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Do Not Lay a Hand on ADONAI's Anointed
First Samuel 26: 1-12

Do not lay a hand on ADONAI's anointed DIG: Compare this passage and David's encounter with Sha'ul in the cave. What are the differences? How has YHVH humbled Sha'ul? Exalted David? Given this setting, how would you have responded to David's invitation in verse 6? Why did David turn down Abishai's advice? What evidence do we have that ADONAI was with David? Why had the LORD twice delivered Sha'ul into David's hands this way? Would Ha'Shem really have been angry if David had killed Sha'ul?

REFLECT: How hard is it for you to wait on ADONAI before you act? Failing to see ADONAI act on your behalf, are you tempted to take matters into your own hands? In what area? Have you gotten ahead of the LORD in the past? How did that work out? How did it change you? What have you learned? How can you help others?

1012 BC

Since **Chapter 16**, the narrative has been shaped so that **Sha'ul** and **David** are on a collision course. But in the end, the confrontation between them has an odd settlement. For a long stretch of the narrative, **Sha'ul** is the stalker seeking out **David**; **David** is the one stalked, who must always seek escape. Here, however, **their** roles are reversed. Abruptly and unexpectedly, **Sha'ul** is the one being hunted and **David** is the hunter. This reversal is done very skillfully. **David**, we know is sure to succeed. The chase must come to an end. But we also learn that **he** is unwilling to seize **his** crown, **his** unavoidable success, with violence.

The sheer intensity of **Chapter 26** surpasses that of **Chapter 24**. This is the last meeting and last exchange between the antagonists who have become deadly rivals. **Sha'ul** will appear again only in a secret, disastrous meeting (**to see link click Bv – Sha'ul and the Medium at Endor**) and in **his** own death scene (see **Bz – Sha'ul Takes His Own Life**). In terms of its power and significance, **Chapter 26** culminates **Sha'ul's** part in **David's** story.[157]

The Second Betrayal by the Ziphites: The Ziphites went to Sha'ul at Gibeah. Once again we see that there was an active betrayal on **their** part. They were related to Caleb **(First Chronicles 2:42)**, so being members of the tribe of **Judah**, they should have been loyal to **David**. But hoping to gain **the king's** approval, **they** betrayed **David** for a second time. **And they** said: **Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?** This time **Sha'ul** is so desperate that **he** did not send **the Ziphites** back to scout out the territory **(First Samuel 23:19-20)**, this time **he** went **himself** to finish the job.

Not much had changed in **Sha'ul** since **his** last appearance. Notice how ready **he** was to commit evil. Given **Sha'ul's** words at the end of **his** prior meeting with **David** (see **Bj – David Spares Sha'ul's Life**), we might have expected **the king** to ignore the intelligence and send **the Ziphites** away with a warning to leave **David** alone. Yet exactly the opposite happened. Hadn't **Sha'ul** figured out by then that **Ha'Shem** wasn't going to allow **him** to take **David's** life? No . . . **his** sin had blinded **him**! **So Sha'ul went down** from the high ground at Gibeah **to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David** and **his** six hundred men**. Sha'ul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David** was already far ahead of **him**, for **his** spies had located **Sha'ul's** camp**. David,** sensing **that Sha'ul had followed him there, sent out scouts** to confirm the fact **and learned that Sha'ul had definitely arrived (First Samuel 26:1-4).**

David Spares Sha'ul's Life Again: This would be the final encounter between the two adversaries. When **David** was about 28 years old, **he** took the initiative and **went to the place where Sha'ul had camped.** From a distant vantage point **he saw where Sha'ul and Abner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Sha'ul was lying inside the** heart of **the camp, with the army encamped around him. David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite to go with him.** There were still remnants of **the Hittite** empire in the Land, in fact, centuries earlier Abraham bought **the cave of Machpelah** from **Ephron the Hittite** (see the commentary **Genesis Fu – Abraham said: I am an Alien Among You, Sell Me Some Property So I can Bury My Dead**), and **David** had **Hittites** in **his** army such as **Uriah the Hittite (Second Samuel 11:2b-3). David** also **asked Abishai** (the **brother of Joab** who would become the commander of **David's** army) **son of Zeruiah** (half sister of **David**)**, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Sha'ul?"** So these two were **David's** nephews **(First Chronicles 2:16)**. This is the first mention of these two, but especially **Joab** will play an important role in **David's**

career as king **(First Chronicles 26:5-6a)**.[158]

Far from being intimidated by the impossible odds, **David** worked out a plan for which **he** needed a companion. The challenge was, **"Who will go down into the camp with me to Sha'ul?" Abishai** said: **I'll go with you. So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Sha'ul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear, the** symbol of **his** authority, **stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him. Abishai,** who was convinced that it was **God's** will that **he** kill **Sha'ul** and put an end to **his** selfish rule, **said to David, "Today YHVH has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won't** need to **strike him twice." Abishai** knew of **David's** oath not to harm **Sha'ul**, so **he** volunteered to do the dirty work **himself (First Samuel 26:6b-8)**.



But David commanded **Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless. . . ADONAI forbid that I should raise my hand against ADONAI's anointed" (First Samuel 26:9** and **11a CJB)! David** realized that it would be sinful to take personal revenge against **Sha'ul**, a lesson that **he** had learned from **Abigail** (see **Bn – Abigail Acted Quickly**). **Abishai's** brazen offer to pin **Sha'ul** to the earth with **his spear** showed all the signs of vengeance of **Sha'ul's** earlier attempts to pin **David** to the palace wall with the very same weapon. Only **Abishai's** was an act of self-preservation while **Sha'ul's** act was a selfish act of hatred.

David had learned from **his** experience with the foolish and greedy **Nabal** that **he**

shouldn't try to force **God's** hand. In **his** anger over **Nabal's** insults, **David** had been on the verge of committing mass murder until **Nabal's** gracious wife **Abigail** intervened (see **Bm – Nabal Offends David**). Afterwards, **YHVH** took care of **Nabal** in a much better way than **David** ever could have. **David** learned from this experience to wait upon **the LORD** in the confident hope that **He** would work things out justly and wisely. **Then David added, "As ADONAI lives, ADONAI will strike him down, or the day will come for him to die, or he will go down to battle and be swept away (First Samuel 26:10 CJB).**

But now, David did what **he** came to do, an act the bloodthirsty **Abishai** could hardly appreciate, saying: **We'll take the spear by his head and the jug of water, and get out of here.** Previously in **the cave** at **En-Gedi**, **David** had taken the corner of **Sha'ul's** robe as a symbol of **Sha'ul's** authority, but here **David took the spear and the water jug from Sha'ul's head and got away. The spear** was prominent everywhere in **Sha'ul's** life, as defense, as safety, as an expression of anger, and as a sign of authority. Now all that was in **David's** hand.[159] **Nobody saw or knew about it, and no one awoke, because they were all asleep – a deep** supernatural **sleep from the LORD** (Hebrew: *tardeimat ADONAI*) **had fallen over them (First Samuel 26:11b-12 CJB).** Therefore, **David** and **Abishai**, unseen and unheard, vanished into the night.

David's growth in grace involved his awareness of **YHVH's** goodness, justice and wisdom. Knowing that he served an omnipotent, sovereign, faithful **God** who had promised **his** salvation, **David** chose to wait on **ADONAI** to find a solution in dealing with **Sha'ul** rather than coming up with **his** own. The moral and spiritual authority so necessary to **David's** kingdom would have been impossible with **Sha'ul's** blood on **his** hands. **David** reasoned that if **Ha'Shem** intended for **him** to be **king**, and if **Sha'ul's** wickedness stood in the way of **his** reign, then **the LORD** would take action against **Sha'ul**.

Rather than taking matters into our own hands when confronted with a hostile situation, **God's** people are to wait upon **the LORD** in prayerful humility, refraining from anger and violent retribution. **Put your hope in ADONAI, be strong, and let your heart take courage! Yes, put your hope in ADONAI (Psalm 27:14 CJB)**.