

# Do Not Lay a Hand on ADONAI's Anointed

## First Samuel 26:1-12

**DIG:** Compare this passage and David's encounter with Sha'ul in the cave (see Bj - David Spares Sha'ul's Life). 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 (see **By - 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.<sup>157</sup>

**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**).<sup>158</sup>

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.<sup>159</sup> 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).**