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David Among the Philistines
First Samuel 27:1 to 28:2
and First Chronicles 12:1-22

David among the Philistines DIG: Given King Achish's last encounter with David, how do you think he felt about David's arrival and settlement in Gath? Why does David desire to move to Philistia? What was David's motive for totally annihilating those whom he raided? Was David justified in raiding the outlying towns (First Samuel 15:2-3)? In what ways did David deceive Achish (First Samuel 28:1-2)? What was the result?

REFLECT: David escapes Sha'ul only to land in Achish's lap. When has an escape play of yours turned into a similar "out-of-the-pan-into-the-fire" experience? What good, if any, came of the fiery situation? What are you getting away with right now (at home, work, school or social setting) that you fear someone might blow the whistle on? What long-standing agreement with the Lord remains unfulfilled in your life?

1012-1011 BC

In reality, the story of the rise of **David** continues beyond **Sha'ul's** death in **Chapter 31** and through the accounts of **David's** elimination of other rivals to **his** divinely granted rule over **Isra'el** in **Second Samuel Chapters 1** through **5**. At the same time, however, there is a distinct literary break (**to see link click Bv – Sha'ul and the Medium at Endor**), which begins the narrative that describes **Sha'ul's** final hours. So the scene depicting **David's** escape to the land of **the Philistines** is a convenient point to highlight **David's** rise and **Sha'ul's** decline.[165]

It was with a measure of desperation that **David** felt that **he** was prepared to consider approaching the very **enemies he** had successfully fought on **Isra'el's** behalf, and offer **them his** services. Not that **he** had any intention of turning traitor to **his** beloved **Y'hudah**, but **he** would have to appear to do so in order to reassure **his Philistine** allies. This was not **David's** first attempt to enlist **Philistine** protection (see **Aw – David at Gath**), but that effort would not have helped **him** on

this second attempt. This time the situation was very different.[166]

God's name is not mentioned either in **First Samuel 27:1** to **28:2**, or in **First Samuel 31**. This suggests that **Sha'ul** had entered his final battle against **the Philistines** without **YHVH's** assistance (ominously in **28:6**), and that **David** did not consult **ADONAI** (maybe believing that **he** could not do so because **he w**as no longer in **Isra'el**, **his** homeland, see the comments on **First Samuel 26:19-20a**) when **he** decided to escape to **Philistine** territory.[167]

The Reason for the Fight: Even though **Sha'ul** had promised not to harm **him** (see **Br – Sha'ul Promises Not to Harm David**), **David** still did not trust **the king**. **So he thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Sha'ul." He** obviously didn't believe that **Sha'ul** had repented. **"The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines."** This sojourn to **Gath** would end **his** running from **Sha'ul**, and **he** would shortly become **king** over all **Isra'el**. **Then Sha'ul will give up searching for me anywhere in Isra'el, and I will slip out of his hand (First Samuel 27:1). David** was immortal until **God's** purpose for **him** had been fulfilled. **YHVH** had already promised him that **he** would be **king**.

So David and six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maok king of Gath. David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. When Sha'ul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him (First Samuel 27:2a-4). This implied that it was **David's** move **to Gath** that stopped **Sha'ul** dead in **his** tracts. It also showed that **Sha'ul's** second change of heart was as temporary as **his** first change of heart.

Ziklag: After living with **Achish** at **Gath** probably for a month or two, **David** asked **Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of your country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" David** wanted to be away from the watchful eye of **the Philistines**, and to avoid assimilation with **the Philistines**. **He** still saw **himself** as a loyal **Israelite**. **So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag.** Within the territory controlled by **Gath**, **he** goes to **his** final stopping place before moving back into **the Land**, which was **Ziklag**. Originally it was assigned to the tribe of **Y'hudah (Joshua 15:31)**. But they did not occupy it and **the Philistines** retained it. **Ziklag** was in the southeast corner of **Gath's** territory, and was far

enough away from the heart of **Philistine** territory that it gave **him** an opportunity to carry out **his** own agenda without being discovered. **And it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.** This shows that the books of **Samuel** were written sometime after the division of the Kingdom.[168] **David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months (First Samuel 27:5-7). David** was about 28-29 years old during that time and lived sufficiently long in **Ziklag** to build up relationships with Israelites living in the far south **(First Samuel 30:26-31)**.

These were the men who had been with **David** for the sixteen months that **he** lived in **Philistine** territory **while he was banished from the presence of Sha'ul. They were among the warriors who helped him in battle; they were armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed. They were from the tribe of Benjamin,** which was **Sha'ul's tribe**, and the defection of some of **his** men to **David** was a sure sign that the pendulum had swung against **the** faithless **king**. Even though **they** were **Sha'ul's** fellow **tribesmen, they** recognized that **YHVH** had chosen faithful **David**. **Ahiezer the Benjaminite chief and Joash the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Berakah, Jehu the Anathothite, and Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty warrior among the Trinity** (see **Ej – David's Mighty Warriors**)**; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah and Shephatiah the Haruphite; Elkanah, Ishiah, Azarel, Joezar and Jashobeam the Korahites; and Joelah and Zeadiah the sons of Jeroham from Gedor (First Samuel 27:2b; First Chronicles 12:1-7).**

Some Gadites defected to David at his stronghold in the wilderness. They were brave warriors, ready for battle and able to handle the shield and spear. They were fierce as lions, and they were as swift as gazelles in the mountains. Fierce as lions and **swift as gazelles** means **they** were mighty and experienced warriors. **Ezer was the chief, Obadiah the second in command, Eliab the third, Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, Yirmeyah the tenth and Makbannai the eleventh. These Gadites were army commanders; the least was a match for a hundred, and the greatest a thousand.** This description is not about their rank, but their reputation. **It was they who crossed the Jordan in the first month when it was overflowing all its banks** (which makes **the Gadites'** achievement all the more noteworthy)**, and they put to flight everyone living in the valleys, to the east and to the**

west (First Chronicles 12:8-15).

Other Benjamites and some men from Y'hudah also came to David in his stronghold. David went out to meet them and said: **If you have come to me in peace to help me, I am ready for you to join me. But if you have come to betray me to my enemies when my hands are free from violence, may the God of our ancestors see it and judge you.** For some reason **David** feared possible treachery. Perhaps **he** remembered **his** betrayal by **Doeg the Edomite**, resulting the subsequent slaughter of virtually the entire priestly community (see **Bd – Sha'ul Kills the Priests of Nov**). **Then the Ruach ha-Kodesh came upon** (Hebrew: *labesh* meaning *clothed* ***Himself***) **Amasai, chief of the Thirty** (see **Ej – David's Mighty Warriors**)**, and he** said: **We are yours, David! We are with you, son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you. Amasai's** words, therefore, have the character of prophecy, rather than mere well wishing. **So David received them and made them leaders of his raiding bands (First Chronicles 12:16-18).**

Some of the tribe of Manasseh defected to David when he went with the Philistines to fight against Sha'ul. (He and his men did not help the Philistines because, after consultation, their rulers sent him away. They said: **It will cost us our heads if he deserts to his master Sha'ul). When David went to Ziklag, these were the men of Manasseh who defected to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu and Zillethai, leaders of units of thousands in Manasseh. They helped David against raiding bands, for all of them were brave warriors, and they were commanders in his army. Day after day men came to help David, until he had a great army, like the army of God (First Chronicles 12:19-22).**



David's Raids: Now being stationed in the southeast corner of **Philistine** territory, **David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, probably a small tribe dwelling between Philistia and Egypt (Joshua 13:2); the Girzites, Canaanites occupying Gezer, a town to the northeast of Philistia, and the** long hated **Amalekites, on the eastern frontier of Egypt. From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur, on the eastern frontier of Egypt, all the way to Egypt**, but **they** were living within the borders of the Promised Land. **(First Samuel 27:8).** Therefore, **David** was merely finishing some of the work left undone by **Joshua** and **the Judges**, because **YHVH** had commanded the total destruction of these **people** earlier **(Exodus 17:14; Joshua 13:13; First Samuel 15:2-3)**.

Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes (see **Af – The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**)**. Then he returned to Achish** regularly to share the spoil with **the king of Gath. When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?"** While actually **raiding** Jewish enemies, **David** would say that **he** had raided various tribes in **Judah**. It was deceptive, but necessary to stay alive. **David would** say: **Against the Negev of Y'hudah, or against the Negev of Jerahmeel, or against the Negev of the Kenites. He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and** say: **This is what David did. And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory" (First Samuel 27:9-11).**

In fact **David** fought against **their** common enemies, nevertheless, **Achish trusted David and** therefore was deceived in **his** report. **Achish said to himself** (because

of **his** false belief that **David** did **his raiding** in **the Negev of Y'hudah**), **"He has become so utterly despised to his own people of Isra'el, that he will be my servant for life" (First Samuel 27:12).** Another **Philistine of Gath** (Goliath) had likewise prematurely predicted much the same thing for **David's** fellow **Israelites (17:9)**. It didn't work out too well for him either.

The Preparation for War: When **David** was living in **Ziklag**, making **his** various raids, **the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Isra'el. Achish** commanded **David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army." David** and his men were to become part of the army of Gath against his own people, the Israelites. **David's** answer was ambiguous: **Then you will see for yourself what your servant can do. He** was bluffing. **He** was buying time because **he** had no other choice. **David** had no intention of fighting against **his** Jewish brothers. At just the right moment, **he** and **his men** would switch sides and fight against **the Philistines**. **Achish** replied: **Very well, I will make you** the head of **my** royal **bodyguard for life (First Samuel 28:1-2).**