

# Bible Stories

## THE WILDERNESS YEARS

1 Samuel 23:14-15

December 03, 2022

The stories of the **Wilderness Years** cover 9 chapters in 1 Samuel. Here are the highlights.

After Jonathan and David parted, David fled to Nob, where the Tabernacle resided. He went to see Ahimelech, the high priest. Ahimelech was surprised to see David and asked why he was there. David lied, "*The king has sent me on a secret mission,*" then asked if Ahimelech had any food.

The only food available was the consecrated bread from the Tabernacle.

Ahimelech fed David and his men and gave David the sword of Goliath, which was being stored in the Tabernacle. Doeg, the Edomite, saw the whole thing..... Next, David:

- Went to Achish, king of Gath – one of the 5 Philistine cities – for refuge, but was not welcomed, so pretended to be insane to escape.
- Began to collect men dissatisfied with Saul's leadership.
- Took his family to the king of Moab to protect them from Saul.
- Returned to Judah at the insistence of Gad, the prophet.

Saul was at Gibeah. He accused the men of Benjamin of conspiring against him and siding with David, which, of course, they denied.

Doeg stepped up, "*I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of Yahweh for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.*" - 1 Samuel 22:9-10

Saul sent for Ahimelech and his family and accused them of conspiring against him.

**Ahimelech:** *Isn't David faithful to you, the captain of your guard and honored in your house? I have no idea what you are talking about!*

**Saul:** *You are lying! You and your entire family will die today!*

None of Saul's men were willing to kill the high priest and his family, but Doeg had no such scruples. He killed the 85 men who stood before Saul, but he didn't stop there. He went to Nob and destroyed the entire city and everyone in it. Only Abiathar, one of Ahimelech's sons, escaped and fled to David.

When David heard the story, he took full responsibility and invited Abiathar to join him, promising protection.

Meanwhile the Philistines attacked Keilah. David put the matter before Yahweh and was told to go up against the Philistines. His men were afraid, so David inquired again and was told the same thing – "*Go to Keilah, I will deliver the Philistines into your hands.*"

David obeyed ---- The Philistines were defeated ---- Keilah was saved.

Told of David's victory, Saul gathered his army and headed for Keilah - intending to lay siege to the city.

When David learned that Saul was on his way, he sought guidance from Yahweh. As a result, David and his men were already in the wilderness of Ziph by the time Saul arrived at Keilah. Saul went home and David remained in Ziph.

The Ziphites decided it was in their best interest to turn David over to Saul. With their intel in hand, Saul went in hot pursuit of David until a messenger came with word that the Philistines were raiding in Israel. Saul called off his search and returned home. David went to the strongholds En Gedi.

When word came that David was in the Wilderness of En Gedi, Saul took his 3,000 men and went on the hunt once again.

On the way, Saul took the opportunity to relieve himself in a cave. David and his men were hiding in the same cave. (See Ps 57 & 142)

David's men suggested this was a great time to get rid of Saul, **"Clearly Yahweh has given him into your hand,"** so David snuck over and cut off the edge of Saul's robe, but felt immediate guilt for **"Raising his hand against Yahweh's anointed,"** and forbade his men from doing anything further. Saul left the cave – knowing nothing of what had just transpired – and went on his way. David went to the mouth of the cave and called after Saul:

**David:** *Your majesty! Why do you listen to people who say I am trying to kill you? I could have killed you just now while you were in the cave, but I didn't! See father, I have a piece of your robe!*

**Saul:** *Is that you David, my son? You are more righteous than I am because you have dealt well with me even though I've been trying to kill you. Now I know that you will be king and the kingdom of Israel will be established through you.*

Saul went home but David returned to the strongholds in the wilderness.

An aside ---- Samuel dies – all Israel mourns his death – he is buried at his house in Ramah.

**Chapter 25:2-43** is the story of David, Nabal and Abigail. Here are the resulting consequences of that story: Nabal dropped dead and David married Abigail. He now has 2 wives: Abigail and Ahinoam {Michal was given to Palti after David escaped into the wilderness}.

The Ziphites must not have liked David, because they reported to Saul that David was in hiding on the hill of Hachilah (**see Ps. 54**).

Saul got his 3,000 men together and headed out. David came across Saul's encampment and that night, while Saul and his men slept, David and 3 men snuck into the camp.

Again, David's men encouraged him to **"end this,"** but David remained steadfast, **"No! You cannot strike Yahweh's anointed without incurring guilt. Yahweh will take care of it. I will not be responsible for killing Yahweh's anointed king. Take his spear and water jug and let's get out of here".**

David went to the top of a hill and called out to Abner (Saul's cousin and general):

**David:** *Hey, Abner! I thought you were a great man in Israel. Why then, didn't you guard the king? Someone has snuck into the camp to kill your lord the king. You deserve to die, you and your men, for not guarding the king as you should have. If you don't believe me, look around. Do you see the king's spear or water jug that lay near his head?*

**Saul:** *Is that you David, my son?*

**David:** *Yes – Why are you chasing me? What have I done to you?*

**Saul:** *I have sinned! Come back with me; I will not try to harm you again because you did not kill me. I have acted foolishly.*

David, however, still did not trust Saul {for obvious reasons}, so declined the invitation.

**"Saul is going to kill me one day. My best option is to go to the Land of the Philistines,"** David thought ---- he did not seek Yahweh's will in this situation and there will be consequences.

David took his wives and 600 men and went again to Achish, king of Gath, and requested asylum:

**Akish:** *You can have Ziklag ----* David lived at Ziklag until the death of Saul.

- **1 Samuel 27:12** - Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever."

1 year and 4 months later, the Philistines went to war against Israel – what's new – and Achish informed David that he would be fighting on the side of the Philistines. David reluctantly agreed – he would fight against his own nation.

This time, however, Yahweh chose to intervene.

- **Ellen White {PP 690.2}:** David was caused to feel that he had missed his path. Far better would it have been for him to find refuge in God's strong fortresses than with the avowed enemies of Jehovah and His people. But the Lord in His great mercy did not punish this error of His servant by leaving him to himself in his distress and perplexity; for though David, losing his grasp on divine power, had faltered and turned aside from the path of strict integrity, it was still the purpose of his heart to be true to God. While Satan and his host were busy helping the adversaries of God, the angels of the Lord were working to deliver David from the peril into which he had fallen. Heavenly messengers moved upon the Philistine princes to protest against the presence of David and his force with the army in the approaching conflict.

Achish sent David away and he returned to Ziklag.

Meanwhile..... The Amalekites raided into the Negev. They destroyed Ziklag and took captive all the women and children, including David's wives. Suddenly, David found himself in a precarious situation. Those who remained declared that David was responsible for the destruction of their town and there was even talk of stoning him.

This time, David consulted Yahweh:

**David:** *Should I pursue after this band of raiders?*

**Yahweh:** *Pursue them, for you will certainly overtake them, and you will certainly rescue the captives.*

David took his 600 men and pursued the Amalekites. With the assistance of a nearly dead Egyptian, they found wandering around in the desert, David and 400 of his men {200 were left behind, because they were exhausted} found the Amalekites, ***"Spread out over the surface of all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all of the abundant plunder which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah."***

David attacked at dusk. The victory went to him and all the wives, children and plunder were recovered. Nothing was missing.

Meanwhile at Jezreel..... Saul, his sons and the army of Israel are fighting an entirely different battle. Most of them will not survive.

### **What do we do with this story?**

Even though Saul pursued him relentlessly, Yahweh protected David throughout the wilderness years. For the most part David relied on Yahweh and put his loyalty to Him above all other considerations.

However, there is one glaring moment when David decided that he had only 1 option available to him without seeking Yahweh's guidance or permission. That one choice created 2 very serious and unforeseen consequences and other people paid a high price for David's shortsightedness.

Sometimes we make a choice with this thought in mind, ***"It's easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission."*** We either don't know what to do, but also don't want to take the time to ask **OR** we know that the answer will be contrary to what we want to do. So, we do what **WE** want, knowing we may have to seek forgiveness if caught out. That is the sin of presumption.

I believe that David falls into the ***"don't know what to do"*** category. He felt trapped and pressed and responsible for all the people who followed him and he needed to decide **NOW**..... In that moment he forgot all Yahweh had done for him and he made a disastrous choice –

It is always better, when moments of crisis arise, to take a deep breath and consult the One who sees all and knows all. We only see limited options, but in God there is always an option we have not considered.