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Achish Sends David Back to Ziklag
First Samuel 29: 1-11

Achish sends David back to Ziklag DIG: Why were five Philistine kings present? What reservations did the Philistine generals have about David fighting on their side? What did King Achish think? Why? Do you think David would have fought against Isra'el? Or was he bluffing? Why?

REFLECT: In your life right now, where are you "between a rock and a hard place," caught in the middle of a situation that you have no control over? How many times has God intervened to prevent something terrible from happening to you? Or for something that we would regret for the rest of our lives? In such dilemmas, how does your faith in God affect how you decide? Is the LORD obligated to step in and save us from results of our own sinful decisions? Do we reap what we sow? How would David reap what he had sown in the years to come?

1011 BC

This was the battle in which **Sha'ul** and Y'honatan died (**to see link click Bw – Sha'ul Takes His Own Life**), and it was therefore providential that the hand of **ADONAI** kept **David** and **his men** from having to fight against **their** own people, **the Israelites**. **David** was about 29 years old.

The Philistine Generals rejected David: The Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, and Isra'el camped by the spring of Jezreel. Here **the Philistines** were some thirty miles (or 48 kilometers) further north of **Aphek**, well on their way to **the Valley of Jezreel**, but still about forty miles (or 64 kilometers) or two days short of **Shunem** where they would set up camp**.** At that time, the **Israelite** army was already in **Jezreel** getting ready to take up their positions for battle on **Mount Gilboa (First Samuel 28:4a)**. Therefore, the battle would take place in three days.

As the Philistine generals marched with their units of hundreds and

thousands, David and his men were marching at the rear with Achish. As **the troops** were reviewed, all five of **the Philistine rulers** were present representing the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron and Gath. **Their** personal involvement demonstrated **their** perception that this battle was crucial.[169] Therefore, it was a sizable army. **David** and **his men** happened to be a part of the army of Gath. And as **they** passed before the reviewing stand, **the Philistine rulers** were obviously uneasy at the presence of **David the Israelite** and **his** six hundred **men**, so they asked: **What about these Hebrews (First Samuel 29:1-3a)?** The other four **Philistine rulers** were irate that **Achish** could possibly be so naïve as to think it safe to include **David** in the order of battle for **their** invasion of **Isra'el**.

If the **Philistine rulers** were hostile to **David's** presence, **Achish** could not say enough in **David's** defense: **Is this not David, who was an officer of Sha'ul king of Isra'el? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Sha'ul until now, I have found no fault in him.** This shows how well **David** was able to mask **his** own activities. **But the Philistine rulers were angry** and said: **Send the man back, that he may return to the place you assigned him. He must not go with us into battle, or he will turn against us during the fighting** (exactly what **David** was thinking)**. How better could he regain his master's favor than by taking the heads of our own men?"** pointing to **the Philistine** troops marching by in full display. **The** other four **Philistine rulers** had accurately perceived **David's** true intent, namely, to turn on **them** in the heat of battle so as to strike a decisive blow for **Isra'el**.

But **ADONAI** had other plans. There would be no rescue of **Sha'ul** because **YHVH** would bring up Samuel in two days to declare to **the Israelite king** that **he** would indeed die in the upcoming battle (see **Bv – Sha'ul and the Medium at Endor**). **David** had no way of knowing that and, in **his** predicament, saw no other alternative than to strike **the Philistines** in the heat of battle. But like I said, **God** had other plans.

The Philistine rulers concluded **their** critique by reminding **Achish** of the song sung by the women of **Isra'el** in honor of **David** and **Sha'ul**. **Isn't this the same David they sang about in their dances, "Sha'ul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands? (First Samuel 29:3b-5)?** That Jewish saying had become famous, even among **the Philistines** and they took the song as a sign of solidarity between **David** and **Sha'ul**. **The Philistine rulers** suspected that **David** had aspirations for the throne of **Isra'el**. **David**, **they** argued, could become

acceptable to **Sha'ul** and **Isra'el** only by putting **Philistines** to death, so **they** demanded that **he** should be sent back to **Ziklag**.[170]

David Was Sent Back to Ziklag: So Achish, not willing to buck **his** peers, **called David and** to impress **him** with **his** own sincerity, **he** used the name of **David's God** and not **his** own. **The Philistine ruler said to him, "As surely as the LORD lives, you have been reliable, and I would be pleased to have you serve with me in the army. From the day you came to me until today, I have found no fault in you, but the** other four **rulers** are unconvinced and **don't approve of you. Now turn back and go in peace; do nothing to displease the Philistine** military **rulers (First Samuel 29:6-7).**

"But what have I done," asked David? "What have you found against your servant from the day I came to you until now? Why can't I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" David pretended to be outraged – but this saved **him** from **his** deadly dilemma. For *the third time* **Achish** vindicated **David's** honor and dependability, saying: **I know that you have been as pleasing in my eyes as an angel of God.** The *threefold* formula of Pontius **Pilate's** acquittal of **Yeshua** sounds like a strange echo of the words of **Achish**. **Pilate** declared of **Messiah, "I find no fault in this man in anything of which you are accusing him" (Luke 23:14 Aramaic Bible in Plain English).** Having examined **Jesus, Pilate** rendered **his** verdict: **I find no guilt in Him (John 18:38 NASB).** And then, **for the third time Pilate spoke to the crowd, "What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty" (Luke 23:22).**

Nevertheless, the Philistine rulers said, "He must not go up with us into battle." Now get up early, along with [the Israelites] who have come with you, and leave in the morning as soon as it is light. So David and his men got up early in the morning to go back to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel (First Samuel 29:8-11). On the one hand, **YHVH** saved **David** from **his** dilemma; but on the other hand, **God** didn't want **David** to turn on **the Philistines** and save **Sha'ul** because **ADONAI** had already decreed that **the king** would die in three days.[171]

Thus **David**, doubtless relieved, avoided fighting against **his** own countrymen . . . and did so with the blessing of **the Philistines**. This was divine intervention. It was the sovereignty of **God**. It was very ironic that the very same **Philistines** who would finally dispose of **Sha'ul** were the ones who unwittingly rescued **David**.[172]