

# CHAPTER 19

## INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 19

This chapter relates the dangers David was exposed unto through Saul's enmity at him, and his deliverance from them, as by the notice Jonathan gave him of his father's designs against him, and by his kind interposition on his behalf, (<sup><0901></sup>1 Samuel 19:1-7); by David's slipping out of Saul's presence, when he was about to cast a javelin at him, (<sup><0908></sup>1 Samuel 19:8-10); by Michal's letting him down through a window, when Saul sent messengers to kill him, and by deceiving them with an image laid in his bed in the room of him, (<sup><0911></sup>1 Samuel 19:11-17), and again by Samuel's protection of him at Naioth, whither David fled, and where Saul sent messengers after him, and at length came himself; and instead of laying hands on David, both he and the messengers were set a prophesying, (<sup><0918></sup>1 Samuel 19:18-24).

**Ver. 1.** *And Saul spake to Jonathan his son*, etc.] Who was heir to his crown; and though he knew he loved David, and was in strict friendship with him, yet he might hope, that as his succession to the kingdom was in danger, as he thought, and that David was his rival in it, his mind would be alienated from him; and that he would listen rather to a father than a friend, and would see where his true interest lay, and abandon David, yea, seek his ruin, which Saul was intent upon

*and to all his servants*; who yet pretended to love David, and as he himself said they did, and some of them might; with these he might rather hope to succeed, as they were attached to him, and might be secretly enemies of David, and therefore to these, as well as to his son, he spake, and gave his orders:

*that they should kill David*; as if he was a traitor, and an usurper of his throne, and one that had a design upon that, and upon his life; finding he could do nothing by the schemes, and snares, and stratagems, he used in a private manner, he grew outrageous and furious, and openly declared his views, and laid his injunctions on his son and servants to take away David's life, as a very dangerous person to his crown and government.

**Ver. 2.** *But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David*, etc.] In his company and conversation; he loved him with a love of complacency, and was constant and steadfast in it, and which was a kind providence to David; for by this means he came to the knowledge of Saul's designs upon him, and could the better guard against him:

*and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee*; to inform him of which was acting the part of a sincere and faithful friend:

*now therefore, I pray thee, take heed of thyself until the morning*: it seems it was now evening when he informed him of it; and as he knew not what emissaries Saul might have out that night in quest of him, he advises him to take care of himself, and not expose himself to any danger, and to keep a strict guard about him; and in the morning he would try to conciliate his father to him, when he might hope, having slept upon it, that he would be in a better temper, and more disposed to hear what might be said to him:

*and abide in a secret [place], and hide thyself*; he seems to suggest as if it was not safe for him to be in his own house, and in his own bedchamber that night, but that it was advisable to retire to some private place, where it might not be known or suspected that he was there. By what follows he means some field, and a private place in it.

**Ver. 3.** *And I will go out*, etc.] In the morning, at the same time his father used to take his morning walk:

*and stand beside my father in the field where thou [art]*; on that side of him next to David, that he might not see him, and yet be so near, that David might hear what passed between them:

*and I will commune with my father of thee*; speak in favour of him, and endeavour to dissuade him from attempting to take away his life, which was of so much importance and usefulness in the commonwealth of Israel:

*and what I see that I will tell thee*; what David could not well hear he would inform him of, and what he could perceive in the countenance of Saul, as well as conclude from his words, that he would make known to David, that so he might know better what he had to do, and provide for his safety.

**Ver. 4.** *And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father*, etc.] Observed to him what a good man he was, and what good things he had

done, what wisdom and prudence he had shown in the management of all his affairs, what valour and courage in all his expeditions, what faithfulness and integrity to his king and country in every instance:

*and said unto him, let not the king sin against his servant, against David;* by taking away his life; which would have been a great sin indeed, a sin against the law of God, which forbids murder, and which would have been attended with sad aggravations of cruelty and ingratitude:

*because he hath not sinned against thee;* had not disobeyed any of his orders, but faithfully served him in everything, and much less ever thought to take away his life, or seize his crown, as he might imagine:

*and because his works [have been] to thee-ward very good;* by slaying the Philistines, when he and his army were in the utmost terror; by driving away the evil spirit from him, through playing on his harp before him; as well as by commanding his troops, and leading them against the Philistines, and obtaining victory over them.

**Ver. 5.** *For he did put his life in his hand,* etc.] Exposed himself to the utmost danger, when no one in all the camp of Israel would do the like:

*and slew the Philistine;* Goliath of Gath, who defied the armies of Israel; against him he went unarmed, only with his sling and stones, and fought him, and slew him:

*and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel;* by his hand, so that they were delivered from their enemies, who fled before them, and they pursued them, and got a complete victory over them:

*thou sawest [it], and didst rejoice;* he was an eyewitness of David's going forth against the Philistine, and slaying him, and of all the happy effects of it, which then greatly affected him, and he could not forbear expressing great joy on that occasion:

*wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?* and so entail the guilt of it on himself and family.

**Ver. 6.** *And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan,* etc.] Not only heard him out what he had to say, but was affected with it, and wrought upon by it, and was convicted for the present that he was wrong in seeking the life of David, and therefore would desist from it; the Lord working

upon his mind by what Jonathan said, and inclined him to listen to it, and act accordingly:

*and Saul sware, [as] the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain;* this oath he added to what he said to Jonathan, for the confirmation of it; and which was taken either with a real intention to keep it, though that intention did not long continue; or with a view to deceive Jonathan, that he might acquaint David with it, and so prevent his flight and escape, and that he might the more easily fall into his hands; but the former seems rather to be the case.

**Ver. 7.** *And Jonathan called David,* etc.] Out of his lurking place in the field, after Saul was returned home:

*and Jonathan showed him all these things:* which had passed between him and his father, and particularly the oath he had made that he should not be slain:

*and Jonathan brought David to Saul:* introduced him at court again, and into the presence chamber of Saul; who, in appearance, received him courteously, and a reconciliation was seemingly made:

*and he was in his presence as in times past;* when he was first received at court, and in great esteem both with Saul and his courtiers.

**Ver. 8.** *And there was war again,* etc.] Between Israel and the Philistines; it does not appear that either of them sent out their whole force, only some parties or detachments, between which there were skirmishes:

*and David went out and fought with the Philistines;* he went out with his thousand men, over which he was made captain, (<sup><ORIS></sup>1 Samuel 18:13); for he had not the command of the whole army; that belonged to Abner:

*and slew them with a great slaughter, and they fled from him;* he killed many of them in his engagements with them, and the rest fled, and he returned victorious; which stirred up the envy and increased the jealousy of Saul, to observe which this is related.

**Ver. 9.** *And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul,* etc.] His melancholy and frantic disorder returned upon those victories of David, and he grew envious, jealous, spiteful, and malicious:

*as he sat in his house with his javelin his hand*; which either describes the posture he was in when the evil spirit came upon him; or the effects of it, he became dull and melancholy, did not care to go abroad, but kept at home, and was suspicious of everybody; and therefore kept a javelin in his hand to defend himself; or it may be rather to dispatch David with it, when an opportunity should offer, which quickly did:

*and David played with [his] hand*; on some instrument of music, particularly the harp, to drive away the evil spirit, the melancholy disorder, from Saul; which showed his humility, that though he was an officer in the army, had a considerable post in it, yet deigned to act the part of a musician to Saul, and his great kindness and affection for him his sovereign, willing to serve him what he could to promote his health and comfort, and the trust and confidence he put in his promise and oath, or rather in the providence of God for his protection in the way of his duty, though he knew how spiteful and injurious Saul had been to him.

**Ver. 10.** *And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with his javelin,* etc.] To strike it through him, and fasten him to the wall with it, as he had attempted before, (<sup><DISE></sup>1 Samuel 18:11);

*but he slipped away out of Saul's presence*: he perceived his design, and being of great agility of body, moved out of his place before him very nimbly:

*and he smote the javelin into the wall*; he threw it with such force that it entered into the wall, and stuck there; so great was his resolution to destroy David, and such the rage and passion that he was in, and such his strength of body, and which, in person; in his circumstances, is strangely exerted at times:

*and David fled, and escaped that night*; it being towards night, or in the evening, very probably, when this affair happened; upon which he departed from Saul's court, and went to his own house, and so escaped the danger he was exposed to for the present.

**Ver. 11.** *And Saul sent messengers unto David's house,* etc.] Supposing that he was gone thither; where this was is not said, very likely in Gibeah, where Saul lived:

*to watch him*; that he might not get out from thence in the night:

*and to slay him in the morning*; the reason why he did not order them to break into the house, and slay him at once, but wait till morning, seems to be, lest should he be alarmed by their breaking in, he might take the advantage of the night, and easily escape, or another person through mistake might be slain for him; and therefore, that they might be sure of him, they were to watch till it was broad daylight, when they could not well miss him. Josephus <sup>f395</sup> says, the orders to watch him until morning were, that he might be taken and brought to a court of judicature, and be condemned and put to death, which was usually held in a morning; but Saul's orders to the messengers were to put him to death themselves, and he had no notion of dealing with him according to a formal process of judgment:

*and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, if thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain*; meaning, if he did not take the benefit and advantage of the night to make his escape, he would not be able to do it in the morning; the house being so beset, as she perceived, by persons whom she might suspect were sent by Saul to destroy him, knowing the ill will her father bore to him, or a messenger at the same time might be dispatched to her, either from her brother Jonathan, or from one of her friends at court, acquainting her with the design against David, and the danger he was in. Upon this occasion David penned the fifty ninth psalm, (see <sup><480></sup>Psalm 59:1-17).

**Ver. 12.** *So Michal let David down through a window*, etc.] In like manner as Rahab let down the spies from her house in Jericho, when the king's messengers were in quest of them, (<sup><00215></sup>Joshua 2:15); and as the disciples let down the Apostle Paul at Damascus, to preserve him from the designs of the Jews upon him:

*and he went, and fled, and escaped*; he departed from his house, and ran with all the haste he could, and escaped the messengers that had beset the house, and were waiting for him.

**Ver. 13.** *And Michal took an image*, etc.] Or "teraphim", as the word is; which, if the same with those that Rachel stole from her father, they seem to be of the same sort with the penates or household gods of the Heathens, which were privately kept by Michal; for, had David known of them, he would not have suffered them to have been in his house. Aben Ezra supposes they were images made in the form of men under such a constellation, a sort of talismans, to receive the heavenly influences, and

which being consulted, foretold things to come; and R. Isaiah is of opinion, that Michal chose and placed these in the bed, that her father might conclude, when he should hear of them, that David had found them; and by thus means know that his intention was to kill him, and therefore fled; but to consult such images was very far from David, and without it he knew Saul's intention. Abarbinel makes mention of several sorts of teraphim, some for idolatry, some to draw down the heavenly influences, some to know the time of the day, a sort of dials; some were made after the form of a man known, and like him in his form and features; and women, he says, used to have the forms or statues of their husbands, that they might have them continually before them, because of the great love they had to them; and of this sort he supposes were the teraphim of Michal, and which is approved of by Abendana; and that this image had the likeness of an human face is very probable, or it could not have so well answered her purpose:

*and laid [it] in the bed;* where David used to lie, that it might seem to be he himself;

*and put a pillow of goats' [hair] for his bolster;* she took the finest of the goats' hair, which she had in the house, women being used to spin in those days, even great personages, and put it into a pillow, and made a bolster of it, and put it under the head or block of the image, which would sink it, being soft, and so look like a sick man, whose face could not easily be discerned; though some think this goats' hair was put about the head of the image, to make it look the more like an human head; goats' hair being very much like human hair <sup>f396</sup>, and of different colours, and such a colour might be chosen as was most like David's, (see ~~2001~~ Song of Solomon 4:1); the Targum interprets it, a bottle of goats skins, that is, a leathern bottle or bag made of goats skins, such as they used to put wine into; hence the conceit in the Midrash <sup>f397</sup>, that a bottle of wine was put instead of David: but the pillow or bolster had the form of a leathern bag or bottle; the Septuagint version is very odd,

“and put the liver of goats at his head;”

and so Josephus says <sup>f398</sup>; and it is observed <sup>f399</sup>, that the liver of a goat will move a long time after it is taken out, and so make a show of the palpitation of the heart: but then this was put, not within the bed, but at the head of the image:

*and covered [it] with a cloth*; to keep her sick husband warm, as she would have it understood.

**Ver. 14.** *And when Saul sent messengers to take David*, etc.] Either the same who in the morning inquired for David, or those staying longer than Saul expected, and fearing they were negligent or corrupted, he sent others: to whom

*she said, he [is] sick*; and in bed, and cannot be spoke with; this lie she told through her affection to David, and to preserve his life; and this stratagem she devised to gain time, that while she was amusing the messengers with this tale of hers, before they could discover the truth of the matter David would be out of their reach; whereas, had she denied his being at home, or signified that he had made his escape, they would have immediately pursued after him, and he would have been in danger of being taken by them.

**Ver. 15.** *And Saul sent the messengers [again] to see David*, etc.] Not to visit him, or to see how he was, or inquire of his health, in a kind manner, but to see his person, whether he was sick or not, and whether he was there or not; for Saul might suspect some deceit was used, because the messengers took the report of Michal, and saw not David, nor attempted to see him; but now they have strict orders to see him, and not take Michal's word as before, (~~1~~1 Samuel 19:14); wherefore the supplement again may be left out:

*saying, bring him up to me in the bed*; if so bad that he was not able to rise, or not fit to be taken out of his bed, his orders were, that he should be brought to him in it; resolved he was to have him, sick or well:

*that I may slay him*: not content that he should die a natural death, or willing to wait for it, he is in haste, being full of wrath and malice, to slay him himself.

**Ver. 16.** *And when the messengers were come in*, etc.] To David's house, and into the room where he was supposed to lie:

*behold, [there was] an image in the bed to their great surprise*; they expected to see David, but instead of him the teraphim, as in (~~1~~1 Samuel 19:13); if they had been in the room before, and thought they had seen David in the bed, they might be the more surprised to find that it was only an image they saw:



*with a pillow of goats' [hair] for his bolster*; (see Gill on “~~0913~~1 Samuel 19:13”).

**Ver. 17.** *And Saul said unto Michal*, etc.] After the messengers returned and reported what they had seen, when Saul either came to her at her house, or sent for her to his palace:

*why hast thou deceived me so*; for deceiving his messengers was deceiving him, by pretending David was sick and in bed, when she had placed an image there, and had let him down through a window, and he was gone:

*and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?* as if she was more obliged to gratify the wicked passion of a father, than to provide for the safety of her husband:

*and Michal answered Saul, he said unto me, let me go, why should I kill thee?* though she was concerned for the preservation of her husband, yet not for his honour and credit, nor for her own veracity; she attempted not to vindicate her husband from the charge of being an enemy to Saul, as she might; but suggested that he was so desperate a man, that if she had offered to have detained him, he would have murdered her, and threatened, if she did, he would do when both were false; that he should say to her let me go, when it was she that advised him to go, and that if she refused he would kill her; which lies were framed by her to excuse herself, at the expense of her husband's reputation.

**Ver. 18.** *So David fled and escaped*, etc.] Fled from his own house, and escaped falling into the hands of the messengers of Saul, and so of Saul himself:

*and came to Samuel to Ramah*; the place where Samuel dwelt: to him David chose to come, by whom he had been anointed king, that his faith might be strengthened by him with respect to the kingdom, which might be weakened by what had happened to him; and that he might have some advice and direction from him what he should do, and what course he should take in his present circumstances, and that he might receive some comfort from him under his present troubles:

*and told him all that Saul had done to him*; how he had spoken to his servants to kill him, had cast a javelin at him himself, and had sent messengers to his house to slay him:

*and he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth*; which was in or near to Ramah, as appears by (~~1~~1 Samuel 19:19); which perhaps was a more retired place, and so chosen for the sake of conversation between them, or reckoned a more safe place. Here being a school or college of the prophets, might be a kind of an asylum, and where it might be thought Saul would not attempt to lay hands on David, should he know where he was; for if the Philistines gave no disturbance to the hill of God, and the prophets in it, (~~1~~1 Samuel 10:5); it might be reasonably concluded Saul would not; so the Targum paraphrases it, “he and Samuel went and dwelt in the house of doctrine”, or in the school, the school of the prophets. R. Abimi the Nothite, or Naiothite, mentioned in the Talmud<sup>f400</sup>, is supposed<sup>f401</sup> to be of this place; it is said<sup>f402</sup> to be six miles from Jerusalem to the north.

**Ver. 19.** *And it was told Saul*, etc.] By some officious persons who saw David at Ramah, and observed that he and Samuel went together to Naioth:

*saying, behold, David [is] at Naioth, in Ramah*; or near it; according to R. Isaiah, Ramah was the name of a hill, or mountain, so called from its height, and Naioth the name of a place on it; it signifies pastures and pleasant places, as meadows and pastures are; and here in the fields near Ramah was the house of doctrine, as the Targum calls it, or the school of the prophets, being pleasant and retired, and fit for study.

**Ver. 20.** *And Saul sent messengers to take David*, etc.] Notwithstanding the sacred place he was in, so bent was he upon his destruction:

*and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying*; or praising, as the Targum; singing hymns and songs of praise to God, under the inspiration and influence of the Spirit of God, who endited these songs for them, and excited them to sing them; these prophets belonged to the school or college of prophets at Naioth, whom the messengers saw when they came thither, and found them thus employed; or “when he saw”,<sup>f403</sup> for the word is singular, that is, the chief of the messengers, or everyone of them, so Kimchi:

*and Samuel standing [as] appointed over them*; he was president of the college, and he stood to instruct and teach them in the knowledge of divine things: so the Targum,

“standing, teaching over them or by them,”

and to direct and assist them in singing their songs of praise:

*the Spirit of the Lord was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied:* or praised, as the Targum; sung hymns and songs of praise as the prophets did, and were so taken up with these religious exercises, that they forgot, or were inattentive to the business they were sent to do. Ben Gersom thinks they foretold things to come, and so Abarbinel; and particularly that they prophesied that David should rule over all Israel, and that God would not suffer Saul to slay him; and so were indifferent to, and negligent of doing the errand they were sent on, yea, purposely avoided it.

**Ver. 21.** *And when it was told Saul,* etc.] That the messengers he had sent, instead of seizing on David, were prophesying of him, or however were attending to services of a different nature than what they were sent upon:

*he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise;* when they came to the same place:

*and Saul sent messengers again a third time, and they prophesied also;* joined the rest in singing praises, or foretelling future events.

**Ver. 22.** *Then went he also to Ramah,* etc.] That is, Saul; his messengers not returning to him, when he sent one after another to take David, at length he set out himself from Gibeah to Ramah:

*and came to a great well that [is] in Sechu;* which was either the name of a man, the owner of the well, or a place near to which the well was, and is commonly thought to be the same with Shochoh, (~~1~~ 1 Samuel 17:1); at such places there was generally a concourse of people at certain times, to fetch water for the inhabitants of the place, and for the watering of flocks and herds, and so a proper place to stop at, and ask the following questions:

*and he asked and said, where [are] Samuel and David?* for his messengers not returning to him, he could not be sure where they now were, though he had heard they were at Naioth:

*and [one] said, behold, [they be] at Naioth in Ramah;* at the house of doctrine, or school in Ramah, as the Targum; thus one at the well replied, in answer to his question, who had seen them go there, or knew they were there.

**Ver. 23.** *And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah*, etc.] He went on from the well towards the place:

*and the Spirit of God was upon him also*; as well as upon his messengers; even the spirit of prophecy, as the Targum:

*and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah*: in this he differed from his messengers; they did not prophesy till they came to that place, but Saul began to prophesy before he came thither, as he was in his way from the well to it.

**Ver. 24.** *And he stripped off his clothes also*, etc.] Not all his clothes, but his upper garments, as men in such circumstances used to do, as the prophets sometimes did, and as it seems his messengers had done; according to Jarchi, R. Isaiah, and others <sup>f404</sup>, he stripped himself of his royal robes, and put on the habit of the scholars, the disciples, and sons of the prophets:

*and prophesied before Samuel in like manner*, as the messengers had done, singing such like songs, or foretelling such like things as they did; he and they speaking not of themselves, but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of prophecy; for such gifts have sometimes been bestowed on men that were destitute of the grace of God, as Balaam, Caiaphas, and others;

*and lay down*: or “fell down” <sup>f405</sup>, as persons in an ecstasy or trance: and lay

*naked all that day, and all that night*; not entirely naked, both without his upper garment or royal robes, or else his armour; so an unarmed man is said to be naked, though otherwise he has his clothes on: thus Gelon having conquered the Carthaginians, and made himself master of all Sicily, went into the forum “naked” (i.e. unarmed), and declared he would restore the government to the citizens, wherefore a naked statue for him was erected in the temple of Juno <sup>f406</sup>; so Quinctius Cincinnatus was found ploughing naked <sup>f407</sup>, who cannot be supposed to be without any clothes on him. Jarchi, from Menachem, reports, that he had heard from an Arabian, that the word the Targum makes use of for “naked”, signifies, in the Arabic language, one that is furious or mad, as persons in an ecstasy, or under a prophetic spirit, sometimes seemed to be; now Saul was kept and held in such circumstances a whole day and night, that David might have an opportunity of making his escape, and getting at such a distance from him that he could not overtake him:

*wherefore they say, [is] Saul also among the prophets?* this became a common saying, a proverbial expression, at least was now revived and observed with admiration; that Saul, who had behaved himself in so ill a manner, as an enemy to so good a man, should be found among the prophets of the Lord, and prophesying as they did.