

# Cornered (1 Samuel 27-28:2)

David's:

## 1. Conglomeration (22:1-2; 23:13; 24:13; 25:13; 27:2)

Mounting and pressing concerns have developed as David wanders in the wilderness of Ziph:

- A. The size of his militia has grown: David began with 400 men (22:1-2) and now has 600 (24:13) to care for.
- B. The men have "households" with them: women, children, and belongings that were alluded to previously (25:13) are now confirmed. The size of David's following may be upwards of 3,000 people (men, women, and children).
- C. David's wives: David now has Ahinoam and Abigail with him (25:43).
- D. Weariness and discouragement: months of wandering as a fugitive, compounded with shepherding concerns have become a burden. Additionally, Saul has shown no evidence of restraint. David fears he will return (24:22; 26:1, 25), and consequently, there is no end in sight.

## 2. Conversation (v.1)

- David said, "in his heart." This was a conversation that he had to himself, or with himself.
- David's fear was that Saul would one day kill him. Where did these unwholesome, carnal thoughts come from? David reverts to his earlier days of unbelief (20:3).
- Remaining in a habitual state of flight from Saul, together with the pressures of the men and their families, weakened David's propensity to think clearly and critically.
- During some period, perhaps after Saul returned to Gibeah for a second time, David's perspective changed. He no longer believes that the LORD will deliver him from all tribulation (26:24). His fearful imagination and God-less thought life has infiltrated his heart. He now believes he will "perish by the hand of Saul."

## 3. Calculation (v.2-4)

- David concludes that his only way of escape from the "hand" of Saul is by fleeing to the Philistine territory of Gath (21:10-15). His goal is simple: if he is outside of Israelite territory, Saul will not seek after him. He is correct.
- David brings his wives, Ahinoam and Abigail with him, along with his men and their households (v.2-3).
- While in Gath, David requested that a separate location be given to him and his followers. Achish agreed to this for several reasons: First, he did not want to be responsible for providing food, shelter, and clothing for all of David's cohort. Second, David has 600 armed men with him. Third, Achish is going to use David to purge Philistine enemies from the land. David is going to function as a raider or mercenary for Achish. Finally, he is more than happy to consign David and his men to a location far away from Gath. Ziklag is 25 miles southwest of Gath. This territory was originally assigned to Judah and Simeon (Josh. 19:5; 15:31) yet never conquered. The narrator adds "Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day." This section must have been written after David's and Solomon's kingship.

## 4. Consideration

- This chapter is a God-less text. There is no mention of God, or the LORD. There are no mentions of any covenant promises. There is no prayer. David does not seek the LORD's direction either through prayer (23:2), the Urim or Thummim (23:10), or a High Priest. David does not consult anyone for wisdom (19:18; 20:1-3). Samuel is dead, but what of Gad? There is no word from the LORD, nor any comment from the narrator about anything spiritual.

## 5. Contribution (v.5-11)

- David and his men will live in Gath for sixteen months (27:7) and conduct raids against all enemies of Philistia, except Israel. The Geshurites, Girizites and Amalekites all dwelled in southern Judah and Egyptian border.

While in Ziklag, David exercised questionable policies that demonstrate unbelief:

- A. David and his men killed all Geshurite, Girizite and Amalekite men and women they encountered:
  - Even though these other nations were not mentioned in the *ban (herem)*, the Amalekites were to be killed (Ex. 17:15-16; Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15:1-3).
  - All other nations not specifically mentioned in the *ban* (Deut.20: 10-18) were to be offered terms of peace or driven from the land of Canaan (Num. 33:50-52). The Geshurites and Girizites should not have been slaughtered, but instead driven from the land.
- B. David and his men received no additional revelation or exceptions to the *ban*:
  - If David and his men are continuing the LORD's command to Saul (1 Sam. 15:1-3), no animals should have been left alive. The LORD must provide exceptions to the *ban* (Josh. 6:17-7:26). David has received no direction from the LORD or any prophet.
- C. David's motivation, according to the narrator, was not obedience to the Torah, but deception. David removed all "loose ends" (v.9-11). "Negeb" are all regions in Judah. The tribute of sheep, oxen, donkeys, camels, and garments were not from the Negeb (residents of Judah) but the three nations that lived in Judah and surrounding areas. David developed a winsome stratagem and has successfully duped Achish.
- D. Raids in the Near East typically did not consist of slaughtering, but of theft.

\*While David refused to touch God's anointed (24:26) or kill Nabal (25), David and his men have complete ease of conscience killing anyone who would otherwise inform Achish of what David is really doing. While the argument can be made for slaughtering of the Amalekites, no justification can be made for doing the same to the Geshurites and Girizites.

## 6. Complication (v.12-28:1-2)

- David is so cunning and crafty that Achish is left in the dark on David's true motives for his occupation in Ziklag and movements to strengthen Judah.
- After sixteen months of David presenting "evidence" that he has been attacking Philistia's enemies, Achish is convinced that David has "burned all of his bridges." He believes that David has nowhere to go, including back to Israel (Judah).
- Achish is still unaware that David has endeared himself to Judah, for the Geshurites, Girizites, and Amalekites were enemies of Judah as well!
- Achish believes that he has the advantage over David (23:27). He would have been aware of the drama between Saul and David in the wilderness. When David arrived in Gath for the second time (21:10-15; 27:2), Achish thinks that David has no other option than unite with him to strengthen the Philistine agenda. Achish believes he has the upper hand.
- David has hoodwinked Achish so severely that Achish asks David to be his bodyguard (v.2). The Hebrew for "bodyguard" is "keeper of the head." How ironic! (17:51, 57).
- Convinced that David has compromised his good standing in Israel, Achish tells David and his men to join the Philistines in the raid against Judah. What will David do?
- This is another low point in David's wandering. David is the LORD's anointed king (16:13) who has just become the life servant of a Philistine king, who is warring against the very nation of which David was anointed to be king.
- David will show Achish "what his servant can do" (18:2).