

10. The Saul / David Conflict Comes to an End

(1 Samuel 27–31)

3.11 David Enters Achish's Service (1 Samuel 27:1–28:2)

- 27:1-7 - This is the second time David flees to Gath (see 1 Sam 21:10). This time the circumstances are different as he enters as an “outlaw” and is received favorably by Achish.

- 27:8-12 - ON David's Raids:

“David and his men went up and raided” (v. 8) three different groups. God had given the land of “the Geshurites,” located in Judah’s tribal allotment, to Israel; however, Israel had failed to take control of that region (cf. Josh 13:1–2). The Lord had also commanded Israel to eliminate “the Amalekites” (cf. Exod 17:15–16; Deut 25:17–19). Saul had failed to accomplish the task (cf. chap. 15), but David heeded the Torah mandate. “The Girzites” are otherwise unknown, but like the Geshurites and Amalekites, “had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt” and thus were partially in territory that legitimately belonged to Judah.

As such, the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites were under the ban commanded by the Torah (Deut 20:16–17); none of them was to be spared by the Israelites in warfare. David, the man after the Lord’s heart (cf. 12:24; Acts 13:22), was careful to follow the prescribed rules of warfare. Thus, whenever “he attacked an area” (v. 9) inhabited by these peoples, “he did not leave a man or woman alive.” However, he did take the booty—“sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes,” part of which he presented “to Achish” on his periodic visits to Gath.” [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 261–262.]

- 27:10 - David’s replies to Achish about where he was raiding are both **cunning** and **deceptive**, giving the idea that he was raiding Israel!! David deceives Achish to get his trust. Even his words in 28:1 are ambiguous: “You’ll see for yourself what your servant can do....”
- 28:2 - **Achish** makes David is “bodyguard” - in Hebrew this is “keeper for my head.” David had already “kept” another head from a resident of Gath: Goliath (17:54)
- **TENSION:** The narrator puts us in suspense to see if David will side with the Philistines to fight against Israel or will he do something else.

3.12 **Saul Consults the Medium at Endor** (1 Samuel 28:3–25)

- 28:3-6 - Saul first tries to get insight from the LORD through legitimate means, but the LORD is silent.
- **Saul's final Offense:**
“This section presents what another writer considered perhaps the darkest moment in Saul’s life, his deliberate violation of one of the most serious prohibitions in the Torah (cf. 1 Chr 10:13–14). By turning to a medium to receive guidance for his life, Saul committed a capital offense (cf. Lev 20:6). Less than twenty-four hours after he did so, he was dead—a sobering reminder of the swiftness and surety of the Lord’s punishment for any who violate the divine word.”
[Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 264]

28:8 - **Divine for me....** - Samuel has already equate Saul’s earlier rebellion to the sin of divination (see 1 Sam 15:23).

1 Chronicles 10:13–14 “So Saul died for his breach of faith. He broke faith with the Lord in that he did not keep the command of the Lord, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance. He did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse.”

- 28:10 - Saul foolishly makes an oath “on the LORD’s life” that the medium would not be punished even though that directly contradicts the LORD’s will and instruction. Saul is setting the LORD against Himself!!!!

Leviticus 20:27 “A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them.”

- 28:24-25 - There is probably a subtle allusion to David and Abigail here: Saul is fed by an unfaithful woman under the curse of the LORD whereas David is nourished and refreshed by a wise woman under the blessing of the LORD.

3.13 **David Saved from Fighting Against Israel** (1 Samuel 29)

- 29:3 - The Philistines had already been betrayed by another group of Hebrews (see 1 Sam 14:21)
- 29:6-7 - Achish / Saul
“Ironies abound in Achish’s relationship with David. A study of the author’s portrayal of the Philistine king suggests that Achish was

intended to serve simultaneously as a type and a foil for Saul. Both kings made David their personal bodyguard (cf. 22:14; 28:2); both were impressed with David, particularly his fighting abilities, yet both ended up removing him from the ranks of their armies; both were responsible for David's making his abode in southern Judah; and both badly misjudged David. Saul considered David his mortal enemy, yet he was in fact his most loyal subject; Achish considered David his most trusted subject, yet he was in fact his most dangerous enemy. Both kings also made inappropriate use of oaths taken in the Lord's name (cf. 14:39; 29:6). The parallels between Saul and Achish suggest that Saul was indeed a king "such as all the nations have" (cf. 8:5).

[Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 272]

- 29:8 - Again, David's response to Achish is **ambiguous** - which King has his true loyalty?
- **What's the point of this episode?** If our we are correct that the editors of Samuel were in part shaping the material to show that David had not usurped the throne from Saul, the current narrative would show that David had nothing to do with Saul's death. When Saul dies, David and his men were a hundred miles away destroying Amalekites, fulfilling what Saul had neglected (see 15:18–19; Exod 17:15–16; Deut 25:17–19).

3.14 David Raids the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30)

- 30:2 - taken captive... - Kidnapping is punishable by death under the Torah (Exodus 21:16)
- 30:7 - This episode is set against Saul's consulting the medium at Endor. While Saul is practicing forbidden occultism, David is inquiring of the LORD.

By the end of this episode, Saul and all his heirs will be dead, whereas David's heirs will be restored to him. It is the end of the Curse / Blessing cycle in which Saul's faithlessness brings ruin but David's faithfulness brings favor.

- 30:11-12 - The detail of David's treatment of the Egyptian shows that even in extreme duress, he is till mindful of the Torah instruction on the treatment of foreigners in the Land (see Exod 22:21; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 23:7)
- 30:17 - David's destruction of the Amalekites is almost complete. They would not appear as opponents to Israel again until the time of Hezekiah, about 300 years later (716–687 B.C. see 1 Chr 4:43)

- 30:23-25 - David's distribution of the spoils of war to all show his mind was aligned with the grace and provision of the LORD for all his people. Jesus' parable of the "workers in the vineyard" in Matthew 20:1-16 contains similar ideas.
- 30:26-31 - David's "present" (*blessing* in Hebrew) to the people and Elders of Judah in part reveals his emerging Messianic status: he has fought the enemies of the LORD and is now providing blessing to the LORD's people.

3.15 **Saul's Reign and Line Comes to an End**(1 Samuel 31)

- 31:1-7 - Just as Samuel had just predicted hours earlier (1 Sam 28:19), Saul and all his family came to an end.
- 31:4 - Saul's death is paralleled to that of Abimelech Judges 9:54 who was also unfaithful.
- 31:11 - Jabesh Gilead
"Though the efforts of the citizens of Jabesh Gilead were considerable and apparently exceeded those of any other Israelite city, they were thoroughly appropriate. After all, the city had once been rescued from humiliation at the hands of foreigners by Saul's efforts on their behalf (cf. 11:1-11). In addition, Saul may have had genealogical ties with individuals within Jabesh Gilead (cf. Judg 21:10-12; 2 Sam 21:12-14). David would later commend the Gileadites for their heroic act of loyalty to Saul (cf. 2 Sam 2:5-7). [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 284]
- 31:13 - the Tamarisk Tree - a call back to 22:6 where Saul had conducted royal meetings under this type of tree.