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Sha'ul Promises Not to Harm David
First Samuel 26: 13-25

Sha'ul promises not to harm David DIG: What was the penalty for Abner not protecting Sha'ul? Why didn't David call Sha'ul "my father" as he had done before? What did David mean when he said that people had said to him, "Go, serve other gods?" What was David's point when he compared himself to a flea and a partridge? Was Sha'ul sincere in his confession? Did it matter? In what way were Sha'ul's words, God's words concerning David?

REFLECT: How can we tell the difference between true repentance and mere emotion? Why do we need to know this? In what area of your life do you need to be comforted with this reminder: The LORD rewards righteousness and faithfulness? Where is your faithfulness being tested? Describe one of your "desert experiences" from the past. Are you in one right now? What do you hope to learn from this one?

1012 BC

Throughout **First Samuel**, we have seen **David** contrasted to **King Sha'ul**. From the start, **David** was intended to be **ADONAI's** replacement for **the apostate leader (First Samuel 13:14).** In this chapter, we see them together for the last time . . . **Sha'ul** declining into **his** depravity and **David** growing in **God's** grace. On these respective courses, time has only served to widen the gap between **them**. Imagine how great the gulf is when advanced into eternity! The real difference, of course, was **their** respective relationship with **the LORD**, which set them on **their** different paths. Our standing with **ADONAI** is what matters to each of us. A relatively moral person who is a stranger to **God's** grace is bound to move in a godless direction, if only in his or her own heart. However, a relatively immoral person who comes to faith in **Christ**, is bound to become more and more holy over time.[160]

David's Message to Abner: Then David and **his** nephew **crossed over to the**

other side and stood on top the hill opposite **the hill of Hakilah some distance away** (**to see link click Bq – Do Not Lay a Hand on ADONAI's Anointed**)**. There was a wide space between them** so **David** could not be easily caught**. He called out to the army** to waken **them**, **and** specifically **called Abner, Sha'ul's** general (and thus by association to **the king** himself), by name, taunting **him, "Aren't you going to answer me, Abner?"** After waking up, **Abner** replied: **Who are you who calls to the king? Abner's** snooty response is only an invitation for **David's** sharp and baiting speech. In a few words, **David** managed to honor **Sha'ul**, to take **Abner** seriously, and yet to ridicule **him**.

David said: **You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Isra'el? Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. What you have done is not good. As surely as ADONAI lives, you and your men must die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head (First Samuel 26:13-16)?** The absence of **the spear and water jug** was evidence enough that someone had indeed been close enough to **the king** to have killed **him**. So **Abner**, whose responsibility it was to protect **the king**, was guilty. **Abner** could not know, of course, that **his** failure was due to the **deep** supernatural **sleep sent by YHVH (First Samuel 26:12b CJB). ADONAI** was with **David**, and **Abner** was sure to fail. **Sha'ul's** general stood indicted, and was reduced to silence.[161]

David's Message to Sha'ul: David was careful not to humiliate **Sha'ul** in the presence of **his** men, although **Sha'ul** couldn't easily escape the embarrassment of the situation. **He recognized David's voice** because it was still too dark to recognize **his** face and figure **and** said: **Is that your voice, David my son?** But **David** didn't **call him "my father"** as **he** had done before **(First Samuel 24:11). He** replied: **Yes it is, my lord the king. And he added, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words.** Had **David's** suffering come from the hand of **God** or the hands of **men**? **If ADONAI has incited you against me, then may He accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD!** If **David** had broken the commandments of the Torah, then **he** was willing to bring a sacrifice and have **his** sins forgiven. But if **Sha'ul** was treating **David** like a criminal because of the lies **his people** had told **him**, then **they** would have to pay for **their** sins.

They had driven David from **the Land**, the very **inheritance** that **YHVH** had

given **his** family, and if **David** moved to other lands, how could **he** worship **ADONAI** away from the priesthood and the ark of the Covenant?[162] It was as if **Sha’ul** was saying: **Go, serve other gods.** Consequently, **David** pleaded: **Now do not let my blood fall to the ground** (to die a violent death) **far from the presence of ADONAI** outside **the Land,** away from **the** Sh’khinah **glory. The rabbis teach that the God of Isra’el could only be properly worshiped in the Land of Isra’el; hence, banishment was equivalent to his being told to go and serve other gods. The king of Isra’el has come out to look for a** single **flea – as one hunts a partridge in the mountains.** This was an undignified pursuit, hardly worthy of the dignity of **the king of Isra’el (First Samuel 26:17-20). The species of partridge common in the Holy Land tries to save itself by running, rather than by flight, and is continuously chased until, when fatigued, it is killed by sticks thrown along the ground.**



Sha’ul’s Promise: Once again **Sha’ul** lapsed into one of **his** sentimental moods and confessed: **I have sinned. Come back** to the palace of Gibeah**, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Sha’ul** admitted that **he**, like **his** alter ego Nabal (see **Bm – Nabal Offends David**), had **acted like a fool and had been terribly wrong (First Samuel 26:21).** In this contrite state of mind, **Sha’ul** wanted **David** to return, however **David** had learned **his** lesson – **Sha’ul** couldn’t be trusted under any circumstances. Therefore, **he** submitted **Sha’ul** to the indignity of having to send a soldier to fetch **his spear**.

David’s Response: David offered to return **Sha’ul’s spear,** the symbol of death, but not **the water jug**, the symbol of life.[163] **“Here’s the king’s spear,” David answered. “Let one of your young men come over and get it. YHVH rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. David** ignored **Sha’ul’s** invitation to return to the palace. **He** had no reason to trust **him**. **God**

would judge **Sha’ul**. **The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on ADONAI’s anointed. As surely as I valued your life today, so may YHVH value my life and deliver me from all trouble (First Samuel 26:22-24). David** had spared **Sha’ul’s** life, and **he** knew that **Ha’Shem** would reward **him** for what **he** had done. **ADONAI, who dispenses judgment to the peoples, vindicate me, ADONAI, according to my righteousness and as my integrity deserves (Psalm 7:8 CJB).** At this point **David** didn’t need anything from **Sha’ul**, only from **YHVH**. **Sha’ul**, in fact, had become irrelevant.[164]

The Final Separation of Sha’ul and David: Sha’ul here is a pathetic figure as **he** pronounced a blessing on **David** and foresaw **his** many successes, which foreshadowed **Sha’ul’s** own death. **Then Sha’ul,** resigned to **his** destiny, **said to David, “May you be blessed** of **God** and protected by **Him; David my son, you will do great things and surely triumph.” So David went on his way, and Sha’ul returned home (First Samuel 26:25).** Nothing had changed, **Sha’ul** headed off to ultimate disgrace and death, and **David** to ultimate **glory** and victory. The two would never see each other again. **David** was about 28 years old at that time. One day **he** would look back on those difficult years and see in **his** painful experiences only the **goodness and mercy** of **the LORD** when **he** wrote: **Goodness and mercy will pursue me all the days of my life; and I will live in the house of ADONAI forever (Psalm 23:6).**