

1 Samuel Chapter 22

Verses 1-2:

Samuel had warned the people that a king would tax the people and make use of their resources for his own work (8:10-18).

It is possible Saul had levied a heavy tax upon the inhabitants of Israel, and that many of these victims, “in debt” and “discontented” and “in distress”, decided to join David when they heard that he was in exile.

“The cave Adullam” was where David composed (Psalm 142).

1 Samuel 22:1 "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard [it], they went down thither to him."

“Cave Adullam”:

A cave near Adullam was David’s refuge.

Adullam, which may mean “refuse”, was located in the western foothills of Judah (Joshua 15:33), about 17 miles southwest of Jerusalem and 10 miles southeast of Gath (see titles of Psalms 57 and 142, which could possibly refer to 1 Sam. 24:3).

“Brethren and all his father’s house”:

David’s family members went down from Bethlehem to join David in Adullam, a journey of about 12 miles.

This cave was a natural hiding place for David.

It was large enough to safely house a few hundred people.

There were many caves in this area.

This was not the largest, but it was large enough to give them safe haven from their enemies.

It appears that his father and his brethren came to the aid of David.

David's father was aware that David had been anointed king by Samuel.

The brethren here, would have included all of David's close relatives.

1 Samuel 22:2 "And every one [that was] in distress, and every one that [was] in debt, and every one [that was] discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men."

“Captain over ... four hundred men”:

David became the leader of a formidable force of men

Saul had been a hard king.

He had brought extra pain on some of the people.

Saul was not a king that thought of justice for all the people.

He was a self-willed individual.

He did not concern himself with the hardships of others, as long as he was comfortable.

The Israelites had insisted on having a king like their neighbors and that is just what they got.

He was not just a strong military leader; he was a dictator at home.

These who have come to be with David are thinking of a revolt against Saul.

They are dissatisfied with him as king.

These 400 men were nothing compared to the army that Saul had, but with the LORD with them, they felt they could win.

Verses 3-5:

“David” began to attract a following that was disenchanted with Saul.

Because David had family ties in “Moab” (Ruth 4:21-22), and because Moab was a traditional enemy and was even now hostile to the current Israelite throne (14:47), David sought a place of refuge for his family there.

David may have left his followers behind in the forest of “Hareth,” to which he returned after placing his family in safekeeping in Moab.

“Gad” is later called David’s seer (1 Chron. 21:9).

He subsequently collaborated in an account of the deeds of David (1 Chron. 29:29).

1 Samuel 22:3 "And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, [and be] with you, till I know what God will do for me."

"Mizpeh of Moab":

Mizpeh means "watch tower," or "place that overlooks".

This was Located on one of the heights of the tableland east of the Dead Sea, this site cannot be exactly identified.

"King of Moab":

This ruler was probably a mutual enemy of King Saul.

David had Moabite blood from his great-grandmother Ruth, and thus sought refuge for his father and mother in Moab (see Ruth 1:4-18; 4:13-22).

David was aware that Saul would show no mercy to his father and mother.

He sends them to safety in Moab.

They will stay with the king of Moab, until the battle between the forces of Saul and the forces of David have decided who will rule.

David knows that his fate is in the hands of God.

1 Samuel 22:4 "And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold."

"The hold":

Transliterated *mesudah*, this may refer to Masada, the mountain fortress above the shores of the Dead Sea, or some unknown location.

The hold, in this instance, is speaking of the cave where David is headquartered with his men.

He probably changed locations occasionally, to keep Saul from finding out where he was.

1 Samuel 22:5 "And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth."

"Prophet Gad":

As the prophet Samuel had helped and advised Saul, so now Gad performed the same functions for David (compare 2 Sam. 24:11, where Gad is called "David's seer").

“Forest of Hareth”:

Location in Judah unknown.

Gad here seems to be a prophet who had joined David while he was hiding in the caves.

David seems to have great respect for him, as a prophet of God.

David takes the advice of Gad.

Perhaps the LORD knows that Saul has found out where David is hiding, now he speaks through Gad for them to move to the forest of Hareth in Judah.

1 Samuel 22:6 "When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that [were] with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants [were] standing about him;)"

“Under a tree”:

Possibly located on a hill outside Gibeah which had been given over to pagan worship (Ezekiel 16:24-25, 31, 39).

“Spear”:

A reminder of the threat that Saul was to friend and foe alike (compare 18:10-11; 19:9-10; 20:3).

It appears, from this, that Saul feared David greatly.

He had his spear in his hand as a sign of his authority.

He moved under this big shady tree, and had his men surrounding him on every side.

This tree was a tamarisk, which was a big tree with many branches and much foliage.

It gave off more shade than most of the other trees.

Verses 7-8:

As Samuel predicted (8:14), and just as the kings of other nations did, Saul took the people's land and gave it to his commanders.

Despite Saul's bribes, his commanders remained loyal to David and would not give him up.

1 Samuel 22:7 "Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, [and] make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;"

“Benjamites”:

Saul asked those of his own tribe whether associating themselves with David would provide for them more possessions and privileges than they already had from Saul.

Saul is trying to tell his men how much better off they are with him, than with David.

It seems to me that Saul fears that his men will leave him and go to the side of David.

Saul had shown favoritism in his reign.

Verses 8-13:

To lie in wait”:

Saul insinuated that David was plotting his death.

This was not true, as David would later spare Saul’s life (verses 24, 26).

1 Samuel 22:8 "That all of you have conspired against me, and [there is] none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and [there is] none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"

The unhappy, jealous spirit had obtained such complete mastery over the unhappy king that now he suspected even the chosen men of his own tribe.

All his tried favorites, the men of his own house, even his gallant son, he charged with leaning towards David the traitor, his supplanter in the hearts of Israel.

"My son hath made a league":

It would seem as though Saul had learned something of what passed between Jonathan and David when they met for that farewell interview at the memorable New Moon feast.

The words respecting the covenant between the two being too pointed and marked to refer only to the well-known ancient friendship between the prince and the son of Jesse.

"There is none of you that is sorry for me":

These words of the sad king, tormented as he was by an evil spirit, ever whispering doubt and jealous thoughts into the poor diseased mind, are here strangely real and pathetic.

“My son hath made a league”:

See note on 20:8.

He is accusing his own men of betraying him.

He leaves no one out, when he says all.

He believes that Jonathan has gone into league with David.

The only thing that Jonathan has really done is saved David's life.

David had done nothing evil to his father.

Saul would even kill his son, if he knew for sure he had conspired with David.

Verses 9-10:

“Doeg the Edomite”:

See note on 21:7 and the title of Psalm 52..

David wrote (Psalm 52), because of this incident (22:22).

“Doeg” was a Gentile who tried to win Saul’s favor by betraying Ahimelech and slaughtering the “priest” at “Nob”.

1 Samuel 22:9 "Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub."

Josephus calls him a Syrian, and so the Septuagint version (see 1 Sam. 21:7); being full of enmity to David, and willing to curry favor with Saul, and eager of further preferment, which Saul seemed to promise.

And being more forward than the rest of his servants, spoke first.

"Which was set over the servants of Saul":

Over his herdsmen (see 1 Sam. 21:7).

"And said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub":

In much the same way as 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.

We remember that, Doeg had accidentally been at Nob at the same time David was there.

He is telling Saul that the priest, Ahimelech, helped David.

He does not tell him that David told the priest he was on the king's business.

Ahimelech had not betrayed Saul, but Doeg insinuated that he had.

1 Samuel 22:10 "And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Which not being expressed before, some have taken it to be a lie of Doeg's, he being charged with lying by David (Psalm 52:3).

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 (1 Sam. 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.

"And gave him victuals":

Hallowed bread, loaves of showbread, 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 armor; 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.

Doeg was trying to save his own life and the life of Saul's men.

He turned Saul's attention away from his own men to the priest, Ahimelech.

At this point, Saul is like a mad man.

1 Samuel 22:11 "Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that [were] in Nob: and they came all of them to the king."

This sending for all the priestly house to Gibeah when alone Ahimelech was to blame, if blame there was, looks as though Saul and Doeg had determined upon the wholesale massacre which then followed.

There would be a large number of priests in this case.

Saul's madness is now directed to all of the men who were related to Ahimelech.

His intentions from the beginning, was to kill them all.

Saul was so full of hate; it had to come out in killing the innocent.

1 Samuel 22:12 "And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I [am], my lord."

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 honor 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.

Ahimelech appeared before Saul, representing all of the priests.

When Saul called his name, He answered by calling Saul his lord.

This is a statement, which says he recognizes Saul as his earthly king.

1 Samuel 22:13 "And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"

"Conspired against me":

Saul insisted falsely that Ahimelech was in league with his enemy David.

Of course, Ahimelech had given food and the sword of Goliath to David, but for an entirely different reason than Saul supposes.

David had told the priest, that he was on business for Saul.

1 Samuel 22:14 "Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who [is so] faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house?"

“And goeth at thy bidding”:

Ahimelech responded to Saul by defending David’s character as loyal to Saul.

Ahimelech knew that the heart of David was not against Saul.

He even reminds Saul, that David is his son-in-law.

Ahimelech had no reason to suspect that David was at odds with Saul.

David had been faithful to Saul.

He had won many battles in the name of Saul.

He does take a stand, expressing his belief that David is an honorable man.

1 Samuel 22:15 "Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute [any] thing unto his servant, [nor] to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more."

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, for if had known it to be disagreeable to thee, or how David's standing 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.

This verse is in defense of himself and the priests with him.

He truly did not know that David was running from Saul, when he came to him.

Saul was cruel and looking for someone to take out his anger on.

The priest explains, that he was innocent of wrong doing, but that will not matter with Saul.

Verses 16-19:

This fulfills the curse on Eli's house (see note on 1 Sam. 2:31), with the exception of Abiathar, who was later dismissed from the priesthood by Solomon (1 Kings 2:26-29).

1 Samuel 22:16 "And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house."

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 then to execute his threatening against the house of Eli, which of course was this priest's father's house, for their former wickedness.

But this is no excuse for, nor extenuation of the sin of Saul.

It does not matter that he is innocent.

Saul orders him and his father's entire family killed.

He is killing the representatives of the LORD upon the earth.

This is a very serious sin.

1 Samuel 22:17 "And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also [is] with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD."

The term “footmen” (literally, “runners”), refers to the royal bodyguard who protected the “king;” some ran before his chariot (8:11), while others guarded the palace door (1 Kings 14:27).

The position was an honored one in the ancient Near East.

“Would not ... to fall upon the priests”:

Although Saul condemned Ahimelech and the priests to death, his servants knew better than to raise their weapons against the priests of the LORD.

The footmen of Saul's were Israelites.

They knew the danger of killing a priest.

The servants of Saul refused to kill these men of God.

A man, who truly knew God, would have thought about his order to kill the priests and changed it, but not Saul.

1 Samuel 22:18 "And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod."

No doubt, being assisted by his own attached servants, Doeg then carried out this deed of unexampled barbarity.

For this act the Edomite servant of Saul has been execrated in the most ancient Jewish writings perhaps above any other of the famous wicked men who meet us in the Holy Scriptures.

For instance, we read in the Babylonian Talmud how “Doeg ... the Edomite, after his massacre of the priests, was encountered by three destructive demons.

One deprived him of his learning (concerning which see above, in Note on 1 Sam. 22:9), a second burned his soul, and a third scattered his dust in the synagogues”.

Through thee the priests of Nob were slain; through thee Doeg the Edomite became a reprobate; and through thee Saul and his three sons were slain.”

“Linen ephod”:

See notes on 2:18; 14:3.

Doeg and his men had no special respect for the priest, or the priests.

They were Edomites.

They gladly killed these priests.

There were 85 people killed who had on the garment of the LORD (linen ephod).

1 Samuel 22:19 "And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword."

"Nob, the city of the priests":

See note on 21:1.

What Saul failed to do righteously to the Amalekites (15:3, 8-9), he unrighteously did to the citizens of Nob.

Saul was so cruel, he was not satisfied just killing the priests.

He turned on their wives and children and killed all of them too.

He killed their animals to show his utter hate for all of them.

Verses 20-23:

"Abiathar" escaped with his life.

From this point forward, the priesthood left Saul in support of David.

Abiathar remained with David until David's death (2 Sam. 20-25).

1 Samuel 22:20 "And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David."

"Abiathar":

Literally "The father is excellent".

A son of Ahimelech (21:1), who escaped the slaughter and joined David's company, he performed priestly functions for David for the rest of David's life (compare 23:6, 9; 30:7; 2 Sam. 8:17; see note on 22:16-19).

We do not know how he got free only that he did.

He would have been a priest as well.

He was the son of Ahimelech.

His name was Abiathar.

He had, probably, been left to care for the sanctuary, while Ahimelech and the others went to answer Saul's request.

His escape to David was necessary.

We read in the Scripture of the great respect that David had for Abiathar.

The name "Abiathar" means father of plenty.

1 Samuel 22:21 "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.

This was terrible news to David.

He would feel responsible for their deaths.

He had not intended that, when he stopped for help from them.

1 Samuel 22:22 "And David said unto Abiathar, I knew [it] that day, when Doeg the Edomite [was] there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned [the death] of all the persons of thy father's house."

"I have occasioned":

David recognized his responsibility for causing the deaths of the priests' families and animals, acknowledging the devastating consequences of his lie to Ahimelech (compare 21:1-2).

By being deceitful and trying to arrange his own plan, David set in motion a chain of events that led directly to the slaughter of 85 innocent people, a sorrow that he had to live with for the rest of his life.

David had left quickly when he saw Doeg, thinking he might draw Saul away from the priests and their family.

He knew that Doeg would tell Saul and that Saul would give chase.

He did not believe Saul was evil enough to kill the priests however.

David was sorrowful of the priest's death, blaming himself for their problem.

1 Samuel 22:23 "Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou [shalt be] in safeguard."

David greatly lamented the calamity.

It is great trouble to a good man to find himself any way the cause of evil to others.

He must have been much pained, when he considered that his falsehood was one cause of this fatal event.

David speaks with assurance in regards of his own safety, and promises that Abiathar should have his protection.

With the Son of David, all who are his may be sure they shall be in safeguard (Psalm 91:1).

In the hurry and distraction David was continually in, he found time for communion with God, and found comfort in it.

There really was nothing to go back to.

Saul had destroyed all of his family and all they had.

Saul would kill Abiathar, the same as he would kill David, if he could find them.

David promises the priest that he will be safe with him.

David feels indebted to him all the days of his life.

One lesson we must all learn from this, is that sin gets worse and worse, if not checked.

Saul started out doing just a few little things in contrast with the commandments of the LORD.

Each time he committed a sin, the next sin was worse.

Now, he has committed one of the most heinous crimes of all history.

We must immediately stop, when we commit that first little sin.

We must seek forgiveness, and turn from sin at that moment.

Sin is like a cancer that grows and grows, until it destroys us.

1 Samuel Chapter 22 Question

1. Where did David escape to?
2. When his brethren and all his father's house heard it, what did they do?
3. How large was the cave?
4. David's father was aware, that David had been anointed king by_____.
5. Who were covered by "brethren" in verse 1?
6. Who gathered themselves to him?
7. How many men came to help David?
8. What kind of a king had Saul been?
9. Where did David find a place of safety, for his mother and father?
10. Why had David done this?
11. David knows that his fate is in the hands of the _____.
12. How long did his parents stay with the king of Moab?
13. What did the prophet, Gad, suggest that David do?
14. Where was Saul abiding, after he heard what David was doing?
15. What was the spear in Saul's hand a sign of?
16. What was the tree that Saul sat under?
17. What is Saul saying in verse 7?
18. Who is he accusing of conspiring against him in verse 8?
19. Who speaks up, and tells of David coming to see Ahimelech?
20. Why did he tell this?
21. What does he tell Saul, that Ahimelech did for David?

22. Who did Saul call to his presence to check on this matter?
23. What does Saul accuse the priest of?
24. What does Ahimelech say in defense of David?
25. What is verse 15?
26. What punishment did Saul declare on the priest?
27. Who refused to move against the priests?
28. Who killed them?
29. What other cruel thing did Saul do, to the families of the priests?
30. Who ran to David for safety?
31. Why did David feel responsible for this?
32. What did David tell Abiathar to do?
33. What is a lesson we can all learn here?