

1 Samuel 22

Saul Murders the Priests

- ¹ David left there and took refuge in the Cave of Adulam. When his brothers and the rest of his father's family heard of it, they went down to see him there. ² Then all the people in distress, in debt or embittered began gathering around him, and he became their leader; there were about four hundred with him.
- ³ David went from there to Mitzpeh of Mo'av and said to the king of Mo'av, "Please let my father and mother come and stay with you until I know what God will do for me." ⁴ He presented them to the king of Mo'av, and they lived with him as long as David remained in his stronghold. ⁵ But the prophet Gad said to David, "Don't stay in the stronghold. Leave, and go to the land of Y'hudah." So David left and went to the Forest of Heret.
- ⁶ Sha'ul heard that David and the men with him had been located. Sha'ul was sitting in Giv'ah, under the tamarisk tree on the hill, with his spear in his hand and all his servants standing around him. ⁷ Sha'ul said to his servants standing around him, "Listen, you men of Binyamin! Is Yishai's son going to give any of you fields and vineyards? Is he going to make you all commanders of thousands and hundreds? ⁸ Is this why you have all conspired against me, why none of you told me when my son had incited my servant to become my enemy as he is now."
- ⁹ Then Do'eg the Edoni, who had been put in charge of Sha'ul's servants, answered, "I saw Yishai's son come to Nov, to Achimelekh the son of Achituv. ¹⁰ He consulted Adonai for him, gave him food and gave him the sword of Golyat the P'lishti." ¹¹ The king sent to summon Achimelekh the Cohen the son of Achituv, along with all his father's family, the cohanim in Nov; and all of them went to the king. ¹² Sha'ul said, "Listen here, you son of Achituv!" He answered, "Here I am my lord." ¹³ Sha'ul said to him, "Why did you conspire against me, you and Yishai's son? By giving him bread and a sword and consulting God for him, you helped him rebel against me and become my enemy, which he now is!" ¹⁴ Achimelekh answered the king, "Is there anyone among all your servants more trustworthy than David? He's the king's son-in-law, he carries out your every request, your household honors him. ¹⁵ I didn't start consulting God for him just today. Heaven forbid! The king shouldn't accuse me or my father's family of anything! Your servant knows nothing at all about any of this!" ¹⁶ But the king said, "You must die, you and your father's whole family." ¹⁷ Then the king told the guards standing around him, "Go around, and kill the cohanim of Adonai, because they knew he was escaping, yet they didn't tell me." But the king's servants refused to lift their hands against the cohanim of ADONAI. ¹⁸ So the king said to Do'eg, "You go around and kill the cohanim!" Do'eg the Edomi went around and fell on the cohanim; that day he killed eighty-five persons wearing linen ritual vests. ¹⁹ He also attacked Nov, the city of the cohanim, with the sword; he put to the sword both men and women, children and babies, cattle, donkeys, and sheep.
- ²⁰ One of the sons of Achimelekh the son of Achituv, named Avyatar, escaped and fled to join David. ²¹ Avyatar told David that Sha'ul had killed the cohanim of ADONAI. ²² David said to Avyatar, "I knew it! That day, when Do'eg the Edomi was there, I knew he would tell Sha'ul. I caused the death of every person in your father's family. ²³ Stay with me: don't be afraid; because the one who is seeking my life seeks yours too. You'll be safe with me. 1 Samuel 22

I. INITIAL THOUGHTS

- A. The Cave of Adullam:** In this passage David takes refuge in a cave. He goes to what seems to be a familiar place, not only to him but to his family and the locals. His family is in real danger; the king wants David dead because he considers David his enemy. King Saul knows David's family and where they live. I doubt the older brothers of David are in Saul's army anymore, for now they would be considered guilty by association. Also in 2 Chronicles we find out the Philistines are also coming

up and attacking Bethlehem where the family lives. In light of all this the family hears David is at the cave of Adulam so they go there.

- B. David's 400 Messed-Up Men:** The next set of people we hear about coming to David, despite the fact that his home now seems to be the cave of Adulam, are those that are in debt, in distress, and are embittered. About 400 men! That is quite a following. We are not told where these men came from just these characteristics of them. I do notice though David doesn't seem to turn anyone away. Instead he leads them.
- C. Providing for His Parents:** It seems he starts training them by example, by starting with first things first, his parents. David must realize that anywhere in Israel is not safe for them. So he goes to the king of Mo'av. Why? His great grandmother Ruth is from Mo'av. There is a family tie here. So he goes and asks permission for his parents to stay there until David finds out what God will do for him. The king of Mo'av allows them to stay, most likely because of the family ties and knowing Saul is not going to go into the enemy's land to go after David's parents. So David sets his house in order, so to speak. The Scripture says his parents lived there as long as David was in his stronghold.
- D. Listening to the Prophet:** Good leaders have people in their lives who will speak truth to them. Gad is a prophet and David listens to him. Gad speaks truth to David. Gad tells David not to stay at that stronghold. Think about it. It may have been a temptation for David just to stay in Mo'av. He is after all safe. Yet the prophet reminds him where he is supposed to return to. Leave, and go to the land of Y'hudah. David listens and obeys. David settles in the Forest of Heret. It doesn't take long for the news to reach Sha'ul that David and the men with him have returned to Y'hudah.

II. THE ENEMY'S LIES AND TACTICS

- A. Sha'ul & His Spear:** We find out when Sha'ul receives this news he is in Giv'ah, sitting under the shade of a tamarisk tree, holding his spear while he is surrounded by his servants/officers. Sha'ul is very fond of his spear. Scripture mentions Sha'ul holding his spear many times, even when there should not be danger around him. Maybe he used it as an intimidating factor. Scripture mentions twice Sha'ul thrusting it at David. So maybe that was his practice. For whatever reason Sha'ul is showing everyone who has eyes to see that he is not a man of peace. When he speaks he confirms this truth as well.
- B. Only the Benjamites:** His words divide. He says, "Listen, you men of Benjamin." So apparently he has only surrounded himself with only his tribe of people, Benjamin. Notice the contrast. The men that went to David we are told nothing about where they come from in this passage. Yet only the tribe of Benjamin is allowed to be around Sha'ul.
- C. Sha'ul's Disassociation:** Next, Sha'ul doesn't mention David by name. He refers to him as the son of Yishai. This tactic is called disassociation. It a common factor in murderers toward their victims. There is a lot of hatred toward someone when a person refuses to use their name.
- D. Sha'ul's Promises:** The next tactic Sha'ul uses is the famous- 'I can give you _____. He can't provide like I can or will.' Sha'ul says "Will the son of Yishai give you fields and vineyards and make you commanders of thousands and hundreds?"
- E. Sha'ul's Accusations:** Then he accuses them of conspiring against him. Maybe the reason he still holds his spear. That somehow they knew when Jonathan informed David that David's hunch was right and Sha'ul's plan was to kill him. And they deliberately held on to this information refusing to tell him. He next goes into a pity party for himself, "None of you are sorry for me," as he accuses them, "or tells me" then accuses his son, "that my son has stirred up his servant against me, to lie in wait, as it is this day." If you remember, Scripture specifically says it was Jonathon who was shocked at the news of his father wanting to kill David. (1 Samuel 20:2,3) Scripture also states that no one knew of the meetings that Jonathan and David had. This was the meeting coming up with the plan of David hiding for 3 days and waiting for the signal of the arrow and the words to follow it nor the meeting when they said good-bye. (1 Samuel 20:39)
- F. Do'eg the Edomite:** Do'eg the Edomite is next on the scene. He is what we call now a days a brown-noser. He is trying to get into the good graces of Sha'ul, probably looking for a bonus or a raise. He lets Sha'ul know he saw the son of Yishai when he was in Nov. He says the priest

consulted ADONAI for him. Yet when you read the former chapter of Scripture it never says David asked that of Achimelekh. So he lies on the first part and then adds truth. He says he gave him bread and the sword of Golyat the P'lishti. Good leaders put people around them who speak truth to them, not just people who will tell them what they want to hear. The enemy has no problem speaking lies with the truth and he tempts people to do the same. Don't be deceived, if it has a lie with the truth it does not become a half-truth it becomes a lie.

G. Sha'ul's Actions Against the Priests: This is all the ammunition Sha'ul needed. Sha'ul summons Achimelekh the cohen the son of Achituv, along with all his family, the cohanim in Nov; all of them went to the king. Sha'ul is ready to accuse, and accuse he does. Notice when he addresses him he doesn't use his name either, he says, "Listen here, you son of Achituv!" Achimelekh responds with the only words appropriate. "Here I am, my lord." Sha'ul starts accusing, "Why did you conspire against me, you and Yishai's son? By giving him bread and a sword and consulting God for him, you helped him rebel against me and become my enemy, which he now is!"

1. Sha'ul's Underlying Hatred: Sha'ul is David's enemy but David is not Sha'ul's enemy. Sha'ul conspired to kill David. David refuses to do such a thing to Sha'ul for the mere fact God anointed Sha'ul as king so he would not lift his hand against the king's anointed. Sha'ul is so full of hatred and jealousy of David that he has gone beyond reasoning with him nor is he interested in the truth.
2. Achimelekh Defends David: Unfortunately for Achimelekh, he does not know this yet. He lets Sha'ul know he thinks there is no one more trustworthy of all of Sha'ul's servants more than David. That statement probably sealed his fate. Although he doesn't know that he continues to speak truth about David and the role he has had before any of this had come to pass. He even says that he or his family knew nothing at all of any of this.
3. Murder of the Priests: Sha'ul of course refuses to believe him. Sha'ul tells him, "You must die, you and your father's whole family." Sha'ul has lost all respect for the position of the priests as well. He had murder on his heart and therefore murder he would have. The king instructs the guards, "Go around and kill the cohanim of ADONAI, because they are siding with David, and because they knew he was escaping, yet didn't tell me."
 - a. the guard's refusal: But the guards refused to lift their hands against the cohanim of ADONAI. By their refusal they were laying their lives down too. Sha'ul could have easily ordered their deaths as well for this refusal or at least removed them from their jobs.
 - b. Do'eg's compliance: The king tells Do'eg, "You go around and kill the cohanim!" And that is exactly what Do'eg did. He would have never had a respect for the cohanim. He was an Edomite, and they do not worship the God of Israel. So he had no problem killing 85 cohanim wearing the ritual linen garments.
 - c. Sha'ul's inability to inquire of God: Sha'ul is unable to inquire of God due to this order he gave to Do'eg and Do'eg obeying him.
4. Do'eg's Ransacking of Nov: Do'eg then continues on to Nov to put to the sword all the men, women, children and babies, cattle, donkeys and sheep.
 - a. similar to Sha'ul's divine command related to Amalek: Ironically, what was done in Nov to the cohanim and the animals was supposed to be done by Sha'ul to 'Amalek. Scripture says, ²Here is what ADONAI-Tzva'ot says: 'I remember what 'Amalek did to Isra'el how they fought against Isra'el when they were coming up from Egypt. ³ Now go and attack 'Amalek and completely destroy everything they have. Don't spare them, but kill men, women, children, and babies, cows and sheep, camels and donkeys.'" ⁹However, Sha'ul and the people spared Agag, along with the best of the sheep and cattle, and even the second best, also the lambs and everything that was good—they weren't inclined to destroy these things. But everything that was worthless or weak they completely destroyed. ¹⁰ Then the word of ADONAI came to Sh'mu'el: ¹¹ "I regret setting up Sha'ul as king, because he has turned back from following me and hasn't obeyed my orders."²² Sh'mu'el said, "Does ADONAI take as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying what ADONAI says? Surely obeying is better than sacrifice, and heeding orders than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is like the sin of sorcery, stubbornness like the crime of idolatry. Because you have

rejected the word of ADONAI, he too has rejected you as king.” (1 Samuel 15:2-3; 9-11; 22-23)

H. God’s Earlier Prophecy Against the Sons of Eli: Now here is a twist in the midst of this story.

God proclaimed judgement on Eli and his sons and the cohanim earlier in this book of 1 Samuel. It is found in chapter 2:27-36

²⁷A man of God came to Eli and told him, “Here is what ADONAI says: ‘Didn’t I reveal myself to your ancestor’s clan when they were in Egypt, serving as slaves in Pharaoh’s household? ²⁸ Didn’t I chose him out of all the tribes of Isra’el to be my cohen, go up to my alter, burn incense and wear a ritual vest in my presence? Didn’t I assign to your ancestor’s clan all the offerings of the people of Isra’el made by fire? ²⁹ So why are you showing such disrespect for my sacrifices and offerings, which I ordered to be made at my dwelling? Why do you show more honor to your sons than to me, making yourselves fat with the choicest parts of all the offerings of Isra’el my people?’

³⁰“Therefore ADONAI the God of Isra’el says, ‘I did indeed say that your family and your father’s family would walk in my presence forever.’ But now ADONAI says, ‘Forget it! I respect those who respect me, but those who despise me will meet with contempt. ³¹ The day is coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father’s family, so that no one in your family live to old age. ³² At a time when Isra’el is prospering, you will see a rival in my Dwelling; and never will anyone in your family live to old age. ³³ Still, I won’t cut off every one of your men from my altar; because that would make your eyes grow dim, and you would waste away. Nevertheless, all your descendants will die young. ³⁴ Your sign that this will occur will be what happens to your two sons Hofni and Pinchas—they will both die on the same day. ³⁵ I will raise up for myself a faithful cohen who will do what I want and what I intend. I will make his family faithful, and he will serve me in the presense of my anointed one forever. ³⁶ Everyone left in your family will come prostrate himself before him for a silver coin or a loaf of bread, and say, “Please, won’t you give me some work as a cohen, so I can have a scrap of bread to eat?”” 1 Samuel 2:27-36

Then when God first call Sh’mu’el He also says this. ¹¹ ADONAI said to Sh’mu’el, “Look! I am going to do something in Isra’el that will make both ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹² On that day I will go against Eli everything I have said with regard to his family, from the beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I will execute judgment against his family forever, because of his wickedness in not rebuking his sons, even though he knew that they had brought a curse on themselves. ¹⁴ Therefore I have sworn to the family of Eli that the wickedness of Eli’s family will never be atoned for by any sacrifice or offering.” 1 Samuel 3:11-14

I. Avyatar’s Escape: Avyatar the son of Achimelekh, the son of Achituv escaped and fled to join David. Avyatar tells David that Sha’ul has killed the cohanim of ADONAI. Do’eg wielded the sword but Sha’ul gave the order. The leaders are always held more accountable. David felt a responsibility for the deaths of the priests. He offers Avyatar a place of refuge, David acknowledges the one who seeks to take Avyatar’s life is also seeking to take David’s. So David again assures Avyatar that he will be safe with him. Having a cohanim with David allows David to seek God, which we will see he does in the next chapter.

III. FINAL THOUGHTS

A. Comparing Sha’ul & Adam: Similarities of Scriptures I never noticed. First Sha’ul like Adam was given the kingdom. Yet they both decided to go against what God had said so both lived with that consequence to the day they died and it effected their family line forever.

B. David Like Yeshua: David like Yeshua is not accepted by some of his own family. He is anointed as king but still has to wait for that to be fulfilled and as he waits he has no place to call his own. All that go to David are in debt, in distress, and/or discontented, that describes all who come to Yeshua. David accepts them all just as Yeshua does.

C. David’s Numerical Disadvantage: 400 men is quite a following but it is rather minute compared to the army of Saul which some commentaries have said at least 30,000 men.

D. Thoughts on Sha'ul

1. His Choices: What is the significance of the tree that Sha'ul is sitting under and the choice of weapon? Sha'ul prefers his spear, David a sword.
2. His Promises: Sha'ul, the world, and Satan tempt us with, 'will David give you.....' 'I will and can give you.....' Yes, but at what price?
3. His Hypocritical Self-Pity: Sha'ul and the enemy often spins their accusations with pity while they have done or are doing exactly what they are accusing the accused of doing.
4. His Actions Fulfills God's Judgement Against the Priests: What Sha'ul does in his anger and disregard and pride in ordering the deaths of the cohen came as no surprise to God. The fact that it was a judgement on the priesthood spoken of by God decades before and God patiently waits to fulfill His Word is a reminder to me that God is a covenant-keeping God and He will do whatever it takes and isn't concerned with how long it takes to show His people this is the kind of God He is.
 - a. destroyed God's ability to guide him: Letting the condemned continue to pour more condemnation on themselves by choosing to completely destroy the way God set up the way to communicate with Him.
 - b. David's access to a priest for guidance: While also sparing one who will affiliate with David and therefore allow continued guidance to David by way of what Sha'ul tried to completely destroy.
 - c. God's gracious sovereignty: He turns all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. By this whole story playing out I see God is the God who redeems the actions of fallen sinful men placed in authority by Him yet there are severe consequences for their disobedience He is able to bring good and redemption out of something so ugly. Isn't that the Gospel story!

E. Applications: There are many.

1. God Loves Israel: This Scripture story takes place in Israel. God is the God of Israel! All the nations of the world are affected by Israel. Do you love what God loves? Do you protect what God wants protected? In what ways do you support the land and the people of Israel? Do you pray for them regularly? Do you spend some of your resources on Israeli products to demonstrate your love in a tangible way? Where your treasure is is where your heart will be.
2. Help the Downcast: None of us came to Yeshua with anything to offer except our broken selves. That is what He wants. He wants us to accept people who are in debt, distressed, and embittered (discontented). All of us have been there, are there now, or will be there again. Bear one another's burdens! It makes them lighter, and it shows we are in covenant with Him who tells us to 'Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you.' He gives us one another to show us how much He cares for us, and how much we can make a difference in this life He has given us if we will obey what He tells us to do.
3. Take care of your family! There will be times you won't be able to do this on your own. Use the resources God has given you. Many times that is the people he puts in your life past & present. We are not told how much, if any, contact happened with David and the king of Mo'av. David still had a family line there. He used it to ensure his parents would be safe.
4. Obey God: It was the right place and time for David's parents to be there, but it was not either for David to be there. Be where God sends you at the time He sends you, regardless if He sends you and your family to separate places.
5. Listen to Godly Counsel: Listen to the prophet that God has speaking to you in your life.
6. God's Will Above Our Comfort: Safety and comfort is not the highest priority in what we are to be seeking. God's will is the highest priority we are to be seeking.
7. Don't Try to Blend In: All of God's people have enemies. God is perfectly fine with allowing you to be surrounded by enemies. Most of the time they will completely out-number you and your companions. He is not fine with us trying to blend in and looking like the enemy. He has set us to be different, to look different, to think different, to act different, to eat different, to rest different, to work different. All of this is to remind us He is God, we are not. We need to trust Him and obey

Him. Darkness is dispelled when we turn on the light. If he says it is time for our light to go out that is His call. Just as it was His call to have us be light.

8. *Past Sins of the Generations*: There are things that are in our family's past that affect us. We can still choose to be obedient to our calling that allows us to bring people into the presence of God in the present. Even if the disobedience of our past generations catches up with us in the present, even unto death, doesn't mean we can't speak truth or that God doesn't accept our obedience in the present. He still is the God who keeps covenant with all who are His. What was meant for evil He turns into good.
9. *The Enemy's Blows*: There can be times when the enemy delivers a severe and painful blow. It hurts when our family and/or ones we know die, even worse who are taken out by the enemy. We don't deny it. We grieve deeply because of the pain we feel. We are also to go to and/or accept the people who come to us because of what was allowed to happen. Both parties will see redemption, & good, come from the new relationship.
10. *False Guilt*: Sometimes there is false guilt related to the severe blow of the enemy. I don't see how David did anything wrong by going to the priest once he found out Sha'ul wanted to kill him. Who else was he supposed to go to? The first time Sha'ul sent men to kill David, David fled to Sh'mu'el at Ramah. He told him everything, I think because Sh'mu'el is the one who anointed him to be king. No one ever said it was wrong for him to go there. This time he goes to a different cohen in a different place. Aren't we supposed to flee to the cohen, those who have been put in place of authority that helps us seek God? That place was not far (about 3 miles—Less than an hour away on foot). David was probably high-tailing it so a man in fit shape could easily run there in 30 minutes. He doesn't tell him what is going on. I would think for the cohen's own protection. David had no control over who was there when he got there. Nor did he have any control over if/when or what Do'eg would say to Sha'ul. David felt responsible because the slaughter of the cohen happened because he was seen at Nov by Do'eg. The real responsibility for the slaughter at Nov and the cohen was because Sha'ul ordered it to be done. We should acknowledge we have a common enemy and he seeks to kill us. We are stronger together and our purpose is the same. We live to fulfill the role He calls us into to give the God of Israel all the glory He deserves. What better way to show Him our love and devotion.
11. *Journal*. Read what David wrote about this experience in Psalms 57; 142; 52