

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 22

This chapter gives us an account of the flight of David from place to place, from Gath to the cave of Adullam, where his relations came to him; from thence to Mizpeh in Moab, where he got leave of the king of Moab for his father and mother to dwell there; and from thence, by the advice of Gad the prophet, departed into the land of Judah, and came to the forest of Hareth, (^{<0210>}1 Samuel 21:1-5); and of the complaint of Saul to his servants of their unfaithfulness to him, and indolence and unconcern at the behaviour of Jonathan and David to him, (^{<0216>}1 Samuel 22:6-8); when Doeg the Edomite informed him of David being seen by him at Nob, and of his receiving food and a sword from Ahimelech the priest, who inquired of the Lord for him, (^{<0219>}1 Samuel 22:9,10); upon which Saul sent for Ahimelech and all the priests at Nob, and charged them with a conspiracy against him; and notwithstanding the defence the priest made, Saul ordered him and the rest of the priests to be slain by his guards; which they refusing, Doeg became the executioner of them, and of all the inhabitants of the city of Nob, and the cattle in it, (^{<0221>}1 Samuel 22:11-19); only Abiathar a son of Ahimelech escaped and fled to David with the sorrowful news; which greatly affected David, looking upon himself to be the occasion of this sad disaster, and he took Abiathar under his protection, and promised him safety, (^{<0223>}1 Samuel 22:20-23).

Ver. 1. *David therefore departed from thence*, etc.] From Gath, being driven by Achish from his court, and let go by his servants, and glad he was of the deliverance:

and escaped to the cave Adullam; which was no doubt near to a city of the same name in the tribe of Judah, of which (see Gill on “^{<0155>}Joshua 15:35”); this being a strong place, and in his own tribe, he might hope to be in greater safety; here he penned his hundred forty second psalm, (see ^{<0211>}Psalms 142:1-7):

and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard [it]; that he was come thither:

they went down thither to him; to visit and comfort him, counsel and assist him all they could; and chiefly to secure themselves from the rage and malice of Saul, who they might fear would fall upon them, and avenge himself on them for David's sake.

Ver. 2. *And everyone [that was] in distress*, etc.] In straitened circumstances, through the oppression of men, through poverty, and afflictive providences in their families:

and everyone [that was] in debt; and not able to pay their debts, and whose creditors were pressing upon them:

and everyone [that was] discontented; with Saul's government and conduct: or "bitter in soul"^{f449}; distressed and uneasy in their minds, being pinched with want, or pressed with sore afflictions, which made them very disconsolate: these

gathered themselves unto him; to help him, or rather to be helped by him; hoping in time things would take a favourable turn with him, and he should be advanced to the throne, and so their circumstances would be mended thereby:

and he became a captain over them; they enlisted themselves in his service, and he took the command of them; he might not know the circumstances of those in debt, nor of any of them thoroughly, nor their views in joining him; however he meant not to shelter them from paying their just debts if able, nor to encourage them in disloyalty to their king, only to make use of them for his own preservation for the present. In this he was a type of Christ, who receives sinners distressed with a sense of sin, discontented in their present state, and in debt, and, unable to pay their debts; (see ^{<4128>}Matthew 11:28 ^{<4174>}Luke 7:41,42) (^{<4152>}Luke 15:2);

and there were with him about four hundred men; among whom some think were the three mighty men spoken of in (^{<4123>}2 Samuel 23:13,14 ^{<5115>}1 Chronicles 11:15,16).

Ver. 3. *And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab*, etc.] So called to distinguish it from a place of the same name in the land of Israel; which Junius says is the same with Malle, and signifies a fortified place, and refers to the Apocrypha:

“And how that many of them were shut up in Bosora, and Bosor, and Alema, Casphor, Maked, and Carnaim; all these cities are strong and great.” (1 Maccabees 5:26)

here he might think himself safer, though in an enemy’s country, than in the land of Israel:

and he said unto the king of Moab, let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth; out of the land of Israel, or out of the cave of Adullam, whither they were come to him:

[and be] with you; if not with the king of Moab at his court, yet in some part or other of his country, where they might be safe from the rage of Saul:

till I know what God will do for me; on whose power and providence he wholly relied, and not upon the men that flocked to him, nor upon his own power and policy, courage and wisdom; he knew the promise of God to him, and he put his trust in him for the performance of it; but knew not the time, nor way, and manner, in which it would be performed; and expected in the meanwhile to be obliged to remove from place to place; and considering that his aged parents were not fit for such quick and sudden motions, and long flights, he provided as well as he could for their settlement; which was an instance of his filial affection for them, and piety towards them. His father’s name is well known, Jesse, (^{<R042>}Ruth 4:22 ^{<D172>}1 Samuel 17:12), etc. but his mother’s name is nowhere mentioned; the Jews say her name was Natzbet, the daughter of Adal ^{f450}.

Ver. 4. *And he brought them before the king of Moab,* etc.] Having leave from him for it, and left them with him; so the Targum,

“caused them to remain before him:”

and they dwelt with him all the whole time that David was in the hold; either in the cave of Adullam, as some think; or rather at Mizpeh in Moab, which might be a fortified place; or the sense may be, while he was in any hold in those parts, as he might go from one to another; what became of David’s parents afterwards, we nowhere else read. The Jews ^{f451} say the king of Moab slew his father and his mother, and his brethren, all but one, whom Nahash the Ammonite preserved; and is the kindness David speaks of, (^{<R002>}2 Samuel 10:2); and if this was the case, now it was that his father and mother forsook him, and God took him up, (^{<R270>}Psalm 27:10).

Ver. 5. *And the prophet Gad said unto David,* etc.] Who either accompanied him in his exile, or was sent unto him on this account, being one of the company of the prophets, over whom Samuel was president, (~~1~~1 Samuel 19:20);

abide not in the hold, depart, and get thee into the land of Judah; this seems to confirm it that the hold David was in was not the cave of Adullam, because that was in the tribe of Judah; but rather some hold in the land of Moab, which he is directed by the prophet to leave, and go into the country of Judah, his own tribe, where Saul would not be so forward to pursue him, and where he would be among his friends, and in the way, upon Saul's death, to be anointed king over Judah; besides, appearing more openly would show the innocence of his cause, and his confidence in the Lord, more than to lurk about in a foreign land:

then David departed; from "Mizpeh" in "Moab"; or, however, from the hold in which he was:

and came into the forest of Hareth; where he would have places and opportunity enough to hide himself as he saw fit. Jerom^{f452} speaks of a village called Arath, where David abode, to the west of Jerusalem. Kimchi says this was a dry barren place, but for the sake of David it was made by the Lord a well watered and fruitful one.

Ver. 6. *When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that [were] with him,* etc.] That it was known where David was, and what number of men were gathered to him, and that they now openly appeared in the tribe of Judah; for some time Saul had heard nothing of him, but now a report had reached his ears that David was in arms, and at the head of a number of men; which now greatly alarmed Saul, and possessed him with fears and jealousies of his people, and all about him:

now Saul abode in Gibeah, under a tree in Ramah; this was Gibeah of Saul, and in or near which was a place called Ramah, or an high place, as the word signifies, on which was a remarkable tree, and under that Saul abode, being a proper shelter for him from any inclemency of the weather; for this was not Ramah where Samuel dwelt, though the Jews in the Talmud^{f453} so think, and metaphorically understand the tree in it of Samuel in Ramah praying for him, by means of which he continued two years in the height of his kingdom; but this was a tree in a literal sense. R. Jonah^{f454}

says it is possible it might be the same which in Arabia is called Ethel, and is like to a tamarisk tree:

having his spear in his hand: ready to defend himself, and revenge his enemies; or rather which he held as a sceptre in his hand; (see Gill on “~~1~~ Samuel 20:33”);

and all his servants [were] standing about him; in reverence of him, and honour to him, waiting upon him, and ready to obey his orders: these were his courtiers, or his guards, or both.

Ver. 7. *Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him*, etc.] He took this opportunity of addressing them in the following manner, upon the report of David being at the head of a certain number of men:

hear now, ye Benjamites; for Saul being of the tribe of Benjamin, his courtiers and his bodyguards chiefly, if not altogether, consisted of persons of that tribe; and therefore as they were under obligation to him, and ought to abide by him, and adhere closely to him, so it was the more ungrateful in them, as he thought, not to be concerned for his honour and interest:

will the son of Jesse give everyone of you fields and vineyards; as Saul had done, or was capable of doing, and would do if they were faithful to him; whereas it was not in the power of David, whom in contempt he calls the son of Jesse, to do it; and even should he ever be king, and in his power to make such donations, it cannot be thought he would give them to them, but to the favourites of his own tribe:

[and] make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds; which he now could not do, since he had with him but four hundred men in all; and should his army increase, and the kingdom come into his hands, so far would all of them be from being advanced to posts in the army, that it was probable none of them would, but those of his own tribe and party.

Ver. 8. *That all of you have conspired against me*, etc.] For though they had not revolted from him, and been guilty of overt acts of treason, yet since they did not discover to him what he supposed they knew, and showed no concern for the circumstances in which he was, he interpreted this a conspiracy against him:

and [there is] none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse; Saul did not know this certainly, he only suspected it from

the strict and close friendship between them, and imagined that some of his servants were acquainted with it, though they kept it from him; whereas none knew of it but Jonathan and David themselves:

and [there is] none of you that is sorry for me; concerned, troubled, and grieved, that he should be in such circumstances, his own son and his son-in-law in league against him: or, as De Dieu renders it, were not “solicitous” for him, cared not how things went with him, or, against him:

or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me to lie in wait, as at this day? which he concluded was the case, from Jonathan’s not appearing at court since Saul cast the javelin at him, (^{<0190>}1 Samuel 19:10 20:33); or, however, if he did, his countenance showed he was uneasy and discontented, and displeased with Saul; and, besides, he could not think that David, with such a handful of men he had with him, would ever attempt to invade his kingdom, and seize his crown and throne, unless he was privately encouraged by his own son; and David’s being either in the cave of Adullam, or forest of Hareth, whichever of them Saul heard of, he interpreted as lying in wait for him, whereas it was only for the security of himself; and what Saul took ill of his servants was, that none of them apprized him of his son’s concern in this matter.

Ver. 9. *Then answered Doeg the Edomite*, etc.] Josephus ^{f455} calls him a Syrian, and so the Septuagint version; (see ^{<0207>}1 Samuel 21:7); being full of enmity to David, and willing to curry favour with Saul, and eager of further preferment, which Saul seemed to promise; and being more forward than the rest of his servants, prevented them and spoke first:

(which was set over the servants of Saul): over his herdsmen; (see ^{<0207>}1 Samuel 21:7);

and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub; in imitation of Saul, he calls David by way of contempt the son of Jesse; and signifies that what he had to say of him was not by report, but he himself was an eyewitness of his coming to Nob, a city of the priests, and to Ahimelech the high priest there, and of what passed between them.

Ver. 10. *And he inquired of the Lord for him*, etc.] Which not being expressed before, some have taken it to be a lie of Doeg’s, he being charged with lying by David, (^{<0208>}Psalm 52:3,4 120:2,3); but it is not at all improbable that David should desire him to inquire of the Lord for him, and that he did; and he seems to acknowledge it, (^{<0215>}1 Samuel 22:15); but

according to the Jewish writers Doeg meant by this to prove a charge of treason both against David and Ahimelech; that the former made himself king, and the latter owned him to be so, since inquiry by Urim and Thummim was not made for a private person, but for a king^{f456}:

and gave him victuals; hallowed bread, loaves of shewbread, which none but priests might eat of; such was his kindness to him:

and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine; which David took from him, and slew him with it. All this was true, but then he acted the deceitful part, with which he is charged in the above psalms, in not declaring how David had imposed upon the priest, by pretending he was sent in haste on the king's business; which was the reason he was so ill provided with servants, food, and armour; which if Doeg had reported faithfully, as he ought to have done, would have saved the credit and life of the priest, and of his family.

Ver. 11. *Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub,* etc.] Sent messengers to him, and summoned him to appear before him:

and all his father's house; the family of Eli, which God had threatened to destroy, and now the time was hastening on:

the priests that [were] in Nob; in which dwelt none but priests, at least these were the chief of the inhabitants, and therefore called the city of the priests, (~~1~~1 Samuel 22:19);

and they came all of them to the king; not being conscious of any evil they had committed, or that could be charged upon them; or otherwise they would not have appeared, but would have fled to David for protection.

Ver. 12. *And Saul said, hear now, thou son of Ahitub,* etc.] The charge exhibited against him; in contempt of him, he does not so much as call him by his name, nor give him the title of his office, as high priest; though he was the second person in the kingdom, and to whose office a few years ago the civil government was annexed:

and he answered, here I [am], my lord; giving due honour to Saul, though he received none from him, and appearing with great boldness, as having a clear conscience, and so ready to hear what was to be said unto him.

Ver. 13. *And Saul said unto him, why have ye conspired against me, thou, and the son of Jesse?* etc.] No less than treason and rebellion is he charged with, in conjunction with David; the proof follows:

in that thou hast given him bread and a sword; the shewbread, and the sword of Goliath, (^{<0216>}1 Samuel 21:6 22:10), and so had furnished him with food and arms; one that he suggests was in rebellion against him, and therefore he must be involved in the same crime; but the stronger proof follows

and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait as at this day: inquired of the Lord for him by Urim and Thummim, to know his mind in this affair, and thereby encouraged him to rise up in rebellion against him, and to lie in wait, as he did at the present time, watching for an opportunity to seize his crown and kingdom.

Ver. 14. *Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said,* etc.] First with respect to David, and then with regard to himself; with respect to David as follows,

and who [is so] faithful amongst thy servants as David; I considered him, as if he should say, as a servant of thine, upon an errand of thine, and doing thy business; and as a faithful one, none more so, and as such I valued and regarded him, not as a rebel to thee, having no such thought of him:

which is the king's son in law; who has behaved himself so well, and thou hast entertained such an opinion of him, as to take him into thy family, and marry thy daughter to him; wherefore showing him favour, and doing him honour, was doing honour to thee and thy family, and surely there can be no blame in that:

and goeth at thy bidding; has always been ready to execute thy commands, and obey thine orders, let them be what they will; as to go out against an enemy, and fight Saul's battles for him:

and is honourable in thine house? behaved honourably there, and highly esteemed by all, as well as had the honour bestowed upon him to be the king's son-in-law, and made captain of a thousand; and therefore who could think that showing respect to such a man could be deemed treason and conspiracy, or he be thought to be a traitor to the king? and then with respect to himself he answers,

Ver. 15. *Did I then begin to inquire of God for him?* etc.] Was this the first time of inquiring of God for him? no; I have done this many a time, when he has been going upon the king's business, engaging in war with his enemies; he has then consulted the Lord by me, and I have inquired of the Lord for him, as I now did; and which I did as innocently, and as much for the king's service, as ever I did any. Kimchi observes it may be read without the interrogation, "that day I began to inquire of God for him"; it was the first time I ever did, and I did not know it would have been grievous to thee, or have given thee any disturbance or uneasiness. I did not know that he fled from thee, or was not in thy service, and upon thy business; had I known it, I would never have done it, and as it is the first time it shall be the last:

be it far from me; from doing such a thing, had I known it to be disagreeable to thee, or how David stood with thee:

let not the king impute [any] thing unto his servant, [nor] to all the house of my father; charge me or them with the crime of treason, or conspiracy against him, or with aiding, assisting, and abetting traitors and conspirators:

for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more; was entirely ignorant of this affair; which plain, honest, account of things, one might have thought, would have been satisfying to Saul; but it seems it was not by what follows.

Ver. 16. *And the king said, thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech,* etc.] He pronounces the sentence himself, without taking the opinion and advice of others, or further time; which was an act of arbitrary power, and upon an innocent person, which was an act of great injustice:

thou, and all thy father's house; more unrighteous still; but God suffered him to do this to fulfil his will, and execute his threatenings against the house of Eli, which was this priest's father's house, for former wickedness; but this is no excuse for, nor extenuation of the sin of, Saul.

Ver. 17. *And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him,* etc.] Or the "runners"^{f457}; the running footmen, that used to run before him when he went out from place to place, and were here waiting on him, ready to set out whenever he should give the orders to go elsewhere. The tradition of the Jews is, that these were Abner and Amasa^{f458}; but, as Kimchi

observes, they were not footmen, but princes, captains in the army, and the first of them the general of it:

turn and slay the priests of the Lord; he owns them to be the priests of the Lord, and calls them so, and yet gave orders to put them to death, though innocent; one would have thought this their character would have flown in his face, and stung his conscience, and deterred him from so foul a fact:

because their hand also [is] with David; as well as Ahimelech; which did not at all appear, nor that they had so much as seen him at Nob, only Ahimelech; and still less that they had entered into a conspiracy with him:

and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me; which also was false; they knew nothing of the flight of David, and therefore could not discover it to the king:

but the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord; their consciences would not suffer them to do it; they refused to obey the king's orders, and chose rather to expose themselves to his resentment, than to be guilty of such a crime. Saul's footmen had more sense of honour, justice, and truth, than he himself had, and were worthy of praise; but they would have been deserving of more, if they could not have prevailed upon him by entreaties and remonstrances to have forborne such a bloody execution, instead of being the tame spectators of it, they had taken him, and bound him as a madman, and so facilitated the escape of the priests, and prevented this shocking scene of wickedness.

Ver. 18. *And the king said to Doeg, turn thou and fall upon the priests,* etc.] For determined he was they should die; if one would not put them to death, another should, and who so fit for this bloody work as the false accuser of them, and false witness against them?

and Doeg the Edomite turned; immediately, he at once obeyed the king's orders, as brutish as they were:

and fell upon the priests; with his sword in hand:

and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod; not the ephod of Urim and Thummim, which was only worn by the high priest, but a garment wholly linen, worn by common priests; the Targum is,

“who are fit to be clothed with a linen ephod;”

not that they were clothed with it, but were deserving of it; or it designs the great and more honourable among the servants of the Lord, as Kimchi observes, for such were clothed with this garment, as Samuel and David; and he thinks it suggests, that more were slain than these; and the Septuagint version makes them to be eight hundred five, and Josephus^{f459} three hundred eighty five; in the slaying of whom, as the same writer says, Doeg was assisted by some wicked men like himself; and the slaughter did not end here, as the (^{<0226>}1 Samuel 22:19) shows.

Ver. 19. *And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword,* etc.] Either Doeg or Saul; who, as Josephus^{f460} says, sent men thither to slay all the inhabitants of it:

both men and women, children and sucklings; not sparing sex nor age:

and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword; Saul, who was so tender hearted and merciful in the case of the Amalekites, when his orders from the Lord were utterly to destroy them, (^{<0932>}1 Samuel 15:2,3), that he spared their king, and the best of their cattle, (^{<0937>}1 Samuel 15:7-9); yet now so cruel to a city of the priests, as to destroy all the inhabitants of it, and cattle in it; and yet this bloody affair of Saul's is not taken notice of afterwards, only his slaughter of the Gibeonites, (^{<1201>}2 Samuel 21:1); and Abarbinel is of opinion, that the inhabitants of this place were Gibeonites, who were hewers of wood, and drawers of water, to the house of the Lord here, (^{<0623>}Joshua 9:23,27). Now Saul was the more severe this city, to deter others from joining with David, who, if they did, must expect the same treatment.

Ver. 20. *And one of the sons of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped,* etc.] Who very probably was left by his father to take care of the sanctuary, and the holy things in it, when he and the rest of the priests were summoned to appear before Saul; who having heard of his bloody execution of them, before his messengers could get to Nob, took, the ephod, with the Urim and Thummim, and made his escape, as appears from (^{<0216>}1 Samuel 23:6-9); this man succeeded his father in the high priesthood, and continued in it until the times of Solomon:

and fled after David; who was now removed, or removing from the forest of Hareth to Keilah, whither Abiathar followed him, and came to him there, (^{<0216>}1 Samuel 23:6), and with whom only he could be safe, and therefore it was right to flee unto him.

Ver. 21. *And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests.*] Of which perhaps he had not as yet heard; though tidings of such a nature generally fly swiftly; and a sorrowful shocking account he had to give, and which was so to David.

Ver. 22. *And David said unto Abiathar, I knew [it] that day,* etc.] That is, he thought in his mind at that time:

when Doeg the Edomite [was] there; at Nob; in the tabernacle, at the same time that David was there:

that he would surely tell Saul; that he saw David there, and what passed between him and Ahimelech; he knew he was a spiteful mischievous man; that he was a true Edomite, though a proselyte, and bore hatred and enmity in his mind against an Israelite, and especially an Israelite indeed, as David was:

I have occasioned [the death] of all the persons of thy father's house: or have been the cause of all the evils that befell them, and the death they were put unto, not with design, but by accident; and it grieved him that he should be any ways an accessory thereunto, though without intention.

Ver. 23. *Abide thou with me, fear not,* etc.] He appeared to be in a fright; which is not to be wondered at, as not knowing what to do, and where to go and provide for his safety; when, to allay his fears, and make him easy, David invites and encourages him to stay with him, and not be afraid of Saul, nor any other:

for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; or, as Kimchi observes, it may be interpreted, "my life he seeks who seeks thy life"; we are in the same circumstances, and have the same common enemy, and therefore it is best and safest to be together; as the Targum,

"he that seeks to kill me seeks to kill thee;"

and as Jarchi adds, he that loves me will love thee, and he that keeps my life will keep thine:

but with me thou [shalt be] in safeguard; intimating, that he would be as careful of him as of himself; and that for this reason, as Ben Gersom suggests, because he brought the ephod with the Urim and Thummim with him, by which he could inquire of God for him; but this was the thing David was confident of, that God would preserve him, and raise him to the

kingdom, and therefore Abiathar might be sure of safety with him: at this time he penned the fifty second psalm, which shows the frame of spirit he was now in; (see ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 52:1-9).