the two attributes which had most impressed themselves upon his mind when he had been rapt in adoration in the holy place; upon these his mind had dwelt in the preceding Psalm, and the savour of that contemplation is evidently upon his heart when in the wilderness: these he desires to behold again in the place of his banishment. It is a precious thought that the divine power and glory are not confined in their manifestation to any places or localities; they are to be heard above the roaring of the sea, seen amid the glare of the tempest, felt in the forest and the prairie, and enjoyed wherever there is a heart that longs and thirsts to behold them. Our misery is that we thirst so little for these sublime things, and so much for the mocking trifles of time and sense. We are in very truth always in a weary land, for this is not our rest; and it is marvellous that believers do not more continuously thirst after their portion far beyond the river where they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; but shall see the face of their God, and his name shall be in their foreheads. David did not thirst for water or any earthly thing, but only for spiritual manifestations. The sight of God was enough for him, but nothing short of that would content him. How great a friend is he, the very sight of whom is consolation. Oh, my soul, imitate the psalmist, and let all thy desires ascend towards the highest good; longing here to see God, and having no higher joy even for eternity.

**Verse 3. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life.** A reason for that which went before, as well as for that which follows. Life is dear, but God's love is dearer. To dwell with God is better than life at its best; life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honour, in wealth, in pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in Jehovah's smile. In him we truly live, and move, and have our being; the withdrawal of the light of his countenance is as the shadow of death to us: hence we cannot but long after the Lord's gracious appearing. Life is to many men a doubtful good: lovingkindness is an unquestioned boon: life is but transient, mercy is everlasting: life is shared in by the lowest animals, but the lovingkindness of the Lord is the peculiar portion of the chosen.

**My lips shall praise thee.** Openly, so that thy glory shall be made known, I will tell of thy goodness. Even when our heart is rather desiring than enjoying we should still continue to magnify the Most High, for his love is truly precious; even if we do not personally, for the time being, happen to be rejoicing in it. We ought not to make our praises of God to depend upon our own personal reception of benefits; this would be mere selfishness; even publicans and sinners have a good word for those whose hands are enriching them with gifts; it is the true believer only who will bless the Lord when he takes away his gifts or hides his face.

**Verse 4. Thus will I bless thee while I live.** As I now bless thee so will I ever do; or rather, so as thou shalt reveal thy lovingkindness to me, I will in return continue to extol thee. While we live we will love. If we see no cause to rejoice in our estate, we shall always have reason for rejoicing in the Lord. If none others bless God, yet his people will; his very nature, as being the infinitely good God, is a sufficient argument for our praising him as long as we exist.

**I will lift up my hands in thy name** For worship the hands were uplifted, as also in joy, in thanksgiving, in labour, in confidence; in all these senses we would lift up our hands in Jehovah's name alone. No hands need hang down when God draws near in love. The name of Jesus has often made lame men leap as a hart, and it has made sad men clap their hands for joy.

**Verse 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.** Though unable to feast on the sacrifice at thine altar, my soul shall even here be filled with spiritual joys, and shall possess a complete, a double contentment. There is in the love of God a richness, a sumptuousness, a fulness of soul filling joy, comparable to the richest food with which the body can be nourished. The Hebrews were more fond of fat than we are, and their highest idea of festive provision is embodied in the two words, marrow and fatness: a soul hopeful in God and full of his favour is thus represented as feeding upon the best of the best, the dainties of a royal banquet.

**And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.** More joy, more praise. When the mouth is full of mercy, it should also be full of thanksgiving. When God gives us the marrow of his love, we must present to him the marrow of our hearts. Vocal praise should be rendered to God as well as mental adoration; others see our mercies, let them also hear our thanks.

**Verse 6. When I remember thee upon my bed.** Lying awake, the good man betook himself to meditation, and then began to sing. He had a feast in the night, and a song in the night. He turned his bedchamber into an oratory, he consecrated his pillow, his praise anticipated the place of which it is written, "There is no night there." Perhaps the wilderness helped to keep him awake, and if so, all the ages are debtors to it for this delightful hymn. If day's cares tempt us to forget God, it is well that night's quiet should lead us to remember him. We see best in the dark if we there see God best.



**And meditate on thee in the night watches.** Keeping up sacred worship in my heart as the priests and Levites celebrated it in the sanctuary. Perhaps David had formerly united with those "who by night stand in the house of the Lord, "and now as he could not be with them in person, he remembers the hours as they pass, and unites with the choristers in spirit, blessing Jehovah as they did. It may be, moreover, that the king heard the voices of the sentries as they relieved guard, and each time he returned with renewed solemnity to his meditations upon his God. Night is congenial, in its silence and darkness, to a soul which would forget the world, and rise into a higher sphere. Absorption in the most hallowed of all themes makes watches, which else would be weary, glide away all too rapidly; it causes the lonely and hard couch to yield the most delightful repose—repose more restful than even sleep itself. We read of beds of ivory, but beds of piety are better far. Some revel in the night, but they are not a tithe so happy as those who meditate in God.

**Verse 7. Because thou hast been my help.** Meditation had refreshed his memory and recalled to him his past deliverances. It were well if we oftener read our own diaries, especially noting the hand of the Lord in helping us in suffering, want, labour, or dilemma. This is the grand use of memory, to furnish us with proofs of the Lord's faithfulness, and lead us onward to a growing confidence in him.

**Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.** The very shade of God is sweet to a believer. Under the eagle wings of Jehovah we hide from all fear, and we do this naturally and at once, because we have aforetime tried and proved both his love and his power. We are not only safe, but happy in God: we rejoice as well as repose.

**Verse 8. My soul followeth hard after thee,** or is glued to thee. We follow close at the Lord's heels, because we are one with him. Who shall divide us from his love? If we cannot walk with him with equal footsteps, we will at least follow after with all the strength he lends us, earnestly panting to reach him and abide in his fellowship. When professors follow hard after the world, they will fall into the ditch; but none are ever too eager after communion with the Lord.

**Thy right hand upholdeth me.** Else he would not have followed the Lord with constancy, or even have longed after him. The divine power, which has so often been dwelt upon in this and the preceding Psalms, is here mentioned as the source of man's attachment to God. How strong are we when the Lord works in us by his own right hand, and how utterly helpless if he withhold his aid!

**Verse 9.** As David earnestly sought for God, so there were men of another order who as eagerly sought after his blood; of these he speaks: **But those that seek my soul, to destroy it.** At his life they aimed, at his honour, his best welfare; and this they would not merely injure but utterly ruin. The devil is a destroyer, and all his seed are greedy to do the same mischief; and as he has ruined himself by his crafty devices, so also shall they. Destroyers shall be destroyed. Those who hunt souls shall be themselves the victims. Shall go into the lower parts of the earth. Into the pits which they digged for others they shall fall themselves. The slayers shall be slain, and the grave shall cover them. The hell which they in their curse invoked for others shall shut its mouth upon them. Every blow aimed against the godly will recoil on the persecutor; he who smites a believer drives a nail in his own coffin.

**Verse 10. They shall fall by the sword.** So David's enemies did. They that take the sword shall perish with the sword; bloody men shall feel their own life gushing forth from them, when their evil day shall at last come, and they shall be given up to feel in their own persons the horrors of death.

**They shall be a portion for foxes.** Too mean to be fit food for the lions, the foxes shall sniff around their corpses, and the jackals shall hold carnival over their carcasses. Unburied and unhonoured they shall be meat for the dogs of war. Frequently have malicious men met with a fate so dire as to be evidently the award of retributive justice. Although the great assize is reserved for another world, yet even here, at the common sessions of providence, justice often bares her avenging sword in the eyes of all the people.

**Verse 11. But the king shall rejoice in God.** Usurpers shall fade, but he shall flourish; and his prosperity shall be publicly acknowledged as the gift of God. The Lord's anointed shall not fail to offer his joyful thanksgiving: his well established throne shall own the superior lordship of the King of kings; his rejoicing shall be alone in God. When his subjects sing, "Io triumphe, "he will bid them chant, "Te Deum."

**Every one that sweareth by him shall glory.** His faithful followers shall have occasion for triumph; they shall never need to blush for the oath of their allegiance. Or, "swearing by him, "may signify adherence to God, and worship paid to him. The heathen swore by their gods, and the Israelite called Jehovah to witness to his asseveration; those, therefore, who owned the Lord as their God should have reason to glory when he proved himself the defender of the king's righteous cause, and the destroyer of traitors.

**But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped** And the sooner the better. If shame will not do it, nor fear, nor reason, then let them be stopped with the sexton's shovelful of earth; for a liar is a human devil, he is the curse of men, and accursed of God, who has comprehensively said, "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." See the difference between the mouth that praises God, and the mouth that forges lies: the first shall never be stopped, but shall sing on for ever; the second shall be made speechless at the bar of God. O Lord, we seek thee and thy truth; deliver us from all malice and

slander, and reveal to us thine own self, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

## PARALLEL PASSAGES

### RELATED TO DAVID'S TIME IN THE STRONGHOLD

#### 1 Chronicles 12:8-18

From the [Gadites](#) ("an invader: a troop: fortune") there came over to David in the **stronghold** ([metsad](#)) in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for war, who could handle shield and spear, and whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the gazelles on the mountains. 9 Ezer was the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, 10 Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11 Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, 12 Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, 13 Jeremiah the tenth, Machbannai the eleventh. 14 These of the sons of Gad were captains of the army; he who was least was equal to a hundred and the greatest to a thousand. 15 These are the ones who crossed the Jordan in the first month when it was overflowing all its banks and they put to flight all those in the valleys, both to the east and to the west. 16 Then some of the sons of Benjamin and Judah came to the stronghold to David. 17 David went out to meet them, and said to them, "If you come peacefully to me to help me, my heart shall be united with you; but if to betray me to my adversaries, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look on it and decide." 18 Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, who was the chief of the thirty, and he said, "We are yours, O David, And with you, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to him who helps you; Indeed, your God helps you!" Then David received them and made them captains of the band.

#### NOTES:

[Gadites](#) - The portion allotted to the tribe of Gad was on the east of Jordan, and comprehended the half of Gilead, a region of great beauty and fertility (Deut. 3:12), bounded on the east by the Arabian desert, on the west by the Jordan (Josh 13:27), and on the north by the river Jabbok. It thus included the whole of the Jordan valley as far north as to the Sea of Galilee, where it narrowed almost to a point. **This tribe was fierce and warlike**; they were "strong men of might, men of war for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, their faces the faces of lions, and like roes upon the mountains for swiftness" (1Ch 12:8; 5:19-22). [Barzillai](#) (2Sa 17:27) and [Elijah](#) (1Ki 17:1) were of this tribe. It was carried into captivity at the same time as the other tribes of the northern kingdom by Tiglath-pileser (1Ch 5:26), and in the time of Jeremiah (49:1) their cities were inhabited by the Ammonites.

#### 1 Samuel 23:15 Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.

BGT 1 Samuel 23:15 κα ε δεν Δαυιδ τι ξ ρχεται Σαουλ το ζητε ν τ ν Δαυιδ κα Δαυιδ ν τ ρει τ α χμ δει ν τ Καιν Ζιφ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:15 And David perceived that Saul went forth to seek David; and David was in the dry mountain in the New Ziph.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

NET 1 Samuel 23:15 David realized that Saul had come out to seek his life; at that time David was in Horesh in the desert of Ziph.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:15 David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in Horesh when he saw that Saul had come out to take his life.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:15 David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:15 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:15 One day near Horesh, David received the news that Saul was on the way to Ziph to

search for him and kill him.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:15 David was in the Wilderness of Ziph at Horesh when he learned that Saul had come out to seek his life.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:15 David was aware that Saul had mounted an expedition to take his life. David was then at Horesh in the desert of Ziph.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:15 David was apprehensive because Saul had come out to seek his life; but while he was at Horesh in the barrens near Ziph,

YLT 1 Samuel 23:15 And David seeth that Saul hath come out to seek his life, and David is in the wilderness of Ziph, in a forest.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:15 David was afraid because Saul had come to kill him at Horesh in the desert of Ziph.

- **life** Ge 44:30
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID REALIZES LIFE IN DANGER IN WILDERNESS OF ZIPH

**Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness**([midbār](#); Lxx = [eremos](#)) **of Ziph at Horesh** - [See map #11](#) for location of Ziph. NIV = "he learned that Saul had come out to take his life." How would this make you feel if you knew someone was on their way to kill you? Fearful. Discouraged. And a host of other emotions. And God knew how David felt which is why He sends Jonathan (1Sa 23:16).

**1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:16 καὶ ἦν ὁ Ἰωνᾶθαν υἱὸς Σαουλ καὶ πορεύθη πρὸς Δαυὶδ ἐν Καὶν ὡς κρατὰ ὤσεν τὸ χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἐν κυρίῳ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan son of Saul rose, and went to David to Caene, and strengthened his hands in the Lord.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

NET 1 Samuel 23:16 Then Jonathan son of Saul left and went to David at Horesh. He encouraged him through God.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:16 Then Saul's son Jonathan came to David in Horesh and encouraged him in his faith in God,

ESV 1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:16 And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:16 Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:16 Saul's son Jonathan set out and came to David at Horesh; there he strengthened his hand through the LORD.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:16 Jonathan son of Saul set off and went to David at Horesh and encouraged him in the name of God.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:16 Saul's son, Jonathan, came down there to David and strengthened his resolve in the LORD.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan son of Saul riseth, and goeth unto David to the forest, and strengtheneth his hand in God,

GWN 1 Samuel 23:16 Saul's son Jonathan came to David at Horesh. He strengthened David's faith in the LORD.

- **encouraged** (strengthened): De 3:28 Ne 2:18 Job 4:3,4 16:5 Pr 27:9,17 Ec 4:9-12 Isa 35:3,4 Eze 13:22 Lu 22:32,43 Eph 6:10 2Ti 2:1 Heb 12:12,13
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

Dore Woodcut - Jonathan and David

## JONATHAN ENCOURAGES DAVID IN THE LORD

**And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged** (strengtheneth his hand in God,) **him in God** - In this time of intense emotional and physical crisis, the Lord once again provided for David's needs. Jonathan was a "Pr 17:17 man," sticking close to David in his adversity. And do not miss the fact that Jonathan was risking his life to visit David! Had his father discovered this visit, he surely would not have hesitated to kill his son! And so we see that God's provision is providentially, perfectly timed, for David needed some encouraging. And God provided it in sending his kindred spirit some 28 miles from his home in Gibeah! The ways of God are so much higher than our ways! I love the **NIV** rendering that Jonathan "helped him find strength in God." **GWN** says "He strengthened David's faith in the LORD." Literally it reads "strengthened ([chazaq](#)) his hand ([yad](#)) in God." The Septuagint has "strengthened (Lxx = [krataioo](#)) his hands (cheir - hand) in the Lord." How did Jonathan strengthen David? With words in next verse, which included a reminder of God's promise that he would be king.

**THOUGHT** - When your brother or sister needs encouragement, one of the best ways to encourage them is with the promises of God. Note I said encourage them, not preach to them! See Dr Gene Getz's thoughts on applying the friendship of Jonathan and David to our lives.

**Warren Wiersbe** - Sad to say, Jonathan was never allowed to reign with David, for he was slain in battle with his father. The righteous often suffer because of the sins of others. (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#) )

**Deffinbaugh**: Jonathan is the Barnabas of the Old Testament. What great encouragers both these men are. In the Book of Acts, Barnabas starts out as the prominent leader, and Saul (the apostle Paul) is but a man whom Barnabas takes under his wing. As time passes, it becomes clear that God has chosen Paul to assume the dominant role. When this becomes evident, Barnabas joyfully accepts this fact and becomes Paul's most loyal supporter. The same spirit is seen in Jonathan. He is the king apparent, the descendant of Saul whom all expect to rule in his father's place in time to come. Because of Saul's sins, God rejects him as king and designates David as the next king. Jonathan realizes this and, like Barnabas in New Testament times, becomes David's most loyal friend and supporter. When David is in danger and his spirit seems to wane, Jonathan makes his way to and through the wilderness to seek out his friend to encourage him. This he obviously does. ([A Friend Indeed](#) )

**Winter** points out, "Jonathan's strengthening of David was primarily in God. One might expect such encouragement to be the function of the prophet or the priest but the covenant between Jonathan and David had been a sacred vow. The flight of David was even worse than he had anticipated, and Jonathan's coming to him gave him a great deal of reassurance. He was strengthened to know that Jonathan had not forgotten. This knowledge would be an immense boost to David's morale."

**Laney** points out, "These verses record the last meeting between David and his loyal friend Jonathan. There in the wilderness at Horesh Jonathan sought out and encouraged David, assuring him that he would be the next king over Israel. Jonathan exemplifies the attitude of servanthood Paul encourages in Philippians 2:3-11. Although he knew his position as Saul's heir to the throne, Jonathan was content to take second place to God's anointed king, David. Before parting, the two friends renewed the covenant that had been made earlier. In Proverbs Solomon says, 'There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.' Jonathan was that kind of a friend." (Borrow [First and Second Samuel](#))

Here are some verses for strengthening us in the Lord - Isaiah 40:31 Philippians 4:13 Colossians 1:11 Psalm 27:14 Psalm 28:6, 7 Psalm 29:11 Psalm 46:1 Psalm 59:16 Psalm 105:3-5 Psalm 118:14 Psalm 138:3 Psalm 147:5

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**Lawrence Richards** - Jonathan would have made a great and godly ruler. But his role in life was to be a great and godly friend. Few of us will achieve greatness in this life. But each of us can be the kind of friend who helps others find strength in God

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Saul's son Jonathan went to David . . . and helped him find strength in God. 1 Samuel 23:16

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 23:15–24

In 1925, Langston Hughes, an aspiring writer working as a busboy at a hotel, discovered that a poet he admired (Vachel Lindsey) was staying there as a guest. Hughes shyly slipped Lindsey some of his own poetry, which Lindsey later praised enthusiastically at a public reading. Lindsey's encouragement resulted in Hughes receiving a university scholarship, furthering him on his way to his own successful writing career.

A little encouragement can go a long way, especially when God is in it. Scripture tells of an incident when David was on the run from King Saul, who was trying "to take his life." Saul's son Jonathan sought David out "and helped him find strength in God. 'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel' " (1 Samuel 23:15–17).

Jonathan was right. David would be king. The key to the effective encouragement Jonathan offered is found in the simple phrase "in God" (v. 16). Through Jesus, God gives us "eternal encouragement and good hope" (2 Thessalonians 2:16). As we humble ourselves before Him, He lifts us as no other can.

All around us are people who need the encouragement God gives. If we seek them out as Jonathan sought David and gently point them to God through a kind word or action, He'll do the rest. Regardless of what this life may hold, a bright future in eternity awaits those who trust in Him. By: James Banks ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How did someone provide special encouragement to you in your faith journey? What can you do to strengthen someone's faith today?

Loving God, there's nothing like the encouragement You give. Please give me opportunities to help others find new strength in You.

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## Friendship

A friend loves at all times. — Proverbs 17:17

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 23:14-18

Friendship is one of life's greatest gifts. True friends seek a special kind of good for their friends: the highest good, which is that they might know God and love Him with all of their heart, soul, and mind. German pastor and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The aim of friendship is exclusively determined by what God's will is for the other person."

Jonathan, David's friend, is a sterling example of true friendship. David was in exile, hiding in the Desert of Ziph, when he learned that "Saul had come out to seek his life" (1 Sam. 23:15). Jonathan went to Horesh to find David. The significance of this scene lies in Jonathan's intent: He helped David find strength in God or, as the text puts it, he "strengthened his hand [grip] in God" (v.16).

That is the essence of Christian friendship. Beyond common interests, beyond affection, beyond wit and laughter is the ultimate aim of sowing in others the words of eternal life, leaving them with reminders of God's wisdom, refreshing their spirit with words of His love, and strengthening their grip on God.

Pray for your friends and ask God to give you a word "in season" to help them find renewed strength in our God and His Word. By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear Lord, thank You for loving us. May Your love compel us to show love to others. Give us sensitivity to Your Spirit that we might know how to encourage them in their walk with You.

A true friend is a gift from God and one who points us back to Him.

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## My Friends And I

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. — 1 Samuel 18:3

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 23:15-18

John Chrysostom (347–407), archbishop of Constantinople, said this about friendship: "Such is friendship, that through it we love places and seasons; for as . . . flowers drop their sweet leaves on the ground around them, so friends impart favor even to the places where they dwell."

Jonathan and David illustrate the sweetness of a true friendship. The Bible records an intimate and immediate bond between them

(1 Sam. 18:1). They kept their friendship alive by demonstrating their loyalty to each other (18:3; 20:16, 42; 23:18), as well as nurturing it by expressions of concern. Jonathan gave gifts to David (18:4) and watched out for him through many difficulties (19:1-2; 20:12-13).

In 1 Samuel 23:16, we see the highest moment of their friendship. When David was a fugitive on the run from Jonathan's father, "Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God." Friends help you find strength in God during the low points of life.

In a world where most relationships are about what we can get, let us be the type of friends who focus on what we can give. Jesus, our perfect Friend, demonstrated for us that "greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). By: Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thank You, Lord, for the friends You've given me to love me in spite of my failures and weaknesses. Let me treat them as You treated Your friends. Bind us together in You and enable us to help one another.

The glory of life is to love, not to be loved; to give, not to get; to serve, not to be served.

**1 Samuel 23:17 Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:17 κα ε πεν πρς α τ ν μ φοβο τι ο μ ε ρ σε χε ρ Σαουλ το πατρ ς μου κα σ βασιλε σεις π Ισραηλ κα γ σομα σοι ε ς δε τερον κα Σαουλ πατρ ρ μου ο δεν ο τω ς

LXE 1 Samuel 23:17 And he said to him, Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be second to thee; and Saul my father knows it.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

NET 1 Samuel 23:17 He said to him, "Don't be afraid! For the hand of my father Saul cannot find you. You will rule over Israel, and I will be your second in command. Even my father Saul realizes this."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:17 saying, "Don't be afraid, for my father Saul will never lay a hand on you. You yourself will be king over Israel, and I'll be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows it is true."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:17 And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:17 "Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father, Saul, is well aware."

NRS 1 Samuel 23:17 He said to him, "Do not be afraid; for the hand of my father Saul shall not find you; you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be second to you; my father Saul also knows that this is so."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:17 'Do not be afraid,' he said, 'for my father Saul's hand will not reach you. You are to reign over Israel, and I shall be second to you. Saul my father is himself aware of this.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:17 He said to him: "Have no fear, my father Saul shall not lay a hand to you. You shall be king of Israel and I shall be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:17 and saith unto him, 'Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father doth not find thee, and thou dost reign over Israel, and I am to thee for second, and also so knoweth Saul my father.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:17 "Don't be afraid," he told David, "my father Saul won't find you. You will rule Israel, and I will be your second-in-command. Even my father Saul knows this."

- **Do not be afraid** Isa 41:10,14 Heb 13:6
- **will not:** Job 5:11-15 Ps 27:1-3 46:1,2 91:1,2 Pr 14:26 Isa 54:17
- **will be:** Lu 12:32



- **I will be:** Pr 19:21 Ac 28:16 Ro 15:24
- **Saul:** 1Sa 20:31 24:20 Ac 5:39
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FEAR NOT FOR YOU WILL BE KING

**Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid** - He does not just say "buckle up, buttercup" get a grip, man up. He gives David real reasons to not be afraid.

**because the hand of Saul my father will not find you** - First Jonathan functions like a prophet giving this promise that Saul would not find David. Now we know that later they did see each other, but Saul never found David in the sense that he might ambush him or kill him.

**and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you** - Secondly, Jonathan, the crown prince, definitely states it is David who will be the king, again in the form of a prophetic promise.

**Vance Havner** - The rarest man in the orchestra of God is the saint who knows how to play second fiddle.

**and Saul my father knows that also** - Finally, Jonathan reassures that even the one seeking to kill him knows that it is David who will be the next king.

**David Roper** - Friendship entails telling another what we ourselves have come to know about God—nothing more and nothing less. As God teaches us new things about Himself we must give those truths away. Like Jonathan, who went to David at Horesh and "helped him find strength in God" (1 Samuel 23:16), a real friend is one who leaves another with a word that strengthens his grip on God. Befriending, then, is more than mere togetherness and small talk; it means sharing in one way or another what we've heard from God

**William Blaikie** points out, "In such circumstances the cheering words of his friend and the warmth of his embrace must have come on David with infinite satisfaction. They were to him what the loving words of the dying thief were to the Savior amid the babble and blasphemy of Calvary. Who indeed does not see in the David of this time persevering in his work, under such fearful discouragements, under the treachery of men with hearts like Judas Iscariot, experiencing the worst treatment from some who he had benefitted already and from others who he was to benefit still more. Who can fail to see the type of Christ patiently enduring the cross at the hands and in the stead of the very men whom by His suffering He was to save and bless." ([1 Samuel 23](#))

**1 Samuel 23:18 So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.**

GT 1 Samuel 23:18 καὶ οἱ ἔθεντο μὴ τεροὶ διαθήκην ὑπὸ κυρίου καὶ ἐκλήτο Δαυὶδ ἐν Καὶν καὶ Ἰωνάθαν πλῆν ἐς οὐκὸν αὐτοῦ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:18 So they both made a covenant before the Lord; and David dwelt in Caene, and Jonathan went to his home.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

NET 1 Samuel 23:18 When the two of them had made a covenant before the LORD, David stayed on at Horesh, but Jonathan went to his house.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:18 Then the two of them made a covenant in the LORD's presence. Afterward, David remained in Horesh, while Jonathan went home.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:18 And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:18 The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:18 So the two of them renewed their solemn pact before the LORD. Then Jonathan returned home, while David stayed at Horesh.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:18 Then the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:18 And the two made a pact before Yahweh. David stayed at Horesh and Jonathan went home.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:18 They made a joint agreement before the LORD in Horesh, where David remained, while Jonathan returned to his home.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:18 And they make a covenant both of them before Jehovah; and David abideth in the forest, and Jonathan hath gone to his house.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:18 Both of them made a pledge in the LORD's presence. David stayed in Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

- 1Sa 18:3 1Sa 20:12-17,42 2Sa 9:1 21:7
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Sa 18:3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

1 Sa 20:16 So Jonathan made a *covenant* with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD require it at the hands of David's enemies."

### JONATHAN AND DAVID AGAIN CUT COVENANT

**So - So** means "and for this reason" or "therefore." Jonathan is concluding his 3 reassuring statements (to encourage or strengthen the hand of David) in the previous passage with a "seal" of assurance that those statements are true. In the ancient world, the cutting of covenant was the most solemn, binding and intimate form of coming to agreement with another person.

**The two of them made ([karath](#)) a covenant ([beriyth](#)) before the LORD** Jonathan renews the covenant in the presence of the Lord, thus reestablishing their relationship that will take precedence over every other tie or claim. Yes, Jonathan is Saul's son, but Jonathan attests through this solemn cutting of covenant that his loyalty is to David and not to Saul.

**Gulston** says, "In a wood in the wilderness of Ziph Jonathan and David met for the last time. In the silence of a forest Jonathan poured out his words of reassurance. Brave prophetic words but some of the future was still veiled to Jonathan. He would not be there when triumph like a flood came in upon his friend. He would have played his matchless part in a unique drama, leaving his name to be forever synonymous with all that is loyal."

**And David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house**- In the Desert of Ziph there was a place named Horesh which is a word that means forest, wooded area, where David was secluded and not out in the open.

**Vos** writes "The town of Ziph was about 3 or 4 miles southeast of Hebron and the wilderness of Ziph was that part of the wilderness of Judea to the east of the town between Ziph and the Dead Sea. In ancient times there was in that desert and area known as Horesh, meaning 'thicket.' Evidently, the area was overgrown with brush wood, although no trace of these scrub trees exists today. Saul went home while David was in Horesh, but Jonathan heard where David was, and at great personal risk, located his beloved friend. Jonathan strengthened his hand in God, strengthened David's heart by his assurances and renewal of the covenant. There is no certainty from what is said that either Jonathan or Saul knew anything of David's anointing. What a magnificent person Jonathan must have been, and how great must have been his victory over natural feelings and ambitions. With calm assurance he could talk of his dearest friend taking over the kingdom he should have inherited. And in loving self-denial, he could request the second place in the kingdom. He had certainly learned to bow before what he believed to be the sovereign will of God with complete peace of mind. Once more, the two renewed the covenant by solemn oath, and they parted, never to see each other again on earth." (Borrow [1, 2 Samuel : Bible Study Commentary](#))

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**Made** (Cut [a covenant], cut off, destroy) ([03772](#)) [karath](#) literally means to cut, to cut off or to sever an object from its source or cut into parts and implies a violent action. For example, Zipporah "cut off her son's foreskin." (Ex 4:25) or the Jews "cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes." (Nu 13:2-24, cf Dt 19:5, 20:19-20, Jdg 9:48-49, 1Sa 5:4, 17:51, 24:4-5,11, 31:9, 2Sa 10:4, 2Sa 20:22) In another literal use as punishment to Israel for breaking the Mosaic covenant (cf Dt 29:25, 31:16), God says He will "cut down ([karath](#)) your incense altars" (Lev 26:30, cf Jdg 6:25-26, cf 1Sa 28:9). A sacrificial animal was not to be offered if it was "cut"

(karath) (Lev 22:24). Karath means "chewed" (cutting food with teeth) in Nu 11:33.

**Covenant** (01285) [berit/berith/beriyth](#) means covenant, treaty, compact, agreement between two parties (first use in God's covenant with Noah - Ge 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). As discussed more below beriyth describes a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh. Covenant is a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties and entails a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties depending on the specific covenant which is being studied. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44)

**Covenant** can be summarized as follows...

(1) Between two parties (sometimes equal, other times superior to inferior) -- (a) **nations** -- (peace) treaty, alliance of friendship (b) **individuals** -- a pledge or agreement with mutual obligations to each other (c) **monarch and subjects** (2Sa 3:21, 5:3, 1Chr 11:3) -- a constitution (d) **God and man** -- Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New Covenants. [TWOT](#) adds that...

Apart from blood ties the covenant was the way people of the ancient world formed wider relationships with each other. The accounts of the relationship between David and Jonathan are the only unequivocal mention of a compact between two individuals in the Old Testament (1Sa 18:3; 20:8; 23:18). It is spoken of as "a covenant of the Lord" because the Lord witnessed the transaction and protected the legal order.

(2) Accompanied by (a) **signs** (also witnesses, memorials, shared meals) (b) **sacrifices**, (c) **solemn, binding oaths** -- sealing the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking the covenant (d) Sometimes with written document on which the words of the covenant, its terms in the form of promises and stipulations were spelled out, witnessed to, signed and sealed. **Behm** (TDNT) notes that in ancient times

There is no firmer guarantee of legal security peace or personal loyalty than the covenant (e.g., Amos 1:9).

(3) Is depicted in the idiomatic phrase "**make (cut) a covenant**" in which there is was a blood sacrifice as part of the covenant ritual.

**1 Samuel 23:19 Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?"**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:19 καὶ ἐβήσαν οἱ Ζιφῆται ἐκ τῶν ἀκρῶν πρὸς Σαουλ πρὸς τὸν βουνὸν ὃν λέγουσιν οἱ κῆδοι Δαυὶδ κρυπταὶ παρὰ μὲν τῆς Μεσσαρᾶς ἐν τοῖς στενοῖς ἐν τῇ Καὶν ἐν τῷ βουνῷ τοῦ Ἐχέλα τοῦ καὶ δεξιῆς τοῦ Ἰεσσαίμου

LXE 1 Samuel 23:19 And the Ziphites came up out of the dry country to Saul to the hill, saying, Behold, is not David hidden with us in Messara, in the narrows in Caene in the hill of Echela, which is on the right of Jessaemon?

KJV 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?

NET 1 Samuel 23:19 Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Isn't David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon?"

CSB 1 Samuel 23:19 Some Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "David is hiding among us in the strongholds in Horesh on the hill of Hachilah south of Jeshimon.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:19 Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon?"

NIV 1 Samuel 23:19 The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon?"

NLT 1 Samuel 23:19 But now the men of Ziph went to Saul in Gibeah and betrayed David to him. "We know where David is hiding," they said. "He is in the strongholds of Horesh on the hill of Hakilah, which is in the southern part of Jeshimon.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:19 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:19 Some men from Ziph then went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, 'Look, David is hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the Hill of Hachilah to the south of the wastelands.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:19 Some of the Ziphites went up to Saul in Gibeah and said, "David is hiding among us, now in the refuges, and again at Horesh, or on the hill of Hachilah, south of the wasteland.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:19 And the Ziphites go up unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, 'Is not David hiding himself with us in fortresses, in the forest, in the height of Hachilah, which is on the south of the desolate place?

GWN 1 Samuel 23:19 Then the men of Ziph went to Saul in Gibeah. They said, "David is hiding with us in fortified camps at Horesh on the hills of Hachilah, south of Jeshimon.

- **the Ziphites:** 1Sa 22:7,8 26:1 Ps 54:1 \*title Ps 54:3,4 Pr 29:12
- **Hachilah:** Calmet states, that Hachilah was a mountain about ten miles south of Jericho, where Jonathan Maccabeus built the castle of Massada, west of the Dead Sea, and not far from En-gedi. 1Sa 26:1,3
- **Jeshimon:** or, the wilderness, Eusebius places Jeshimon ten miles south of Jericho, near the Dead Sea; which agrees extremely well with the position of Hachilah, as stated by Calmet.
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Psalm 54:1-7 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, **when the Ziphites came and said to Saul** (ALSO A SECOND TIME - 1Sa 26:1-5) , **"Is not David hiding himself among us?"** -- see Psalm 54 and Spurgeon's comments [below](#).

### ZIPHITES' TREACHERY INFORMING SAUL OF DAVID'S LOCATION

**Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds([metsad](#)) at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon** (means waste, wilderness, desert) - This is a sad passage for 3 reasons - (1) Ziphites were from same tribe as David, the tribe of Judah! (2) Ziph was actually a grandson of the godly and courageous warrior Caleb. (3) Of course, saddest is the fact that David had delivered the Ziphites from the Philistines and now they "show their appreciation" by betraying their deliverer! So much for family loyalty and gratitude! In fact, the tragic irony is that David was paid back with evil for doing what Saul should have done (deliver the Ziphites) which paints Saul's heart an even darker shade of black!

See Ps 54 [below](#), which is David's psalm when the Ziphites betrayed him, Ps 54:1-3 reflecting his petitions for deliverance and Ps 54:4-7 thanking God for His answer. In these verses David is betrayed once again, and now it is worse than before because he is betrayed by his own tribe. The people of Ziph reveal David's hideout to Saul, but David still escaped.

**Jeshimon** - The sterile plateau to which David went in fleeing from Saul. It was near Ziph and Maon, SE of Hebron. It refers to the eastern section of the Judean hills, which stretch toward the Dead Sea. For most of the year it is bare of vegetation. Its chalky hills have always been the home of outlaws (1 Sam 23:19, 24; 26:1, 3). (New Bible Dictionary)

"In the OT the wilderness of Judea is called the **Jeshimon**, a word meaning devastation, and no term can better suit its haggard and crumbling appearance. It covers some thirty-five miles by fifteen ... short bushes, thorns, and succulent creepers were all that relieved the brown and yellow barrenness of the sand, the crumbling limestone, and scattered shingle. Such is **Jeshimon**, the wilderness of Judea. It carries the violence and desolation of the Dead Sea Valley right up to the heart of the country, to the roots of the Mount of Olives, to within two hours of the gates of Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem" (Smith, Hist. Geog.). (Borrow [The new Unger's Bible dictionary](#) )

**Cyril Barber** - Barber points out, "Shakespeare may have had the words of James 1:2-8, our Lord's brother, in mind when he wrote, *'Sweet are the uses of adversity, which like a toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head. And this your life exempt from public haunt finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.'* Yet most of us treat trials as unwelcome guests because we must all face the many and varied problems of life. We should take courage. The problems that beset us are designed to help us grow spiritually. The difficulties we face insure that we neither become complacent nor unproductive. By responding positively to hardships, we develop steadfastness of purpose, and the grace of God can be seen in our lives. David was prepared for service as Israel's king by working through the adversity he encountered. As with the Lord Jesus,

he came to full maturity as a result of the things he suffered." ([Books of Samuel - The Sovereignty of God](#))

**1 Samuel 23:20 "Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:20 κα ν ν π ν τ π ρ ς ψυχ ν το βασιλ ως ε ς κατ βασιν καταβαιν τω π ρ ς μ ς κεκλη κασιν α τ ν ε ς τ ς χε ρ α ς το βασιλ ως

LXE 1 Samuel 23:20 And now according to all the king's desire to come down, let him come down to us; they have shut him up into the hands of the king.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.

NET 1 Samuel 23:20 Now at your own discretion, O king, come down. Delivering him into the king's hand will be our responsibility."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:20 Now, whenever the king wants to come down, let him come down. Our part will be to hand him over to the king."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:20 Now come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down, and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:20 Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:20 Come down whenever you're ready, O king, and we will catch him and hand him over to you!"

NRS 1 Samuel 23:20 Now, O king, whenever you wish to come down, do so; and our part will be to surrender him into the king's hand."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:20 Now whenever you wish to go down, my lord king, do so; we shall make it our task to hand him over to the king.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:20 Therefore, whenever the king wishes to come down, let him do so. It will be our task to deliver him into the king's grasp."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:20 And, now, by all the desire of thy soul, O king, to come down, come down, and ours is to shut him up into the hand of the king.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:20 Come, Your Majesty, whenever you want. We will hand him over to you."

- **desire:** De 18:6 2Sa 3:21 Ps 112:10 Pr 11:23
- **our part:** 1Ki 21:11-14 2Ki 10:5-7 Ps 54:3 Pr 29:26
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ZIPHITES CONFIDENTLY PROMISE DELIVERY OF DAVID TO SAUL

**Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand** - Their addressing him as "**O king**" would assure Saul they were loyal to him. **NET** - Now at your own discretion, O king, come down. Delivering him into the king's hand will be our responsibility." **NIV** = "Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king." The Ziphites are doubly treacherous not only giving Saul the location of David's hideout, but even promising to bind him up like a present to be placed in Saul's hand (power).

**1 Samuel 23:21 Saul said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, for you have had compassion on me."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:21 κα ε πεν α το ς Σαουλ ε λογημ νοι με ς τ κυρ τι πον σατε περ μο

LXE 1 Samuel 23:21 And Saul said to them, Blessed be ye of the Lord, for ye have been grieved on my

account.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:21 And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

NET 1 Samuel 23:21 Saul replied, "May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:21 "May you be blessed by the LORD," replied Saul, "for you have taken pity on me.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:21 And Saul said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:21 Saul replied, "The LORD bless you for your concern for me.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:21 "The LORD bless you," Saul said. "At last someone is concerned about me!

NRS 1 Samuel 23:21 Saul said, "May you be blessed by the LORD for showing me compassion!

NJB 1 Samuel 23:21 Saul replied, 'May you be blessed by Yahweh for sympathising with me.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:21 Saul replied: "The LORD bless you for your sympathy toward me.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:21 And Saul saith, 'Blessed are ye of Jehovah, for ye have pity on me;

GWN 1 Samuel 23:21 Saul responded, "The LORD bless you for feeling sorry for me!

- 1Sa 22:8 Jdg 17:2 Ps 10:3 Isa 66:5 Mic 3:11
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## AN IMPIOUS EMPTY BENEDICTION

**Saul said, "May you be blessed of the LORD** - Saul's words are pathetic and powerless. Saul had rejected God's Word and God had rejected him so one would hardly expect God to hear his prayer for a blessing upon anyone! Not to mention he had slaughtered God's priests, and yet still dares to use the LORD's great Name in a blessing! This has to the depth of dark hearted hypocrisy!

**For you have had compassion on me** - NLT - "At last someone is concerned about me!" Saul is having a [pity party](#)."

**Wiersbe** - Saul was still manipulating people by making them feel sorry for him (1Sa 23:21; 22:8), and this combination of building personal pity and wielding ruthless power seemed to be working. But Saul's character was deteriorating very quickly, while the Lord was molding David into a courageous man of God. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**1 Samuel 23:22 "Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:22 πορεθητε δ κα τοιμσατε τι κα γντε τ ν τ πον α το ο σται πο ς α το ν τ χει κε ο ε πατε μ ποτε πανουργε σ ηται

LXE 1 Samuel 23:22 Go, I pray you, and make preparations yet, and notice his place where his foot shall be, quickly, in that place which ye spoke of, lest by any means he should deal craftily.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly.

NET 1 Samuel 23:22 Go and make further arrangements. Determine precisely where he is and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is extremely cunning.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:22 Go and check again. Investigate and watch carefully where he goes and who has seen him there; they tell me he is extremely cunning.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:22 Go, make yet more sure. Know and see the place where his foot is, and who has seen him there, for it is told me that he is very cunning.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:22 Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:22 Go and check again to be sure of where he is staying and who has seen him there, for I know that he is very crafty.



NRS 1 Samuel 23:22 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:22 Go and make doubly sure, find out exactly what place he frequents, for I have been told that he is very cunning.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:22 Go now and make sure once more! Take note of the place where he sets foot" (for he thought, perhaps they are playing some trick on me).

YLT 1 Samuel 23:22 go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his foot is; who hath seen him there? for one hath said unto me, He is very subtle.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:22 Please make more plans, and watch where he goes. Who has seen him there? I'm told he's very clever.

- **haunt is:** Heb. foot shall be, Job 5:13
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO THE TREACHEROUS ZIPHITES

**Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, and who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning** (clever, crafty) - **NIV** - "Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there." Saul issues 4 commands which essentially is calling the Ziphites to act like a [criminal casing a house](#) before the house is vandalized. They are to case out David's hideout.

**1 Samuel 23:23 "So look, and learn about all the hiding places where he hides himself and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:23 κα δετε κα γν τε κα πορευσ μεθα μεθ μ ν κα σται ε στιν π τ ς γ ς κα ξερευν σω α τ ν ν π σαις χιλι σιν λουδα

LXE 1 Samuel 23:23 Take notice, then, and learn, and I will go with you; and it shall come to pass that if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Juda.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:23 See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

NET 1 Samuel 23:23 Locate precisely all the places where he hides and return to me with dependable information. Then I will go with you. If he is in the land, I will find him among all the thousands of Judah."

CSB 1 Samuel 23:23 Look and find out all the places where he hides. Then come back to me with accurate information, and I'll go with you. If it turns out he really is in the region, I'll search for him among all the clans of Judah."

ESV 1 Samuel 23:23 See therefore and take note of all the lurking places where he hides, and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you. And if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:23 Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:23 Discover his hiding places, and come back when you are sure. Then I'll go with you. And if he is in the area at all, I'll track him down, even if I have to search every hiding place in Judah!"

NRS 1 Samuel 23:23 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."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:23 Take careful note of all the hiding places where he lurks, and come back to me when you are certain. I shall then come with you and, if he is in the country, I shall track him down through every clan

in Judah!"

NAB 1 Samuel 23:23 "Look around and learn in which of all the various hiding places he is holding out. Then come back to me with sure information, and I will go with you. If he is in the region, I will search him out among all the families of Judah."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:23 And see and know of all the hiding-places where he hideth himself, and ye have turned back unto me prepared, and I have gone with you, and it hath been, if he is in the land, that I have searched him out through all the thousands of Judah.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:23 Watch and learn about all the hiding places where he may be hiding, and come back to me with the facts. Then I'll go with you, and if he's in the country, I'll search for him among all the families of Judah."

- **learn about all the hiding places:** Mk 14:1,10,11 Joh 18:2,3
- **I will search:** 2Sa 17:11-13 1Ki 18:10 Pr 1:16 Ro 3:15,16
- **the thousands:** Nu 10:36 Mic 5:2
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LOOK AND LEARN WHERE DAVID HIDES

**So look, and learn about all the hiding places where he hides himself and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you** - **NLT** = "Discover his hiding places, and come back when you are sure. Then I'll go with you" **NET** = "Locate precisely all the places where he hides and return to me with dependable information" Saul gives his final instructions to the Ziphites in preparation for his trip but wants to make sure they are absolutely sure of where David is hiding.

**and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah**- **CSB** = "If it turns out he really is in the region, I'll search for him among all the clans of Judah" **NIV** = "I will track him down among all the clans of Judah" Saul was determined to find David and confident that he would succeed.

**1 Samuel 23:24 Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:24 καὶ νῆστησαν οἱ Ζιφῆται καὶ πορεύθησαν μπροσθεν Σαουλ καὶ Δαυὶδ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν ἔρημον τοῦ Μαὼν καὶ ἔβησαν εἰς τὴν ἑσσημον

LXE 1 Samuel 23:24 And the Ziphites arose, and went before Saul: and David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, westward, to the right of Jessaemon.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

NET 1 Samuel 23:24 So they left and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the desert of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:24 So they went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness near Maon in the Arabah south of Jeshimon,

ESV 1 Samuel 23:24 And they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:24 So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:24 So the men of Ziph returned home ahead of Saul. Meanwhile, David and his men had moved into the wilderness of Maon in the Arabah Valley south of Jeshimon.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:24 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:24 Setting off they went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Meanwhile, David and his men were in the

desert of Maon, in the plain to the south of the wastelands.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:24 So they went off to Ziph ahead of Saul. At this time David and his men were in the desert below Maon, in the Arabah south of the wasteland.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:24 And they rise and go to Ziph before Saul, and David and his men are in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain, at the south of the desolate place.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:24 They left for Ziph ahead of Saul. David and his men were in the desert of Maon, in the plains south of Jeshimon.

- **Maon:** 1Sa 25:2 Jos 15:55
- **the south:** 1Sa 23:19
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

The hill at [Tell Maon](#)

## ZIPHITES RETURN HOME FROM SAUL DAVID HEADS FOR MAON

**Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul** - Ziphites return home after conferring and conspiring with King Saul against David.

**Now David and his men were in the wilderness** (*midbār*; Lxx = *eremos*) **of Maon**, **in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon** (waste, wilderness, desert, desolate place) - [See #12 on the map above](#) for location of **wilderness of Maon**, which is about 6-8 miles south of **Ziph**.

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**Maon** (habitation) = a town in the tribe of Judah, about 7 miles south of [Hebron](#), which gave its name to the wilderness, the district round the conical hill on which the town stood. Here David hid from Saul, and here Nabal had his possessions and his home (1Sa 23:24, 25; 25:2). "Only some small foundations of hewn stone, a square enclosure, and several cisterns are now to be seen at Maon. Are they the remains of Nabal's great establishment?" The hill is now called [Tell Maon](#). The name of Maon still exists in *Main*, a lofty conical hill ([shown in picture above](#)), south of and about seven miles distant from [Hebron](#). In this district, the **wilderness of Maon**, David was hiding when his whereabouts was betrayed to Saul by the men of Ziph (1 Sam 23:24 f), and only a timely raid by the Philistines delivered him out of that monarch's hands (1Sa23:27 ff). [Maon](#), from which the adjoining mountainous district derived its name, was city in the most southern parts of the tribe of Judah, and a neighbouring town to Carmel. Hence Nabal (1Sa 25:2) is described as a man of Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and though he might dwell generally in Maon, yet he is styled Nabal the Carmelite, from the place where his estate lay.

[Wikipedia \(see gallery at bottom of page for multiple pictures of Maon\)](#) - Tell Maon ([Arabic](#): Khirbet Ma'in<sup>[1][2]</sup>) was a biblical town in the [Hebron Hills](#), formerly known simply as **Maon** ([Hebrew](#): מעון), rising 863 metres (2,831 ft) above sea level. The town, now a ruin, is mentioned in the [Book of Joshua](#) ([Joshua 15:55](#)) and the [Books of Samuel](#) ([1 Samuel 25:2](#)). It is located about 6 kilometres (3.7 mi) southeast of [Yatta](#).

**1 Samuel 23:25 When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard it, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:25 κα πορεθη Σαουλ κα ο νδρες α το ζητε ν α τ ν κα π γγειλαν τ Δαυιδ κα κατ βη ε ς τ ν π τ ρ αν τ ν ν τ ρ μ Μααν κα κουσεν Σαουλ κα κατεδ ω ξεν π σω Δαυιδ ε ς τ ν ρημον Μααν

LXE 1 Samuel 23:25 And Saul and his men went to seek him: and they brought word to David, and he went down to the rock that was in the wilderness of Maon: and Saul heard, and followed after David to the wilderness of Maon.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:25 Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon

NET 1 Samuel 23:25 Saul and his men went to look for him. But David was informed and went down to the rock and stayed in the desert of Maon. When Saul heard about it, he pursued David in the desert of Maon.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:25 and Saul and his men went to look for him. When David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. Saul heard of this and pursued David there.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:25 And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told, so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:25 Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:25 When David heard that Saul and his men were searching for him, he went even farther into the wilderness to the great rock, and he remained there in the wilderness of Maon. But Saul kept after him in the wilderness.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:25 Saul and his men went to search for him. When David was told, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:25 When Saul and his men set out in search, David was told and went down to the gorge running through the desert of Maon.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:25 When Saul and his men came looking for him, David got word of it and went down to the gorge in the desert below Maon. Saul heard of this and pursued David into the desert below Maon.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:25 And Saul and his men go to seek, and they declare to David, and he goeth down the rock, and abideth in the wilderness of Maon; and Saul heareth, and pursueth after David to the wilderness of Maon.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:25 When Saul and his men came to look for him, David was told the news. So he went to his mountain stronghold in the desert of Maon. Saul heard about it and pursued David into the desert of Maon.

- **the rock**, 1Sa 23:28 Jdg 15:8
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID INFORMED OF SAUL'S SEEKING

**When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told** (informed) **David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon** - [See #12 on the map above](#). David comes to **the rock** which would soon receive the name "Slippery Rock" (See 1Sa 23:28).

When we find ourselves in desperate situations we learn more about God.

**And when Saul heard it, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon-** Saul is hot on his trail and obviously has superior numbers to David's men.

**1 Samuel 23:26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain; and David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:26 κα πορε ονται Σαουλ κα ο νδρες α το κ μ ρους το ρους το του κα ν Δαυιδ κα ο νδρες α το κ μ ρους το ρους το του κα ν Δαυιδ σκεπαζ μενος πορε εσθαι π προσ που Σαουλ κα Σαουλ κα ο νδρες α το παρεν βαλον π Δαυιδ κα το ς νδρας α το συλλαβε ν α το ς

LXE 1 Samuel 23:26 And Saul and his men go on one side of the mountain, and David and his men are on the other side of the mountain: and David was hiding himself to escape from Saul: and Saul and his men encamped against David and his men, in order to take them.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

NET 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, while David and his men went on the other side of the mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, but Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men so they could capture them.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul went along one side of the mountain and David and his men went along the other side. Even though David was hurrying to get away from Saul, Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

NIV 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them,

NLT 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul and David were now on opposite sides of a mountain. Just as Saul and his men began to close in on David and his men,

NRS 1 Samuel 23:26 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul and his men proceeded along one side of the mountain, David and his men along the other. David was hurrying to escape from Saul, while Saul and his men were trying to cross over to David and his men's side, to capture them,

NAB 1 Samuel 23:26 As Saul moved along one rim of the gorge, David and his men took to the other. David was in anxious flight to escape Saul, and Saul and his men were attempting to outflank David and his men in order to capture them,

YLT 1 Samuel 23:26 And Saul goeth on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain, and David is hastened to go from the face of Saul, and Saul and his men are compassing David and his men, to catch them.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men went on the other side of the mountain. David was hurrying to get away from Saul, and Saul and his men were going around the mountain toward David and his men, trying to capture them.

- **David was hurrying:** 1Sa 19:12 20:38 2Sa 15:14 17:21,22 Ps 31:22
- **to get away:** 2Ch 20:12 Ps 17:9,11 22:12,16 118:11-13 140:1-9 2Co 1:8 Rev 20:9
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A VERY CLOSE CALL AT THE MOUNTAIN

**Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain-** David and Saul were separated by a mountain. Who created that mountain? Once again even before David was born, God had prepared a place of separation and protection!

**And David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them -**  
**NAB** = "David was in anxious flight to escape Saul, and Saul and his men were attempting to outflank David and his men in order to capture them."

**1 Samuel 23:27 But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land."**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:27 καὶ ἄγγελος πρὸς Σαουλ ἔθεν λόγον, ὅτι ἐπεὶ καὶ ὁ πότιπθεντο οἱ Ἰλλυφῶλοι πύγνυ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:27 And there came a messenger to Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come hither, for the Philistines have invaded the land.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

NET 1 Samuel 23:27 But a messenger came to Saul saying, "Come quickly, for the Philistines have raided the land!"

CSB 1 Samuel 23:27 Then a messenger came to Saul saying, "Come quickly, because the Philistines have raided the land!"

ESV 1 Samuel 23:27 a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land."

NIV 1 Samuel 23:27 a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land."

NLT 1 Samuel 23:27 an urgent message reached Saul that the Philistines were raiding Israel again.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:27 Then a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come; for the Philistines have made a raid on the land."

NJB 1 Samuel 23:27 when a messenger came to Saul and said, 'Come at once, the Philistines have invaded the country.'

NAB 1 Samuel 23:27 when a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly, because the Philistines have invaded the land."

YLT 1 Samuel 23:27 And a messenger hath come in unto Saul, saying, 'Haste, and come, for the Philistines have pushed against the land.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:27 Then a messenger came to Saul and said, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the country."

- there came: Ge 22:14 De 32:36 2Ki 19:9 Ps 116:3
- the Philistines: 2Ki 19:9 Rev 12:16
- invaded: Heb. spread themselves upon, 1Ch 14:13
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### A STRATEGIC TERM OF CONTRAST!

**But** - (term of contrast - marks a change of direction) - This **but** is one of those little "hinge" words that opened a big door. In this case **but** marked a literal change of direction for Saul's army which was in process of surrounding David's small army. This is a **but** that would change the history of Israel and for that matter the history of the entire world for out of the loins of David, would eventually come the "Son of David," the Messiah and Savior of the world.

**a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land-** The messenger saved the day for David. But why did he come to Saul? Because God providentially timed a Philistine raid to distract Saul and cause him to make a change of plans. God had said David would be the next king and God's prophecies are always perfectly fulfilled, in this case clearly with providential provision of Philistine pressure on Saul!

**1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape.**

BGT 1 Samuel 23:28 κα ν στρεψεν Σαουλ μ καταδι κειν π σω Δαυιδ κα πορε θη ε ς συν ντησιν τ ν  
λλοφ λων δι το το πεκλ θη τ προς κε νος Π τρα μερισθε σα

LXE 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul returned from following after David, and went to meet the Philistines: therefore that place was called The divided Rock.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth.

NET 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul stopped pursuing David and went to confront the Philistines. Therefore that place is called Sela Hammahlekoth.



CSB 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to engage the Philistines. Therefore, that place was named the Rock of Separation.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:28 Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul quit chasing David and returned to fight the Philistines. Ever since that time, the place where David was camped has been called the Rock of Escape.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul stopped pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.

NJB 1 Samuel 23:28 So Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to oppose the Philistines. That is why the place is called the Gorge of Separations.

NAB 1 Samuel 23:28 Saul interrupted his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. This is how that place came to be called the Gorge of Divisions.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:28 And Saul turneth back from pursuing after David, and goeth to meet the Philistines, therefore they have called that place 'The Rock of Divisions.'

GWN 1 Samuel 23:28 Saul gave up pursuing David and went to fight the Philistines. So that place was called Slippery Rock.

- **Rock of Escape:** Here Saul was obliged to separate himself from David, in order to go and oppose the invading Philistines; which deliverance of David was of such a nature as made the Divine interposition fully visible. 1Sa 23:28
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SAUL MAKES A COURSE CORRECTION AT "SLIPPERY ROCK"

**So** - **So** means "for this reason," or "therefore." Based on the urgent news of a Philistine raid (the reason) Saul made [a course correction](#) so to speak.

No matter what men may do, God works out His purposes,  
and His providence does not fail.  
-- Warren Wiersbe

**Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines** - Saul was headed to kill David, but events necessitated he must head to kill Philistines.

**Therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape** - "Sela Hammahlekoth," "rock of parting". **YLT** = 'The Rock of Divisions.' **GWN** = "Slippery Rock" **CSB** = "Rock of Separation." This region would be where David would have an encounter with Nabal and Abigail (1Sa 25:1-3).

**Warren Wiersbe** - To commemorate this great escape, the Jews called the place "Sela Hammahlekoth," which means "the rock of parting." The Hebrew carries the idea of "a smooth rock" and therefore "a slippery rock," in other words, "the rock of slipping away." David quickly moved from Maon to Engedi, next to the Dead Sea, a place of safety with an ample water supply. ([Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Bob Roe** - They commemorated it. That says something about David and his men's view of their own resources as adequate. They memorialized that place as a worship act to their God, as an altar like Abraham. As Abraham trekked through the land, wherever God appeared to him, he erected an altar. David and his men knew who got them out of that mess, YHWH, and they called it the Rock of Escape, literally "the Rock of Slipperies." They slipped away from Saul. ([1 Samuel 23 David in the Wilderness of Maon](#))

**NET NOTE** - The name סֵלָא חַמְּהַלְקוֹת (Sela Hammakhleqoth) probably means "Rock of Divisions" in Hebrew, in the sense that Saul and David parted company there (cf. NAB "Gorge of Divisions"; TEV "Separation Hill"). This etymology assumes that the word derives from the Hebrew root חָלַק (khlq, "to divide"; HALOT 322 s.v. חָלַק). However, there is another root חָלַק, which means "to be smooth or slippery" (HALOT 322 s.v. חָלַק). If the word is taken from this root, the expression would mean "**Slippery Rock**."

**TSK** on **Sela Hammahlekoth (NIV)** - That is, the rock of divisions, because, says the Targum, "the heart of the king was divided to go hither and thither."

## 1 Samuel 23:29 David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi.

BGT 1 Samuel 24:1 καὶ ἔβη Δαυὶδ κατέθεν κακθίσεν ἐν τοῖς στενοῖς Εγγαδὶ

LXE 1 Samuel 23:29 And David rose up from thence, and dwelt in the narrow passes of Engaddi.

KJV 1 Samuel 23:29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi.

NET 1 Samuel 23:29 Then David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of En Gedi.

CSB 1 Samuel 23:29 From there David went up and stayed in the strongholds of En-gedi.

ESV 1 Samuel 23:29 And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of Engedi.

NIV 1 Samuel 23:29 And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

NLT 1 Samuel 23:29 David then went to live in the strongholds of En-gedi.

NRS 1 Samuel 23:29 David then went up from there, and lived in the strongholds of En-gedi.

NJB 1 Samuel 24:1 From there David went up and installed himself in the strongholds of En-Gedi.

NAB 1 Samuel 24:1 David then went up from there and stayed in the refuges behind Engedi.

YLT 1 Samuel 23:29 And David goeth up thence, and abideth in fortresses at En-gedi.

GWN 1 Samuel 23:29 From there David went to stay in the fortified camps of En Gedi.

- 1Sa 24:1 Ge 14:7 Jos 15:62 2Ch 20:2 Song 1:14 Eze 47:10
- [1 Samuel 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

David Falls at En-Gedi

## DAVID DEPARTS FOR ENGEDI

**David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds ([metsad](#)) of Engedi ("spring of a kid")** - [See #13 on the map](#) above and lies about 12 miles to the northeast from Maon on the shores of the Dead Sea.

**TSK** - The district around En-gedi, near the western coast of the Dead Sea, is reported by travellers to be a mountainous territory, filled with caverns; and consequently, proper for David in his present circumstances. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this was the wilderness of Judah, in which David was when he penned the 63rd Psalm, which breathes as much pious and devout affection as almost any of his Psalms; for in all places and in all conditions he still kept up his communion with God.--If Christians knew their privileges better, and acted up thereto, there would be less murmuring at the dark dispensations of Divine Providence.

**TECHNICAL NOTE - [NET NOTE](#)** - Beginning with 1Sa 23:29, the verse numbers through 24:22 in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with 23:29 ET = 24:1 HT, 24:1 ET = 24:2 HT, 24:2 ET = 24:3 HT, etc., through 24:22 ET = 24:23 HT. With 25:1 the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same.

[Don Anderson](#) summarizes this chapter - There are three things that really stand out in this particular chapter

1. GOD'S ABUNDANT PROVISION FOR OUR NEEDS
2. THE BLESSING OF STEADFAST FRIENDS
3. GOD'S GOOD PROVIDENCES

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**Howard Vos** - **ENGEDI** (en-ge'di; "fountain of the wild goat"). A town, also called the city of palm trees (i.e., Hazazon-tamar, Gen. 14:7; 2 Chron. 20:2), and wilderness situated about thirty miles SE of Jerusalem, on the W shore of the Dead Sea. It is full of rocks and caves (1 Sam. 23:29; Ezek. 47:10). The source of the spring from which it derives its name is on the side of the mountain about six hundred feet above the sea.

It is a fertile place and most suitable for refuge. The strongholds of David (23:29; 24:22) must have been situated by the water, and the cave is described as being below them.

It was immediately after an assault upon the "Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar," that the five Mesopotamian kings were attacked by the rulers of the plain of Sodom (Gen. 14:7; cf. 2 Chron. 20:2). Saul was told that David was in the "wilderness of Engedi," and he took "three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats" (1 Sam. 24:1-4). At a later period Engedi was the gathering place of the Moabites and Ammonites who went up against Jerusalem and fell in the valley of Beracah (2 Chron. 20:2, 26). The vineyards of Engedi were celebrated by Solomon (Song of Sol. 1:14), its balsam by Josephus, and its palms by Pliny.

At Tell el-Jurn, just S of the springs of Engedi, Benjamin Mazar led a Hebrew University and Israel Exploration Society dig from 1961 to 1965. He found no evidence of occupation in the time of David, but that is not surprising because the area probably was quite wild when David and his band hid there. Five periods of occupation were uncovered on the tell, dating from the last days of the Judean kingdom to the Roman-Byzantine period. A large fort stood in the middle of the city during the Hasmonean (Maccabean) period (Stratum III) and again in Herodian-Roman days (Stratum II). This latter city and fort were burned about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The place was again occupied during the Roman-Byzantine period. Mazar also excavated a Chalcolithic worship center (c. 3500 B.C.) just N of the spring of Engedi. (Borrow [The new Unger's Bible dictionary](#) )

## PSALM 54

For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?"

Save me, O God, by Your name,  
And vindicate me by Your power.

2 Hear my prayer, O God;

Give ear to the words of my mouth.

3 For strangers have risen against me

And violent men have sought my life;

They have not set God before them. Selah.

4 Behold, God is my helper;

The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.

5 He will recompense the evil to my foes;

Destroy them in Your faithfulness.

6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You;

I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

7 For He has delivered me from all trouble,

And my eye has looked with satisfaction upon my enemies.

**Title.** *To the Chief Musician on Neginoth.* The music was to be that of stringed instruments. Variety is to be studied in our tunes, and in all other matters relating to sacred song. Monotony is often the death of congregational praise. Providence is varied, and so should our recording songs be. *Maschil.* We are to learn and to teach by what we sing. Edification must not be divorced from psalmody. *A Psalm of David.* David's productions were as plentiful as they are profitable. His varied life was for our benefit, for from it we derive these hymns, which at this hour are as fresh and as precious as when he wrote them. *When the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?* To curry favour with Saul they were guilty of gross inhospitality. What cared they what innocent blood was shed so that they earned the graceless monarch's smile! David came quietly among them, hoping for a little rest in his many flights, but they deserted him in his solitary abode, and betrayed him. He turns to God in prayer, and so strong was his faith that he soon sang himself into delightful serenity.

**Divisions.** From Psalms 54:1-3, where the Selah makes a pause for us, the psalmist pleads with God, and then in the rest of the song, laying aside all doubt, he chants a hymn of joyful triumph. The vigour of faith is the death of anxiety, and the birth of security.

## Psalm 54:1

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 1. Save me, O God.** Thou art my Saviour; all around me are my foes and their eager helpers. No shelter is permitted me. Every land rejects me and denies me rest. But thou, O God, wilt give me refuge, and deliver me from all my enemies.

**By thy name,** by thy great and glorious nature. Employ all thine attributes for me. Let every one of the perfections which are blended in thy divine name work for me. Is not thine honour pledged for my defence?

**And judge me by thy strength.** Render justice to me, for none else will or can. Thou canst give me efficient justice, and right my wrongs by thine omnipotence. We dare not appeal to God in a bad cause, but when we know that we can fearlessly carry our cause before his justice we may well commit it to his power.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

*Title.* From the inscription, learn,

1. Particular straits and particular deliveries should be particularly remarked: as David here remembereth the danger he was in by the treachery of the *Ziphims*.

2. Mighty men will find readily more friends in an evil cause, than the godly do find in a good cause: as Saul has the *Ziphims* to offer their service to his cruelly, when David was in straits.

3. The wicked are very hearty to do an ill turn, and glad to find occasion of it. "*Doth not David, 'saith they, 'hide himself with us?'*" as if this had been good and blessed news. *David Dickson (1583-1662), in "A Brief Explication upon the Psalms."*

*Whole Psalm.* The church has taken a clear view in appointing this as one of the Psalms in commemoration of the passion of Jesus. It is seen with greatest effect as a simple prophecy of Christ. Read thus, it is very plain and intelligible; requiring little more than the first idea to exhibit a perfect correspondence with the life and feelings of the Messiah. *William Hill Tucker, in "The Psalms... with Notes," 1840.*

*Whole Psalm.* In the first three verses, David being sought for by his enemies, prays against them. That was his course, he always began his conflict with God, contending and wrestling with him for a blessing and assistance. He durst not lift up his hands even against the enemies of God (yet what durst not David do?) till he had first lifted them up in humble supplication to the Lord his strength. "Who taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight." Psalms 144:1. This being done, his courage breaks out like lightning, he doubts not of slaying his thousands and ten thousands. So in the fourth and fifth verses, he becomes his own prophet, promising himself victory. For who can resist him who hath Omnipotence for his second? Or how can any enemy maintain a fight against that captain who hath beforehand defeated and broken their forces by his prayers? assured his conquest before he puts on his armour? Then in the last verses, David concludes where he began, thankfully acknowledgeth God's goodness in his deliverance, and the dissipation of his enemies, obliging himself to a return of dutiful affectionate service, in consideration of so great mercies received. *J. Dolben, in a Thanksgiving Sermon, 1665.*

*Whole Psalm.* Blessed Redeemer! give me grace to eye thee, and to call to my recollection thine exercises amidst the false friends and open foes, which in the days of thy flesh surrounded thee. Lord! help me so to consider thee, who didst endure such a contradiction of sinners against thyself, that I may not be weary and faint in mind. And while the *Ziphims* of the present hour harass and distress me, and would deliver my soul up into the hand of the enemy: oh! for grace to be looking unto thee, and deriving strength from thee, that I may discover thy gracious hand delivering me out of all my troubles, and making me more than conqueror in thy strength, and in the power of thy might. *Robert Hawker, D.D., 1753-1827.*

**Ver. 1. Save me, O God.** As David was at this time placed beyond the reach of human assistance, he must be understood as praying to be saved by the *name and the power of God*, in an emphatic sense, or by these in contradistinction to the usual means of deliverance. Though all help must ultimately come from God, there are ordinary methods by which he generally extends it. When these fail, and every earthly stay is removed, he must then take the work into his own hands. It was such a situation that David here fled to the saints' last asylum, and sought to be saved by a miracle of divine power. *John Calvin.*

**Ver. 1. Judge me by thy strength,** or power, *i.e.*, determine, decide my cause by thy mighty power. Saul, in the cause between him and David, was resolved to end it by force only, and to arbitrate in no other way than by a javelin, a sword, or his forces. The psalmist well knew that Saul, in this respect, would be too hard for him; and therefore applies for protection and justice to one whose power he knew was infinitely superior to his adversaries, and who, he was assured, could and would defend him. *Samuel Chandler (1693-1766), in "A Critical History of the Life of David."*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 1.** In the deliverance of the saints the honour and power of God are concerned.

- I. Their failure would dishonour both.
- II. Their salvation glorifies both.
- III. Both are immutable, therefore we have a sure plea at all times.

#### WORK UPON THE FIFTY-FOURTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David"*, pp. 152-4, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

### Psalm 54:2

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 2. Hear my prayer, O God.** This has ever been the defence of saints. As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun.

**Give ear to the words of my mouth.** Vocal prayer helps the supplicant, and we keep our minds more fully awake when we can use our tongues as well as our hearts. But what is prayer if God hear not? It is all one whether we babble nonsense or plead arguments if our God grant us not a hearing. When his case had become dangerous, David could not afford to pray out of mere custom, he must succeed in his pleadings, or become the prey of his adversary.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 2. (second clause).** Let **the words of my mouth** with which I have defended my cause, be pleasing and acceptable to thee. For in this way can *prayers* and *words of the mouth* be correctly distinguished, unless any one should wish simply to understand by them *prayers uttered by the mouth*; but, as I have said, the phrase is more emphatic. *Hermann Venema*, 1697-1787.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 2.** Our main concern in prayer.

- I. What is meant by God's hearing prayer.
- II. How we may know that he has done so.
- III. What is to be done when this is doubtful.
- IV. What is due to him when the hearing is given.

### Psalm 54:3

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 3. For strangers are risen up against me.** Those who had no cause for ill will had gone against him; persons to whom he could have given no offence, for they were strangers to him. They were aliens to his God also, and should these be allowed to worry and destroy him. A child may well complain to his father when strangers come in to molest him. What right have they to interfere? Let them leave off meddling and mind their own concerns.

**And oppressors seek after my soul.** Saul, that persecuting tyrant, had stamped his own image on many more. Kings generally coin their own likeness. He led the way, and others followed seeking David's soul, his blood, his life, his very existence. Cruel and intense were they in their malice, they would utterly crush the good man; no half measure would content them.

**They have not set God before them.** They had no more regard for right and justice than if they knew no God, or cared for none. Had they regarded God they would not have betrayed the innocent to be hunted down like a poor harmless stag. David felt that atheism lay at the bottom of the enmity which pursued him. Good men are hated for God's sake, and this is a good plea for them to urge in prayer.

**Selah.** As if he said, "Enough of this, let us pause." He is out of breath with indignation. A sense of wrong bids him suspend the

music awhile. It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions: we are usually too much in a hurry: a little more holy meditation would make our words more suitable and our emotions more fervent.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 3. Strangers:** aliens to his truth, men who from unbelief have estranged themselves from all lot and portion in his covenants -- oppress and persecute. *William Hill Tucker.*

**Ver. 3. (first clause).** The Chaldee interpreter reads, *proud men*, instead of **strangers**, a reading which also is found in eight of Kennicott's Codices. So also Psalms 86:14. *William Walford, in "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, "etc., 1837.*

**Ver. 3. (first clause).** There is a great mistake made by rendering the word *oyrz (zarim)* **strangers**. The Ziphites surely were Israelites, and not strangers. The fact is this, that word is taken from *hrz (zarah)* the primary meaning of which is "to scatter, "to "disperse, "also "to sift, "as grain. Hence it signifies, likewise figuratively, to sift a matter, to investigate, to search out, to trace out. So here, David complains of the new and dangerous enemies he had got in the Ziphites, who became Saul's spies. When he pleads, therefore, for deliverance, saying, "Save me, O God, " etc., he describes the danger he was in: **For spies have risen against me.** *Benjamin Weiss, in "New Translation, Exposition, and Chronological Arrangement of the Psalms, "1858.*

**Ver. 3. Oppressors seek after my soul;** *i.e.*, my life at least; my soul also they would destroy, if it lay in their power, as the Papists delivered up John Huss to the devil. *John Trapp, 1611-1662.*

**Ver. 3. Selah.** See "Treasury of David", Vol. 1, pp. 25,29,346,382; and Vol. 2, pp. 249-252.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 3.** Strange trials.

- I. They are not altogether strange.
  1. Not so to God.
  2. Not so in the history of the church.
  3. Not so to the provisions of grace wherein they are anticipated.
- II. Wherein they are strange.
  1. They reveal God anew.
  2. Endear forgotten promises.
  3. Train unused graces.
  4. Being new praises, etc.

**Ver. 3. (last clause).** The root of sin: if they remembered his authority they dared not, if they tasted his love they would not, if they were conformed to his nature they could not.

## Psalm 54:4

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 4. Behold, God is mine helper.** He saw enemies everywhere, and now to his joy as he looks upon the band of his defenders he sees one whose aid is better than all the help of men; he is overwhelmed with joy at recognizing his divine champion, and cries,

ED: SEE [Jehovah Ezer: The LORD our Helper](#):

**Behold.** And is not this a theme for pious exultation in all time, that the great God protects us, his own people: what matters the number or violence of our foes when HE uplifts the shield of his omnipotence to guard us, and the sword of his power to aid us? Little care we for the defiance of the foe while we have the defence of God.

**The Lord is with them that uphold my soul.** The reigning Lord, the great Adonai is in the camp of my defenders. Here was a greater champion than any of the three mighties, or than all the valiant men who chose David for their captain. The psalmist was very confident, he felt so thoroughly that his heart was on the Lord's side that he was sure God was on *his* side. He asked in the first verse for deliverance, and here he returns thanks for upholding: while we are seeking one mercy which we have not, we must not be unmindful of another which we have. It is a great mercy to have some friends left us, but a greater mercy still to see the Lord among them, for like so many cyphers our friends stand for nothing till the Lord sets himself as a great unit in the front of them.



## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 4. Behold**, says he, I produce a certain fact, well known, demonstrated by a new proof, and worthy of all attention; for the particle *behold*, contains this breadth of meaning. *Hermann Venema*.

**Ver. 4.** Christ sees with the utmost clearness, that God will be his *own helper*, and of them--the disciples and believers-- **that uphold his soul**. In the same moment, does he foresee the destruction of his enemies. He views, in thought, the armies of Titus, the fall of the Jewish nation, and the dispersion of the remnant. He beholds the avenging hand of God, stretched in fury over the destroyers. *William Hill Tucker*.

**Ver. 4. (second clause).** Such as take part with the persecuted saints, God will take part with them! **The Lord is with them that uphold my soul**. *David Dickson*.

**Ver. 4-5.** He is assured of help to himself and to his friends, and of vengeance to his enemies. Whence learn,

1. Fervent prayer hath readily a swift answer, and sometimes wonderfully swift, even before a man have ended speech, as here David findeth in experience. **Behold**, saith he, **God is my helper**.

2. The sight of faith is very clear and piercing through all clouds when God holds forth the light of his Spirit unto it, it can demonstrate God present in an instant; ready to help in greatest straits: **Behold, God is my helper**.

3. There is more joy in God's felt presence than grief in felt trouble; for, **Behold, God is mine helper**, was more comfortable to David than his friends' unkindness, and strangers' malice was grievous. *David Dickson*.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 4.** A theme for wonder.

1. At his unmerited grace, that he should side with *me*.
2. At his gracious power, for who can resist him?
3. At his practical help, for he has upheld my soul.

## Psalm 54:5

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies.** They worked for evil, and they shall have their wages. It cannot be that malice should go unavenged. It were cruelty to the good to be lenient to their persecutors. It is appointed, and so it must ever be, that those who shoot upward the arrows of malice shall find them fall upon themselves. The recoil of their own gun has often killed oppressors.

**Cut them off in thy truth.** Not in ferocious revenge is this spoken, but as an Amen to the sure sentence of the just Judge. Let the veracity of thy threatenings be placed beyond dispute, the decree is right and just, let it be fulfilled. It is not a private desire, but the solemn utterance of a military man, a grossly injured man, a public leader destined to be a monarch, and a man well trained in the school of Moses, whose law ordains eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 4-5.** See **Psalms on "Psalms 54:4"** for further information.

**Ver. 5. Cut them off.** He desires that God would destroy them with a *death dealing blow*, which is the force the word *tmu* contains; its primitive sense is *to be silent, to keep silence*, whence it is transferred to a stroke penetrating deeply and striking fatally, such as is called a *silent* blow, opposed to a *sounding* one, which is wont to rebound and not pierce deeply. *Hermann Venema*.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

## Psalm 54:6

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee.** Spontaneously will I bring my freewill offerings. So certain is he of deliverance that he offers a vow by anticipation. His overflowing gratitude would load the altars of God with victims cheerfully presented. The more we receive, the more we ought to render. The spontaneousness of our gifts is a great element in their acceptance; the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

**I will praise thy name, O Lord.** As if no amount of sacrifice could express his joyful feelings, he resolves to be much in vocal thanksgiving. The name which he invoked in prayer (Psalms 54:1), he will now magnify in praise. Note how roundly he brings it out:

**O Jehovah.** This is ever the grand name of the revealed God of Israel, a name which awakens the most sublime sentiments, and so nourishes the most acceptable praise. None can praise the Lord so well as those who have tried and proved the preciousness of his name in seasons of adversity. The psalmist adds,

**for it is good,** and surely we may read this with a double nominative, God's name is good, and so is his praise. It is of great use to our souls to be much in praise; we are never so holy or so happy as when our adoration of God abounds. Praise is good in itself, good to us, and good to all around us. If David's enemies are described in Psalms 54:3 as not setting God before them, he here declares that he is of a different mind from them, for he resolves to have the Lord in perpetual remembrance in his sacrifices and praises.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee.** He would *sacrifice freely*: by which he does not allude to the circumstance, that sacrifices of thanksgiving were at the option of worshippers, but to the alacrity and cheerfulness with which he would pay his vow when he had escaped his present dangers. *John Calvin.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 6.** We should sacrifice voluntarily, liberally, joyfully, continuously, with pure motive.

**Ver. 6.** The goodness of praising the good name.

## Psalm 54:7

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble.** Up to that time deliverance had come, and for that danger also he felt that rescue was near. David lived a life of dangers and hair breadth escapes, yet he was always safe. In the retrospect of his very many deliverances he feels that he must praise God, and looking upon the mercy which he sought as though it were already received, he sang this song over it--

"And a new song is in my mouth,  
To long loved music set,  
*Glory to thee for all the grace*  
*I have not tasted yet.*"

Out of all trouble our covenant God is pledged to bring us, and therefore even now let us uplift the note of triumph unto Jehovah, the faithful preserver of them that put their trust in him. Thus far have we proved his promise good; he changes not, and therefore in all the unknown future he will be equally our guardian and defence, "showing himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

**And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.** He knew that yet he should look on his haughty foes, gazing down on them in triumph as now they looked on him in contempt. He desired this as a matter of justice, and not of personal pique. His righteous soul exulted because he knew that unprovoked and gratuitous malice would meet with a righteous punishment. Could we keep out of our hearts all personal enmity as fully as the psalmist did in this Psalm, we might yet equally feel with him a sacred acquiescence and delight in that divine justice which will save the righteous and overthrow the malicious. In closing, let us trust that if we are as friendless as this man of God, we may resort in prayer as he did, exercise the like faith, and find ourselves ere long singing the same joyous hymn of praise.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 7. Mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.** Or, *mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies*; that is, he was able to meet them without terror. *Samuel Davidson, D.D., 1852.*

**Ver. 7.** The reader will note that the words *his desire* are supplied by our translators, and are not in the original text. *C. H. S.*

#### **HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 7. (*first clause*).** The exclamation of the newly pardoned penitent, the cry of the delivered saint, the song of the ripe Christian, the shout of the glorified believer.