

### I Samuel

#### Lesson 44 - Chapter 29 and 30

We left chapter 29 last week after establishing that the story is being told in a flashback style, and thus it integrates and overlaps with the narrative of chapter 28. The flashback concerns the battle camp of the Philistines that is said in chapter 28 to be at Shunem on the edge of the Jezreel Valley, and the Israelite battle camp that is situated atop Mt. Gilboa not far from Shunem. Chapter 29 informs us that the Philistines first assembled at Afek that is on the northern edge of Philistine territory while Israel used a large spring about 5 miles away from the city of Jezreel as an initial meeting point for the clans and tribes to gather for war. Once both armies were assembled, then they marched to their respective battle camps at Shunem and Gilboa.

Let's re-read this short chapter 29 to refresh our memories on the situation.

#### **RE-READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 29 all**

The circumstances are that as the armies of the 5 Philistines Kings were arriving at Afek David and his men showed up, bringing up the rear as part of Achish's contingent. Four of the Philistine Kings (Achish representing the 5<sup>th</sup>) were surprised and not the least bit happy to find David and his army there. Obviously they were aware of the alliance that Achish had formed with David, and Achish's contentment with David and his men and their families living in Achish's territory. But common sense told them that to have the Hebrew David and his men participate in a war against their own countrymen (regardless of the political difficulties with Saul that forced David into a self-imposed exile), it was too risky to allow it.

Achish was so firmly convinced of David's dependability, and as equally convinced that David had severed all loyalties with Israel in general (due to his raiding Judahite settlements in the Negev) that he defended David's expectation of involvement in the upcoming battle. King Achish said that he'd been dealing with David for nearly a year and a half and that David had proven to be nothing but trustworthy.

Verse 4 has 4 Philistine Kings confronting Achish and telling him to send David back to Ziklag because it was highly likely that once the battle started David would turn on the Philistines as a means of getting back into the good graces of the Israelites. Most versions say something to the effect that David would revert to becoming an enemy or adversary of the Philistines.

The Hebrew word that is being translated as enemy or adversary is a familiar one: **satan**. That's right; here the accusation is that David would become a **satan** of Philistia. Despite the reality that we tend to use Satan as a formal name for the devil, in fact it is but a common Hebrew term that means adversary. And here we see a good example of what an adversary (a **satan**) does in the eyes of the ancients. First and foremost a **satan** is a traitor. Second is that a **satan** will fight against his former ally and king. Third is that even though he might feign loyalty, the words are hollow because a **satan** is a liar by nature. These are good things to remember about the attributes of the Evil One whom we call Satan.

The Philistine Kings pled with Achish to come to his senses and remember that a leopard doesn't so easily change his spots. "This is David", they remind him. This is the guy who is such a fierce warrior and is able to gain the loyalty of his troops to such a degree that the Hebrew women wrote songs about him that made him 10 times greater in their eyes than the King of Israel! Achish saw that there was no point to arguing the matter further so he turned to David and told him the bad news; Achish was utterly apologetic. He acknowledges how upright and truthful David had been and that he would have been greatly pleased to have David fight side by side with him in battle. But, alas, the other Philistine lords would have none of it because they didn't trust David. So David would have to take his men and go back to Ziklag.

In verse 6 Achish is so emotional about having to tell David of this decision that he even invokes the name of David's Israelite God when he says, "As Yehoveh lives you have been upright." This was undoubtedly an act of the greatest courtesy and deference towards David. But in verse 8, perhaps we ought to be surprised to find that David actually tried to change Achish's mind. He says he is astonished and confounded because he can't imagine what he has done to deserve this treatment. He asks what is it about him that Achish finds suspicious such that he won't allow David to "fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"

Many Jewish and Christian scholars refuse to see David's statement as anything but deception. In fact many say that his reference to "my lord the king" was intentionally ambiguous; that David COULD have been referring to Saul. I must tell you, I see nothing that substantiates such a point of view. David certainly intended to fight for Achish and against

Saul's forces. Now what David would have done had he come face to face with Saul is open for debate; but for sure David had no problem killing Saul's soldiers, Hebrew or not. Nothing has been recorded to indicate that David was, up to now, plotting to suddenly turn on the Philistines who had befriended him and saved him from Saul.

So Achish instructed David to finish out the night at the Philistine camp in Afek, but in the morning to get up and head back to Ziklag. David complied. David was again saved from himself by God's providence. It is hard to say how David would have reacted once the battle against his own brethren began. It is also doubtful that all of David's men would have joined him. Certainly some unknown number of David's troops could not have brought themselves to spill the blood of their extended family members for the sake of the Philistine's ambitions. It was one thing to raid Judean villages for profit and sustenance by taking animals and food and other valuable goods; it was quite another to fight against their hereditary nation on behalf of an enemy.

David was in deep; he had indeed made himself a pariah in the eyes of his own tribe Judah, and his own nation, Israel due to his association with Achish and plundering his own people. And at the same time he was relying on the Philistines to keep him safe from King Saul. Should he fight against the man he steadfastly acknowledged as God's anointed king; or should he turn against the King of Gath, Achish, who showed David such grace and hospitality (and trust)?

It seems like in this situation no matter which way he chose to proceed he would have had blood on his hands and sin on his head. Of course this no-win dilemma was as the result of a series of less than admirable decisions, and of David's penchant for lying, deceit and self-preservation at any cost. But God had great plans for David and so as only Yehoveh can, He invisibly and unexpectedly intervened and David was miraculously relieved of having to choose between fighting Israelites and fighting Achish. But that doesn't mean there weren't terrible consequences for his actions.

Let's read about those consequences in chapter 30.

**READ 1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL CHAPTER 30 all**

Three days after being dismissed by Achish David and his men were horrified when they returned to a burnt-to-the-ground Ziklag. Nothing was left; all the women and children were missing. The Amalekites had come while David and his men were marching with Achish; they had ransacked the village. No doubt the Amalekites had been waiting for just such an opportunity for revenge after what David had been doing to them for the past year or so.

Verse 2 makes the point of saying that the Amalekites had not killed anyone, but rather they had carried them off. At first blush this seems a bit odd considering that David's methods of attacking the Amalekite people was to plunder them and then kill all the adults, male and female, ostensibly so that Achish couldn't find out anything from them about David's tactics or the amount of booty that was confiscated. Why wouldn't the Amalekites simply slaughter all of David's people as payback? Was it a kindness of sorts to merely kidnap them? Simply put the Amalekites needed to replenish their tribe since David had killed so many of them. And it was, and continues to be, common in tribal societies for one tribe to steal people from another tribe as a means of building up their own. The payback was that the Amalekites were stealing the women from the very men who had killed the Amalekite women.

Naturally David and his men were devastated; their wives and children were gone, taken away by God's #1 earthly enemy Amalek. The sad irony in all this is that had King Saul or any of the prior Israelite leaders followed Yehoveh's instruction to exterminate the Amalekites down to the last one, this would never have occurred. The first mention of the eternal order to destroy Amalek came in Moses' day. Amalek was the first to try to destroy Israel and it happened almost immediately after Israel's redemption. They had only just left Egypt and not even reached Mt. Sinai yet, when Amalek attacked.

***(Deu 25:17-19 CJB) <sup>17</sup>"Remember what 'Amalek did to you on the road as you were coming out of Egypt,***

***<sup>18</sup> how he met you by the road, attacked those in the rear, those who were exhausted and straggling behind when you were tired and weary. He did not fear God.***

***<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when ADONAI your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies in the land ADONAI your God is giving you as your inheritance to possess, you are to blot out all memory of 'Amalek from under heaven. Don't forget!***

But nearly 400 years later in Saul and David's time God had not forgotten even though Israel now had other enemies that they were more concerned with and thus had a decided ambivalence towards this command:

***CJB 1 Samuel 15:1 Sh'mu'el said to Sha'ul, "ADONAI sent me to anoint you king over his people, over Isra'el. Now listen to what ADONAI has to say.***

***2 Here 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 and women, children and babies, cows and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"***

This is the way of men. We believe that as time passes, society and culture evolves, the older ways automatically become irrelevant and thus we are no longer beholden to them. This is probably why the Bible takes every opportunity to remind us that while we might change, God never does.

I am heartsick, distressed and not just a little angry that many Jews and Christians alike have decided that in hindsight it was wrong and barbarian of God to order this enemy Amalek annihilated (or anyone else for that matter). And that Our Savior has (thankfully) decided that we need to go another way and ignore what the Father commanded. It is Amalek's descendants who continue today to want to destroy Israel and yet many believe we need to see them as the victims and give them mercy and support in God's name. Amalek lives on in spirit and in the flesh. We've talked about the Spirit of Amalek in prior lessons and it's a difficult and controversial subject because as Believers we don't like to face the realities and consequences of it. In a nutshell the spirit of Amalek is alive and well in all those who oppose Israel and God's people the Hebrews. Those who are anti-Semitic are Amalek. I'm not speaking about an opposition to some of the Israeli government's political or social policies, or to disgust at some of the Orthodox's radical and unkind behavior, or to the endemic and politically correct Israeli Jewish persecution of Jewish Believers in Yeshua. This isn't about a blanket approval of all things Jewish or of all Jewish individuals, or that they are beyond criticism. Rather I'm speaking about a fundamental bent to stand with Israel's enemies against Israel. I'm speaking of a philosophical belief that Israel is entitled to no more land than what the world decides they ought to have. I'm speaking about a denial that the Hebrews and the land of Israel are set-apart for God; and a belief that the set-apart land no longer belongs ONLY to the set-apart people.

The purpose of Armageddon is essentially so that our returning Messiah will finally do what all of Israel's leaders had been charged to do but didn't because of their own self-defined sense of justice (that was effectively in opposition to God's sense of justice). It is also because those who today stand in sympathy with the Arab and Muslim world against Israel harbor the Spirit of Amalek. And while I'm not advocating the execution of these people in our day, I am saying that those who have this attitude against Israel and the Jewish people stand in direct opposition to God and have chosen to be in harmony with Amalek. I am saying as loudly and strongly as I know how that if you attend a church or a synagogue where the leadership harbors this attitude and advocates it, get out. It is a malicious, deadly and contagious spiritual virus and you need to stay far away from it.

This same deadly virus had now attacked the future king of Israel, David, and carried off his wives and the wives and children of his followers. David's men were so bitter that many thought David needed to be stoned. Did David deserve some blame for this? Absolutely he did. It was his lying, deception, and trying to play both sides of the fence at the same time that put them all in this situation. While David was allying himself with the enemy and leading his men off on a junket to fight against God's set-apart people, the enemy stealthily came in and stole away their families. Let those who have an ear to listen, hear.

Yet David's men couldn't justifiably lay all the fault upon David; they chose to follow (they were not captives or slaves). Fortunately common sense prevailed and once the men calmed down they realized that killing David was not the answer to the problem. So what would they do? Again they looked to their leader David, and David (still maintaining that heart for God despite all of his imperfections) knew that he needed to look to his leader the God of Israel.

Verse 6 says that David strengthened himself in YHWH. Here is a pattern for us to remember and take to heart: when in times of great distress and danger the **first** thing to do before acting is to bring the matter before the Lord. Unfortunately often that's the second thing we do; first we act in our own strength and make things worse and then we seek God to straighten it out.

David called for the High Priest Avyatar so that the Urim and Thummim (that were stored in the High Priest's ephod) could be used to determine God's will. Avyatar was the offspring of Abimelech, the High Priest of Nob. I realize that no mention is made of the Urim and Thummim in this passage but it is self-evident that the two divine stones were the means of communication with God in this instance. David made a series of inquiries; the first was the most basic question of all, should he go after the Amalekites who stole their women and

children? To this Yehoveh answered in the affirmative. The next question was whether they would catch up to them, and the answer was that not only would they catch up to them but that they would recover everyone and everything.

There is an interesting (and I'm sure intentional) contrast here to the result of David's seeking God's oracle and that of Saul's attempts to do the same just a couple of chapters ago. Here God readily responds to David, but gave only silent condemnation to any of Saul's overtures. And this is because God was with David, but He was no longer with Saul.

Let me point out that the editor of 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel has formulated the words written down as God's response to David but they were not actually spoken by God. We can know that for a couple of reasons; first, the Lord did not speak directly to David as He did with Moses (and to a lesser degree to the Prophets). Second, the Urim and Thummim stones could only give binary answers: yes or no, right or left, one or the other. The addition of this line of dialogue is merely to make the story more memorable and exciting, and the essence of it is accurate. David asked these questions in some form and to them God answered, "Yes". Strengthened that the outcome was already determined and that it was to be a good outcome, David gathered his 600 men and headed south to intercept the marauding Amalekites.

After traveling about 25 miles they came to a Wadi and decided to rest for a short time. 200 of David's men were simply too exhausted to go any further. We have to remember that within the last several days they had marched from Ziklag to Afek, then after one night's rest marched back to Ziklag (3 days journey each direction). Then they arrived home tired and in need of food and there was no village and no food. Almost immediately now they formed up and hurried south at least 2 long days journey until they arrived at the **Wadi Besor** and there the weaker ones couldn't go on. Thus David left the 200 at the Wadi and went on with but 400 heartier men.

David's band of men followed the likely trail of the Amalekite raiders and stumbled across an Egyptian boy out there in the desert wilderness. He was sick and hadn't eaten for 3 days. As much as in order to try and get crucial information as to show some kindness and compassion the boy is given some food and water and he revives. He explains that he indeed was part of the Amalekite raiding party that had been plundering the Negev. He was a slave, so he was forced to be part of the group against his will. However as the Amalekites were fleeing the area he had come down ill and so they abandoned him to die in the desert.



Interestingly the boy's confession explains that the Amalekites attacked both Philistine and Israelite villages. In verse 13 where it says that they raided the Negev of the **K'riti** (the Cherethites) it is actually referring either to the Philistines or at least to their ethnic cousins. We find evidence of this in a couple of other places in the Bible.

***CJB Ezekiel 25:16 therefore,' Adonai ELOHIM says, 'I will stretch out my hand over the P'lishtim, eliminate the K'reti and destroy the rest of the seacoast peoples.***

***CJB Zephaniah 2:5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the K'reti! The word of ADONAI is against you, Kena'an, land of the P'lishtim: "I will destroy you; no one will be left."***

The Hebrew word seems to be referring to Crete, where it is generally thought that the Philistines originally migrated from. The Amalekites also plundered the area around Hebron (the Negev of Caleb) and the southern parts of Judah. They were equal opportunity desert pirates and they didn't much care whose goods they stole. So what we can understand is that as much as Amalek was the hated enemy of Israel, they were also no friend to the Philistines.

David asked the unnamed Egyptian if he could lead David's men to the Amalekites. The boy responded that if David promised to not punish him or give him back to his Amalekite master, that he would.

The boy is true to his word and verse 16 has David coming upon a group of drunken Amalekites sprawled around the desert floor and celebrating their profitable foray into the Negev. The angry and hardened army of David had little problem in decimating the unprepared and bleary-eyed Amalekites. No Amalekite had a weapon in his hand and apparently no watch had been set; so what came next was a total surprise. David waited until they succumbed to the wine and fell asleep, and he attacked them at dawn. The fighting went on until nearly sunset and the only surviving Amalekites were those who had been tending the camels (this would have been young boys). We're told that 400 escaped by riding away on those camels; this ought to give us a sense of the size of the war party. This was a large group, well over 1000 or more, so this must have been quite the scene.



The victorious David rescued every last woman and child and all the goods and animals that had been stolen from them. I can't even imagine what a joyous evening of reunion and relief that must have been. In addition to recovering their own goods, David's men also took all that the Amalekites had taken from other locations. David claimed it as his own, although I'm not so sure that was proper. Back in chapter 15 the instruction to Saul was to attack Amalek and destroy everything right down to the cattle. This was more a standing order to all Israelite leaders than it was a one-time instruction meant only for Saul. Considering that David had consulted Yehoveh and was given the instruction to go after Amalek this smacks of Holy War and the spoils of Holy War belong to God. No doubt much of what David's men retrieved from the Amalekite camp was classified as recovery of property and not spoils of war (the Lord would have had no issue with this). But what David took was indeed spoils of war.

As the happy band began their trek back north, they retraced their route to join back up with the group of 200 left at the Wadi Besor. We read in verse 21 that the men saw David coming and went to meet him, and that David asked after their peace. The CJB says that David greeted them, but it was more than a mere "hello" as the Hebrew word **sha'al** indicates. **Sha'al** means to enquire; it means David was asking about their well being as a concerned shepherd. I suspect the two groups' meeting up again was rather tense and uncomfortable (after all, many of the women and children who were recovered belonged to the group of 200 that decided to stay behind). The 400 had risked their lives for the sakes of all, while the 200 rested safely at the Wadi. I think David sensed this was not going to go well, and so he tried to smooth things over a bit.

Sure enough, several of the 400 who had rescued the women and children and their belongings felt that the 200 didn't deserve anything that was recovered (other than for their families). The Bible describes the men who had that attitude as **rah** and **belial**: evil and worthless. But David's crusader side emerges as he essentially cites the Musketeer creed of "all for one, and one for all" in response. He explains that the Lord gave them this victory over the Amalekites so the plunder should be evenly divided among all the members of the congregation: those who went and fought and those who (due to physical exhaustion) stayed behind. In my mind this lends even more credence to the possibility that in reality this was a Holy War venture in God's eyes and that David had no business accepting the Amalekite plunder as his own prize.

That said, we should notice that what the evil and worthless men were suggesting wasn't so much dividing the goods taken from the Amalekites into 400 shares instead of 600; rather it was that the only recovery that the 200 should get was their families. They shouldn't even receive the food, animals, and other items that may have belonged to them before the Amalekites too it. After all, it is made clear that David took charge of all that belonged to the Amalekites (meaning everything that was above and beyond the band's own recovered

possessions). In the end, David made sure that each family got whatever was recovered and belonged to them.

This incident became infamous and even became almost like case law. It set a precedent as to how such matters were to be addressed. Actually the Hebrew says it became a **choq** and a **mishpat**: an ordinance and a judgment. In other words (as the word **mishpat** implies) this ruling of David's was seen as appropriate justice and so it became part of the Israelite legal code that had to be followed or there was a penalty.

We will stop here and finish up this chapter next week.