

### I Samuel

#### Lesson 40 - Chapter 25

David is a complex man; which is a nice way of saying that as upright and God-fearing and determined to be obedient to the Lord as he is, he can also be proud, self-promoting and tend to overreact; and at times let his volcanic anger and passions overwhelm even his best intentions. Thus when we concluded our previous lesson David was in the throes of being consumed by blind rage, the result of an insult aimed at him by the man known as Nabal.

**Nabal** was not actually the man's given name (the Bible doesn't inform us of it). Rather **Nabal** is an epithet that sums up this man's character: foolish, disgraceful, without Godly wisdom. David and his men had guarded over **Nabal's** substantial flocks out in the Paran and Ma'on desert regions, and so David felt that it was only proper that Nabal reward him with a gift of sustenance for his community of 600 followers. Thus a message was sent with a **minyán** of his men (10 men) asking **Nabal** for this expected reward. **Nabal** not only declined but he responded in a nasty and offensive way that just isn't done in the Middle East unless you are looking for trouble.

In reality, although David's request was made in the most polite of terms, all involved understood that it was a demand. A request that cannot be refused is not a request any longer; and **Nabal** being a rich and powerful and arrogant man didn't like David essentially requisitioning supplies from him.

When David received **Nabal's** offensive reply he took two-thirds of his men and set off to exact revenge for this attack on David's honor. It was his stated intention to not leave one male left alive in **Nabal's** extended family that no doubt included a goodly portion of his entire clan. Fortunately for all concerned **Nabal** had a wife who was full of grace and wisdom: **Avigayil**. A man who had witnessed **Nabal's** offensive reply to David's message secretly went to Abigail and told her about it, and pled with her to take action to avoid the inevitable bloodshed that was bound to result. She sprang into action and loaded up a donkey with a substantial gift of supplies in hopes of appeasing David, all the while making sure her husband was not aware.

That's where we'll pick up this week. Open your Bibles to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 25, and we'll start reading at verse 18.

#### RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 25:18 – end

Verse 20 explains that as David and his men were coming to make war on **Nabal**, it just so happened that the very route **Avigayil** had taken to try and intercept David led her right to him. The CJB doesn't express this thought of amazing coincidence very well. A better way for the verse to read is, "Right at that moment....." when she was riding her donkey in search of David she came across his band of men. So the idea is that nothing happens by chance. It was Yehoveh's providence that set her path, and the exact timing, in motion for this unlikely but

urgent meeting to take place.

The future Hebrew sages took the improbable timing of Abigail's encounter with David, along with some pronouncements she would make in a speech to him, to indicate that she was substantially more than merely a woman full of wisdom; rather, she was a prophetess of the God of Israel. In fact the Hebrew sages of old determined that the Bible lists 7 prophetesses, with **Avigayil** among them. They were Sarah (Abraham's wife) as the first; then Miriam, Devorah, Hannah, our Avigayil, Hulda and the stunning Esther (who even has a book of the Bible named after her).

Days and days have gone by since David and his band strapped on their weapons and left their desert accommodations for a show-down in Carmel. Verse 21 has David essentially muttering to himself as he is traveling, complaining about how he and his men guarded this man's property, and did such a good job, and still this man repays their efforts with an insult! And truly that is the mental picture we need to get; a very upset David who feels that he has been cheated; a man who is roiling this over in his mind, replaying his anger again and again. A modern psychologist might say he is playing those negative tapes in his head and he won't turn them off. And truly, just as for us in our time, this was David sort of enjoying being mad and not particularly anxious to let it go and move on. Folks, this is sin that is being displayed; it was so then, and it remains so today.

In fact, verse 22 continues with David's hissy fit but most Bible versions clean it up substantially. The KJV actually is among the most literal and best translated, even though it is not just a little bit crude:

***<sup>KJV</sup> 1 Samuel 25:22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. (1Sa 25:22 KJV)***

Yes, you heard right; it means just what it says. I don't think I need to draw a diagram to explain what the last 5 or 6 words of that verse are getting at so most versions substitute those last few words with either the word "male" or "men". The Bible doesn't mince words; and the reality is that so much of what we read today in our English translations has been watered down and made considerably more genteel (and often less memorable and impactful) than what the words actually say. David's thoughts are being accurately recorded for us and they are not admirable. This predecessor to Messiah, David, is a strange mixture of stalwart shepherd and ferocious warrior; a mix that seems utterly incompatible, almost schizophrenic. And yet is this not the same mysterious mixture that is Yeshua? A stalwart shepherd and a ferocious warrior is Our Messiah and yet Christianity in general has decided to emphasize one attribute over the other (even to discard one over the other). Partly, I'm sure, because it is so difficult to imagine any being that can be both, simultaneously.

Judaism tends to discount David's human faults and evil inclinations and puts him on a pedestal of near perfection. He is made to be far closer to the actual Messiah than it was intended and this at least partly to blame for the spiritual blindness that has kept the Jewish people from intimacy with their true Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth.

On the other hand I cannot begin to explain the countless conversations I have had with Christian pastors and laymen who at the same time acknowledging that David is a type and illustration of a Messiah yet also see Jesus as only a meek, pacifist shepherd who lovingly gave His life for our sakes. They see the God who orders war and bloodshed for the sake of establishing His Kingdom and eradicating evil as a thing of the past. War is a characteristic of the Old Testament God and shouldn't we all be glad that our God Yeshua has essentially replaced the older God Yehoveh's methods with mercy and love? I often receive either startled looks or blank faces when I ask these pastors and lay people to explain who it is, then, that will be leading the war to end all wars (Armageddon), and will personally cause the blood of God's enemies to fill the Jezreel Valley up to height of a horse's bridle. The answer of course, is Jesus Christ; the same one who gently led 12, and then thousands, to redemption as a shepherd only to be led (Himself) as a lamb to the slaughter on Calvary. Like David, Our Messiah is shepherd **and** warrior and I don't think it is long-coming until we'll be reminded of that.

Poor David, however, was not Messiah. He was not God so he struggled with these contrasting personal attributes of shepherd and warrior that powerfully tugged on him one way and then the other. As he was on the road to Carmel, the warrior had total control and as a result what lay ahead was his ruin. Enter Abigail.

**Avigayil** dismounts from her donkey and prostrates herself before David. Remember now, this woman was an aristocrat; she was the attractive and intelligent wife of a wealthy and powerful man. But her station in life was of little importance to her at the moment; her desperate hope was to stop an atrocity before it happened, to save her family and her clan, even if it meant personal humiliation and accepting all blame. She was taking a great risk.

**Avigayil** makes a long speech to David and he listens intently (probably because of the surprise of finding this well-heeled woman lying on her face on this dusty road). She tries to bring David back to his senses, and to make him more amiable and peaceful, by offering 3 lines of reasoned thought for him to consider and then (hopefully) drawing the conclusion that he needs to back off of his intents.

The first line of reasoning is that God is obviously present in this event because of the providential meeting of **Avigayil** and David. The Lord has intervened and enabled **Avigayil's** and David's paths to cross before he confronted **Nabal**. Thus David has been miraculously kept from murder and incurring blood guilt as a consequence.

The second line of reasoning is that Yehoveh is the Avenger of Wickedness and wrong doing; David should not try to be his own avenger seeking out a solution to his own justice. "Vengeance is Mine saith the Lord" is at the heart of her argument that (in verse 26) "**may your enemies who seek evil for my lord be like Nabal**". In other words, may those who are David's enemies have vengeance heaped upon them by the Lord who will turn them into fools for their wickedness.

Third is that if David forgives this offense, then the Lord will give David a blessing in return because that is God's nature. In fact Avigayil generally lays out exactly what that blessing

(the **berachah**) from YHWH would consist of:

1. The Lord will make David a lasting house (his family will be the ruling dynasty over Israel forever)
2. David will be privileged to continue to fight the Lord's wars (in other words, the wars David is fighting are authorized Holy Wars. Not only are they truly worthy of fighting but it also means that David cannot lose).
3. God will preserve David from his own wrong-doing all of his days. In fact this point is what most of this entire chapter is about; the Lord saving David from himself.
4. No man will be able to take David's soul and destroy it because he will be safely bound into the "bundle of life".

Let's talk about that last one for a second. In verse 29 the CJB and many other translations speak of David being bound into the "bundle of life"; and this is generally pretty literal. She is saying that that David's life will be bound up into this bundle of life. Life in Hebrew is **hayyim**; but here the word referring to David's life is **nephesh** that doesn't mean life, but rather life essence. It is the word typically used for soul or spirit. So it is David's soul or life essence that will be bound up in this "bundle of life".

But "bundle of life" is actually an ancient Hebrew expression that we are running into so we need to see if we can understand what it meant to people of that day to "be bound into the bundle of life". The Hebrew expression is **bisror hahayyim** and it is indeed speaking of some kind of **bundle** and of **life** but the bundle is referring not to a bag or to a package but rather to a document. In the days of David a document for the Hebrews was usually a scroll; or even better, an animal skin with words written on and then rolled up and tied with a leather string to form a bundle. Thus a better and more apt translation is Document of Life or Document of the Living. So the bundle of life is some kind of heavenly document where those whom the Lord chooses have their names place into it, and so their life essences, their souls, are tucked safely away forever. Sound familiar? Obviously this is a very early way of the Old Testament speaking of the Heavenly Book of Life.

***CJB Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (Rev 20:12 CJB)***

The dead were written in the Book of Life according to what? According to "what they had done". This matches well with Abigail telling David that by his action of forgiving the insult, changing his mind, and avoiding murder that he would be written into the Book of Life.

So as we have discovered, the many principles (such as eternal life and the Book of Life) that we find in the New Testament are but progressive developments of principles already established (even if only vaguely) in the Tanach, the Old Testament.

Several times, as in verse 28, **Avigayil** asks David to forgive **her** offenses. On the surface this might seem as those she is essentially asking for forgiveness on behalf of her husband, and in

a round about way it is; yet that's not really the point. Putting ourselves into a Middle Eastern mindset we must see that we have a woman speaking to a man who is not her husband; a man who is well known and to a degree feared. She has dared to approach the man (even to seek him out) when usually a man must approach the woman if there is to be conversation (especially one of this length and subject). She is boldly intervening in her husband's affairs and it could easily have been David's decision to treat her badly for daring to stand between two men in conflict. In fact she is coming dangerously close to (if not stepping over the line of) an obscure Torah law that we looked into a very long time ago:

***<sup>11</sup> "If men are fighting with each other, and the wife of one comes up to help her husband get away from the man attacking him by grabbing the attacker's private parts with her hand,***

***<sup>12</sup> you are to cut off her hand; show no pity.***

***(Deut 25:11-12 CJB)***

Certainly ***Avigayil*** is not physically tussling with David. Nonetheless the underlying principle of Deuteronomy 25 stands; a woman is not to intervene in an otherwise fair fight between her husband and another man. This could have taken a number of different courses for ***Avigayil***, most of them bad, and thus her pleading with David to be forgiving towards her intervention in this matter.

In verse 30 we have Abigail truly apprehending the role of a prophetess (even though there is no evidence that she saw herself in that official role). There she looks forward to the time when God will have fulfilled His covenant promises to David in relation to David and the throne of Israel. She uses a word that we have become familiar with: ***nagid***. ***Avigayil*** speaks of David as a prince over Israel, a ***nagid*** over Israel, and this term essentially means, "King in waiting". In other words, as the Lord has anointed him as the King in waiting (but not YET king) over the Lord's Kingdom, then he stands in constant danger of stumbling. The danger for David is never more imminent now that He is divinely appointed for great things by the Lord because there are actions David can do to ruin his witness and perhaps even his opportunity to be a wonderful tool in the Lord's hand.

And, Abigail continues, the thing that David is on his way to accomplish is to shed blood in vain; to commit blood guilt. To commit blood guilt means to take human life unjustly. Here's the thing about blood guilt: there is no atonement possible for it under Levitical Law. There is no sacrifice available. The only just outcome for the perpetrator of blood guilt is to have his own life's blood spilled; no innocent animal losing its life or priestly ritual done before the Lord is allowed to substitute for it. If David does this thing, he has committed a grave trespass for which there is no forgiveness.

And there is yet another danger that ***Avigayil*** says that David is in; it is that he might seek to gain "the Lord's victory" for himself. In other words, just as David has made it clear that he knows he is not to win the throne of Israel by his own actions (such as murdering Saul), neither is he to avenge wrongs done to him by means his own actions (such as by killing ***Nabal*** and

decimating **Nabal's** family).

She ends her speech by asking David to remember her in the future for what she has done today. Abigail recognized The Father's guiding hand in David's life, and that his destiny was as Israel's King. How did she know this? That is why she is counted as among only 7 prophetesses; such understanding could only have come from Yehoveh. But she did more than merely recognize David's destiny, she took an active role to preserve it even if it meant risking her own life.

I think that we need to consider not only the blessing we have gained from our acceptance of God's covenant provision for us, as His Believers, but also the danger that we are in at all times because we have made a commitment to Him. The Devil doesn't waste his time with unbelievers except to use them as pawns to do his dirty work. Rather his main efforts are to confound the lives of disciples of Yeshua, and to derail the wonderful purposes that The Father has for our lives especially as it pertains to the Kingdom of God. I shudder at how close we must come, often, to disaster and don't recognize it. I also look back at my own life and as thankful as I am for the Lord mercifully choosing to use me for His purposes, I am also at least somewhat aware that had I been more obedient and more faithful I would be a better witness, a better teacher, a better family man and a more useful servant for Him. What opportunities I have lost from my sin, and what could have been greater gain for the Kingdom, I may never know this side of Heaven. As great as David was I suspect that as the end of his life neared, he looked back with regrets and realizations that so much more could have been accomplished through him had he only been more submissive to God.

Beginning in verse 32 David responds to Abigail. In what can only be described as a startling act of humility of a Middle Eastern man towards a woman, David agrees that **Avigayil** is entirely correct and he is entirely wrong. Not only does David forgive her for her bold intervention, but he bestows compliments and blessings and admits that she was an emissary of the God of Israel. And had she not been obedient to the Lord; had she allowed her fears to take over and shrank from her divine assignment, not only would her family be gone but David would have become mired in blood guilt. David recognizes that as much as she saved her family she has saved him. This is a characteristic of David that I'd have to speculate pleases the Lord. When he has done wrong, or is contemplating wrong, and is confronted with it he is contrite and admits his guilt before the Lord. He acknowledges that even above those he has harmed, it is YHWH who he has sinned against. A contrite heart is the key to true repentance.

David accepted the supplies she brought and then commands **Avigayil** to go home in peace. In other words, he will not attack her home or her family (not even that dastardly husband of hers). When Abigail arrives back home, Nabal has no idea what she has been up to and how close he came to losing his life. Nor does he have any idea that it was his wife who has delivered the entire clan from certain eradication. He was drunk when she returned home and so she decided not to inform him of what had transpired, at least for the moment.

In the morning, after he had sobered up, **Avigayil** told him what had occurred; almost immediately he had a stroke. Within 10 days, he died. **Avigayil** was right; the Lord will avenge. The insolent and worthless **Nabal** was struck down by Yehoveh, not by David. The Lord taking

**Nabal's** life was the Lord exacting perfect justice on David's behalf. David taking **Nabal's** life would have been unjust and an unforgivable sin on David's head. A great lesson for us all when we contemplate taking matters into our own hands.

I mentioned last week that there is often significance of numbers in the Bible and 10 is one of the more significant numbers. Notice that **Nabal** died 10 days after he received the message of God's deliverance of his family, which was the same number as the number of men who came to **Nabal** with David's message. Ten is a number of fullness (in the sense that all has been brought to its fullest extent). Ten is a number of perfect completeness; not a perfect end, but rather something that has been made all it was purposed to be. Ten is a number of divine order as opposed to chaos. Thus also the proper measure of the giving of our wealth back to the Lord is 1 tenth. Evidence is gathering in modern physics that there are ten dimensions of existence (Jewish mysticism has for 500 years made the claim that the Bible describes ten dimensions of existence). So when we come across the number 10 in the Bible, always pay special attention just as we do when we see the number 7.

This chapter ends with David asking **Avigayil**, who is now **Nabal's** widow, to be his wife. David sends messengers to her and her response is quite interesting. She says in verse 41:

*CJB* **1 Samuel 25:41** *She got up, bowed with her face to the ground, and said, "Your servant is here to serve you, to wash the feet of my lord's servants."*

This remark is significant especially when we incorporate the concept that David is a type and shadow of Messiah. Note that **Avigayil** speaks NOT of her washing David's feet, but rather the feet of David's followers, David's servants. And since she has accepted David's offer of marriage in front of witnesses, she is now legally betrothed. She is David's wife, the Master's wife, with only the act of consummation left to finalize the marriage. And yet she speaks of herself as a servant who wants to wash the feet of her husband's servants. Does this have a familiar ring to it?

### READ JOHN 13:1 – 20

Truly the Hebrew sages of old were right to assign **Avigayil** the title of God's prophetess.

This foot washing episode comes at us out of left field in Samuel and one finds difficulty in its meaning and purpose if it is not attached to the New Testament book of John. And truly David was a wise man to immediately go after such a woman when she became a widow at God's hand. Yet, we also find that David married not only Abigail but a woman from the city of Jezreel whose name was **Ahinoam** (my brother is delight). Jezreel is not the Jezreel Valley in the north of the land but rather a place in Judah in the general vicinity of Ma'on, Zif, and Carmel. Saul had a wife name **Ahinoam** and some think this was the same woman, but that seems quite farfetched and there is no evidence whatsoever to consider such a conclusion beyond having the same name.

Most likely David married **Ahinoam** before marrying Abigail because **Ahinoam** became mother of David's firstborn, **Amnon**. Even more, in later books of the Bible when the two

women are mentioned in the same context, **Ahinoam** is always mentioned before **Avigayil** (this is an ancient literary formula that describes status).

No doubt there was also politics at play in these marriages. David married prominent women from 2 different clans located in two different regions in Judah. Marrying into these families would have given David a foothold as a future ruler and gained him the backing of these clans. Marriage as a means of gaining allies was standard procedure in those days. It was not considered underhanded at all, but rather practical and customary. Families were anxious and willing for such intermingling and connections with the ruling elite.

The final verse of this chapter explains that Saul willfully and spitefully gave his daughter, David's wife, **Michal** to another man. This reckless act ended all possibility of reconciliation between David and Saul. The man she was given to is known by two names in the Bible: **Phalti** and **Phaltiel**. By Torah Law standards **Michal** was forced into adultery because her husband David had not divorced her. **Phaltiel** was also guilty of taking the wife of another man. Adultery was another trespass that had no atonement possible, so the crime before the Lord was severe, unforgiveable, and eternal.

Yet because David had not divorced **Michal**, he had every right to ask for her to be returned to him as was negotiating with **Avner** on his way to becoming king of Israel. And in taking her back, he was committing no crime; rather he was restoring her.

We'll begin Chapter 26 next time.