
1SAMUEL 26: 1 The Ziphites came to Saul to Gibeah, saying, "Doesn't David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert?"

The Ziphites inform Saul of David's hiding place, 1Sam 26:1. Saul, with three thousand men, goes in pursuit of him, 1Sam 26:2, 1Sam 26:3. David sends out spies; and finds where Saul had pitched his camp; and he and Abishai come to the camp by night, find all asleep, and bring away Saul's spear, and the cruse of water that was at his head, 1Sam 26:4-12. David goes to the opposite hill; awakes Abner, captain of Saul's host; chides him for being so careless of his master's life; and calls on Saul to send one of his servants for the spear; and severely chides him for his continued hostility to him, 1Sam 26:13-24. Saul humbles himself to David; promises to persecute him no more; and returns to his own place, 1Sam 26:25.

Verse 1

The Ziphites came - This is the second time that these enemies of David endeavored to throw him into the hands of Saul. See 1Sam 23:19.

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

Verse 2

Three thousand chosen men - Though they knew that David was but six hundred strong, yet Saul thought it was not safe to pursue such an able general with a less force than that mentioned in the text; and, that he might the better depend on them, they were all elect or picked men out of the whole of his army.

1SAMUEL 26: 3 Saul encamped in the hill of Hachilah, which is before the desert, by the way. But David stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.

1SAMUEL 26: 4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had certainly come.

1SAMUEL 26: 5 David arose, and came to the place where Saul had encamped; and David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his army: and Saul lay within the place of the wagons, and the people were encamped around him.

Verse 5

David arose - As David and his men knew the country, they had many advantages over Saul and his men; and no doubt could often watch them without being discovered.

Saul lay in the trench - The word במעגל *bammaegal*, which we translate in the trench, and in the margin in the midst of his carriages, is rendered by some in a ring of carriages, and by others in the

circle, i.e., which was formed by his troops. Luther himself translates it wagenburg, a fortress formed of wagons or carriages.

As עגל agal signifies any thing round, it may here refer to a round pavilion or tent made for Saul, or else to the form of his camp. The Arabs, to the present day, always form a circle in their encampments, and put their principal officers in the center.

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

Verse 6

Abishai the son of Zeruiah - She was David's sister; and therefore Abishai and Joab were nephews to David.

1SAMUEL 26: 7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the place of the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people lay around him.

1SAMUEL 26: 8 Then Abishai said to David, "God has delivered up your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore please let me strike him with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time."

Verse 8

God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand - Here Abishai uses the same language as did David's men, when Saul came into the cave at En-gedi, (see 1Sam 24:4, etc.), and David uses the same language in reply.

1SAMUEL 26: 9 David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?"

1SAMUEL 26: 10 David said, "As the LORD lives, the LORD will strike him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle and perish."

Verse 10

The Lord shall smite him - He shall die by a stroke of the Divine judgment; or his day shall come to die - he shall die a natural death; which in the course of things must be before mine, and thus I shall get rid of mine enemy; or he shall descend into the battle, and perish - he shall fall by the enemies of his country. These are the three ordinary ways by which man accomplishes, as a hireling, his day. Murder David could not consider to be lawful; this would have been taking the matter out of God's hand, and this David would not do.

1SAMUEL 26: 11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head, and the jar of water, and let us go."

1SAMUEL 26: 12 So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head; and they went away: and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen on them.

Verse 12

David took the spear and the cruse - The spear, we have already seen, was the emblem of power and regal dignity. But it is usual, in Arab camps, for every man to have his lance stuck in the ground beside him, that he may be ready for action in a moment. The cruse of water resembled, in some measure, the canteens of our soldiers. In such a climate, where water was always scarce, it was necessary for each man to carry a little with him, to refresh him on his march.

A deep sleep from the Lord - It is the same word which is used, Gen 2:21, to describe the sleep which God caused to fall upon Adam, when he formed Eve out of his side.

1SAMUEL 26: 13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of the mountain afar off; a great space being between them;

1SAMUEL 26: 14 and David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Don't you answer, Abner?"

Then Abner answered, "Who are you who cries to the king?"

1SAMUEL 26: 15 David said to Abner, "Aren't you a man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not kept watch over your lord, the king? For one of the people came in to destroy the king your lord.

Verse 15

Art not thou a valiant man? - This is a strong irony. Ye are worthy to die; ye are sons of death - ye deserve death for this neglect of your king. And had not Saul been so deeply affected with David's generosity in preserving his life, he had doubtless put Abner and his chief officers to death; though they were not to blame, as their apparent neglect was the effect of a supernatural sleep.

1SAMUEL 26: 16 This thing isn't good that you have done. As the LORD lives, you are worthy to die, because you have not kept watch over your lord, the LORD's anointed. Now see where the king's spear is, and the jar of water that was at his head."

1SAMUEL 26: 17 Saul knew David's voice, and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?"

David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

1SAMUEL 26: 18 He said, "Why does my lord pursue after his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"

1SAMUEL 26: 19 Now therefore, please let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If it is so that the LORD has stirred you up against me, let him accept an offering. But if it is the children of men, they are cursed before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day that I shouldn't cling to the LORD's inheritance, saying, 'Go, serve other gods!'

Verse 19

Let him accept an offering - If God have stirred thee up against me, why, then, let him deliver my life into thy hand, and accept it as a sacrifice. But as the word is מִנְחָה minchah, a gratitude-offering, perhaps the sense may be this: Let God accept a gratitude-offering from thee, for having purged the land of a worker of iniquity; for, were I not such, God would never stir thee up against me.

But if they be the children of men - If men have, by false representations, lies, and slanders, stirred thee up against an innocent man, then let them be cursed before the Lord. If I am guilty, I deserve to die; if not, those who seek my life should be destroyed.

Saying, Go, serve other gods - His being obliged to leave the tabernacle, and the place where the true worship of God was performed, and take refuge among idolaters, said in effect, Go, serve other gods.

1SAMUEL 26: 20 Now therefore, don't let my blood fall to the earth away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

Verse 20

As when one doth hunt a partridge - It is worthy of remark that the Arabs, observing that partridges, being put up several times, soon become so weary as not to be able to fly; they in this manner hunt them upon the mountains, till at last they can knock them down with their clubs.

It was in this manner that Saul hunted David, coming hastily upon him, and putting him up from time to time, in hopes that he should at length, by frequent repetitions of it, be able to destroy him. See Harmer.

1SAMUEL 26: 21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David; for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."

Verse 21

I have sinned - Perhaps the word חָטָאתִי chatathi, "I have sinned," should be read, I have erred, or, have been mistaken. I have taken thee to be a very different man from what I find thee to be. Taken

literally it was strictly true. He often purposed the spilling of David's blood; and thus, again and again, sinned against his life.

1SAMUEL 26: 22 David answered, "Behold the spear, O king! Then let one of the young men come over and get it.

1SAMUEL 26: 23 The LORD will render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness; because the LORD delivered you into my hand today, and I wouldn't stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed.

1SAMUEL 26: 24 Behold, as your life was respected this day in my eyes, so let my life be respected in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all oppression."

1SAMUEL 26: 25 Then Saul said to David, "You are blessed, my son David. You shall both do mightily, and shall surely prevail." So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Verse 25

Thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. - The Hebrew is גם עשה תעשה וגם יכל gam asoh thaaseh, vegam yachol tuchal; "Also in doing thou shalt do, and being able thou shalt be able; which the Targum translates, also in reigning thou shalt reign, and in prospering thou shalt prosper; which in all probability is the meaning.

There is a vast deal of dignity in this speech of David, arising from a consciousness of his own innocence. He neither begs his life from Saul, nor offers one argument to prevail upon him to desist from his felonious attempts, but refers the whole matter to God, as the judge and vindicator of oppressed innocence. Saul himself is speechless, except in the simple acknowledgment of his sin; and in the behalf of their king not one of his officers has one word to say! It is strange that none of them offered now to injure the person of David; but they saw that he was most evidently under the guardian care of God, and that their master was apparently abandoned by him. Saul invites David to return, but David knew the uncertainty of Saul's character too well to trust himself in the power of this infatuated king. How foolish are the counsels of men against God! When he undertakes to save, who can destroy? And who can deliver out of his hands?