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David Recovered His Wives
First Samuel 30: 18-31

David recovered his wives DIG: What dissension in David's army threatened to make this victory bittersweet? How did David deal with that? If the troublemakers had gotten their way, what further resentment would have been felt by the two hundred who stayed behind? What is the leadership principle behind David's actions? Why did David send part of his plunder to the elders of Judah who were his friends?

REFLECT: What can you trust YHVH to do when you encounter problems and crises? David shared the spoils of victory even with the men who were too exhausted to fight, because he said ADONAI and not the fighters deserved the credit. What have been some of your victories with God's help? How can you give Him credit in tangible ways?

1011 BC



The Recovery: David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken (**to see link click Ca – David Inquired of the LORD**)**, including his two wives. Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock,** saying: **This is David's booty** by means of conquest **(First Sam 20:18-20)**, however, **David**

naturally understood it was ultimately not **his**, but **the LORD's**.

The contrast between **David's** battle against **the Amalekites** and the holy mission **Sha'ul** was sent on needs to be explained. **Ha'Shem** had declared **the Amalekites** to be *cherem*, meaning *devoted to destruction* (see **Af – The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). **ADONAI-Tzva'ot** had declared: **I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Isra'el when they ambushed them as they came up from Egypt** (see the commentary on **Exodus Cv – The Amalekites Came and Attacked the Israelites at Rephidim**)**. Now go and attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them**. **Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys** (because **they** were all *devoted to destruction*)**. But Sha'ul took Agag alive and spared the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat (Lev 3:16) calves and lambs – everything that was good. These Sha'ul was unwilling to destroy completely** as **the LORD** had commanded **(First Samuel 15:2-3, 9)**. **Sha'ul** had a specific task to fulfill, which **he** well understood, but which deprived **him** of any share of the **plunder**. Once **Sha'ul** took that which was *devoted to destruction,* **he** became *devoted to destruction.* **David,** however, was under no such instructions, and was therefore free to keep what **he** had recovered in the battle.

The Principle: There was a conflict between **the men** who fought with **David** and **the men** who were left behind. **Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow him and who were left behind at the Besor Valley. They came out to meet David and the men with him. As David and his men approached, he asked them how they were. But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers** who had joined **David's** army only to escape **their** own criminal past, said: **Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered,** including **their** own possessions**. However, each man may take his wife and children and go** away, not even being a part of **David's** army any more **(First Samuel 30:21-22).**

David replied: **No, my brothers, you must not do that with what ADONAI has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike. David** exercised **his** prerogative, and laying down **the principle**, which became standard practice and established

legal precedent **for Isra'el from that day to this (First Samuel 30:22-25). David's** actions provided a good illustration of the faith of ordinary Israelites that supported the Torah and made it workable. **David's** sense of justice was based on **his** experience of the mercy and generosity of **ADONAI**, and for that reason, surpassed ordinary human standards of what is just and right.[208]

The Division of the plunder: **David** understood that **the plunder** was ultimately not **his** but **ADONAI's**. **When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah** showing **he** was loyal to **Judah** and not to the Philistines**, who were his friends** or those who had helped **him** in **his** flights from **Sha'ul,** saying: **Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies.** Many of **them** had endured raids, and now **they** would receive some compensation. **David sent it to those who were in Bethel** (not the famous Benjamite city north of Jerusalem, but a town in southern Judah, probably the same as **Bethuel** in **First Chronicles 4:30** in the vicinity of **Ziklag** and Hormah)**, Ramoth Negev** (perhaps the same as **Ramah in the Negev**, a Simeonite city in **Joshua 19:8**) **and Jattir** (about thirteen miles south of Hebron), which was close to **Eshtemoa** were both Levitical cities **(Joshua 21:14); to those in Aroer** (not the famous city on the Arnon river, but a city called **Adadah** in **Joshua 15:22,** which was ten miles south of Beersheba)**, Siphmoth and Rakal** (is **Carmel**, the place where Nabal had his farm in **First Samuel 25:2**)**; to those in the towns of Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; to those of Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athak and Hebron** (the most important city in the area, and soon to be **David's** first capital)**; and to those in all the other places where he and his men had roamed (First Samuel 30:26-31). David's** sharing of **the plunder** was an important factor in building relationships and preparing **the men of Judah** to welcome **him** as **their** new **king.**

As Joyce Baldwin relates in her commentary on the books of **Samuel**, on their return from Aphek, **David** and **his men** had faced their **ruined** homes and kidnapped families; everything seemed lost, and **David** was in danger of being stoned to death. **His** status as the future king, **the LORD's anointed**, was no passport to an easy life, and **he** had to face the uncertainties of human life every bit as much as **Sha'ul** did. **David's** genius was **his** spiritual resilience. **He** expected to find the resources **he** needed in **ADONAI**, and **he** was not disappointed, whereas **Sha'ul** was in the habit of "doing **his** own thing," and deliberately refusing to carry out the instructions given to **him** by **Samuel**. **David** refused to interpret obstacles as signs of **God's** opposition to **him**; rather they provided opportunities to see what

YHVH would do in answer to the prayer of **His servant**.

To be able to find the energy and resolve to rally for another campaign, David's men, who already needed food and rest, carried on. This was indicative of **David's** leadership abilities (in contrast to **Sha'ul's** tendency to wait for something to happen). The inner resources of **David** resulted in action that would not have been possible without **his** faith in **God**. The "chance" encounter with the **slave** of an **Amalekite** was part of the provision that enabled **David** and **his men** to crush **the Amalekites**. That **they** were in no shape to defend **themselves** was the result of **their** own self-indulgence. The hand of **the LORD** is to be seen throughout **David's** wilderness wanderings, in which **he** was able to turn something positive out of a bitter calamity. Certainly, as Isra'el's next king, **David's** wilderness wanderings were over.[209]

In giving gifts to **His** people out of the treasure of **his** own **plunder**, **David** foreshadowed **Messiah's** graciousness as our true **King**. Like **David** with **his** followers, **Yeshua** calls us **His friends (Yochanan 15:15)** and pledges to meet all our needs, especially our need of forgiveness and eternal life (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms – The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, Jesus** said **(John 10:11).** Surprisingly, the gift of **Christ's** gospel is such that when we give it to others, we do not lose it, but possess it even more richly for ourselves. What an incentive for us all to strengthen ourselves in **YHVH** and start following **His** Word in renewed faith. Who can tell what **God** will do in and through any of us if we yield ourselves to **Jesus**?[210]