

# 1st Samuel

## Lesson 46

The prophet Gad, no doubt, a student at the school of prophecy called Naioth, arrived in Moab to tell David to go back to the tribal area of Judah.

### (3) David Escaped to the Forest of Hereth (22:5b)

David took Gad's instruction and David escaped to the forest of Hereth. Verse 5b.

*"So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth."* (22:5b)

For information purposes, Hereth is sometimes spelled Hareth in the Scripture. We know that it was a heavily wooded area in the mountains of Judah, but the specific location was not recorded in the Scripture or on any ancient maps. Its placement is unknown.

### (4) David Outed by Saul's Chief Shepherd

#### (a) Doeg's Report (22:6-10)

Most likely, while David was still in the process of going and coming from Moab, Gad discovered that Saul had been told of the communication between David and Ahimelech at Nob. The writer speaks of David being outed by Saul's chief Shepherd. We come to Doeg's report. Verse 6.

*"Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. <sup>7</sup> Saul said to his servants who stood around him, 'Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?' <sup>8</sup> For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as it is this day." <sup>9</sup> Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, said, 'I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Abitub. <sup>10</sup> He inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.'" (22:6-10)*

Saul must have learned of the defection of over four hundred men and their families to David at Adullam. We do not know that for a fact, but surely that many men would be noticeable and someone told Saul of their defection. Sitting with his military counsel around him, Saul's anger burned. Clearly, he blamed his son Jonathan for David's safety. Clearly, because of Jonathan's covenant and closeness to David, Saul blamed Jonathan for the defection. Had David joined Saul for the banquet on the second day of the new year, David would have been dead and this defection would not have happened. Notice also that Jonathan is nowhere in this passage. He, too, ran from his father when Saul tried to kill him at the banquet table. Saul then did what all angry people do, he blamed the circumstance on the men around him. Whether or not they knew anything about David to tell him, he accused them of helping Jonathan help David in defiance of his own kingship.

It was then when Saul accused his own men of collusion, that Doeg spoke up and mentioned that he had seen David with Ahimelech in Nob.

#### (b) Ahimelech's Summons (22:11-13)

Doeg's confession to Saul caused Ahimelech's summons. Verse 11.

*"Then the king sent someone to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Abitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. <sup>12</sup> Saul said, 'Listen now, son of Abitub.'" And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." <sup>13</sup> Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me,*

*in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as it is this day?" (22:11-13)*

In this passage we learn the beginning of the story of the fulfillment of the prophecy of the LORD through Samuel when Samuel was but a child. If you will remember, the LORD told Samuel, and Samuel revealed the prophecy to Eli, that Eli's descendants would be cut off from the high priesthood line and be replaced by another line of Aaron. We know that to be the line of Zadok because that has already happened by the time this story occurs. Zadok became the high priest on the day of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas' death, the day the Ark was captured. It was also on that day that Phinehas's wife gave birth to Ichabod, the brother of Ahitub. Ahitub was not yet a priest when we met him with Saul at the battle against the Philistines at Michmash, but would soon become a priest although he would never be able to be the high priest because that privilege had moved to the line of Zadok.

No doubt, Ahitub was already married at the time of the Michmash event and had a son. That son was named Ahimelech as we discover here. The Michmash event was in the second year of Saul's reign and Ahimelech was probably already alive. In our story line, we are late in Saul's forty years as king and Ahimelech was serving as a priest, but not the high priest because that was forbidden of the LORD for him, in Nob, probably in his mid-thirties.

The order of Saul was wide-spread and we could miss the impact if we did not stop to consider it. Saul's order for the summons of Ahimelech included *"all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob..."* This sweeping order required all of Eli's living descendants to be brought before Saul, which may have included Ichabod, although he was not old enough to be a priest as yet. Everyone who was a descendant of Ahitub was specifically ordered to come to Saul. That may have allowed Ichabod to be excluded because Ichabod was the brother of Ahitub, not a son. Once in the presences of Saul, all the descendants of Ahitub, who will be counted as eighty-five priests in the following verses, heard the accusation of Saul concerning a so-called conspiracy. Ahimelech, was the one who dealt with David and therefore Ahimelech was the one who responded to Saul's accusation.

#### (c) Ahimelech's Response (22:14-15)

The writer tells us Ahimelech's response. Samuel was not there because of the separation between Saul and Samuel had occurred more than a decade before. Therefore, either the prophet Gad or Nathan was there with Saul to hear Doeg's confession and Ahimelech's admission. Verse 14.

*"Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, 'And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house?' 'Did I just begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair.'" (22:14-15)*

Ahimelech was respectful in his response to the king, but he was stern. Yes, he supported David when David asked for help because of David's position in Saul's organization. Ahimelech had not heard of Saul's intent to kill David. Ahimelech could only respond to David with the information David gave him at the time. We must remember that David told Ahimelech that he was on a special, secret mission, by command of the king. Such was all that Ahimelech knew at the time of David's communication with him. David was in the service of Saul and Ahimelech had prayed for David, most assuredly as he had prayed for Saul. Then, Ahimelech admits that he does not know anything about the current conflict between Saul and David. Ahimelech asks Saul to not judge him or his father's family standing with him for helping David without any knowledge of the conflict between him and Saul.

## (d) Ahimelech's Death (22:16-19)

Ahimelech's words did not satisfy Saul. The writer tells us of Ahimelech's death. Verse 16.

*"But the king said, 'You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!'"<sup>17</sup> And the king said to the guards who were attending him, 'Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me.' But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD.<sup>18</sup> Then the king said to Doeg, 'You turn around and attack the priests.' And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod.<sup>19</sup> And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep he struck with the edge of the sword."* (22:16-19)

In Saul's anger, he ordered the deaths of every priest but Saul's men would not touch the LORD's anointed priests. They would not follow the king's order. Saul then ordered Doeg to do the job and he did. In front of Saul, at the tamarisk tree outside of Gibeah, all the descendants of Eli, and all the active priests who served in the Levitical line and were with Ahimelech, died that day, eighty-five in all. Then Doeg traveled to Nob and killed everyone in the city, man, woman, boy and girl of any age as well as all the animal offerings that were there – save one son of Ahimelech.

Saul had inadvertently fulfilled the will of the LORD concerning the descendants of Eli, and the priesthood in his anger, save for one son of Ahimelech – Abiathar.

## (e) David's Premonition (22:20-23)

Abiathar was not killed that day. We have no knowledge of how he escaped the killing spree, but he did. Perhaps he was not at Gibeah with the priests. Perhaps he was able to slip away from the crowd when he heard the command of Saul to kill them. Perhaps Abiathar was able to slip away in between the time Saul's men refused to kill the priests, and the rage Saul had toward them, that is not recorded here but surely happened before he turned to Doeg and gave him the order. At any rate, Abiathar got away and found David to report the news of the devastation. The writer had to have followed Abiathar to David for he tells us of David's premonition. Verse 20.

*"But one son of Ahimelech the son of Abitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David.<sup>21</sup> Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.<sup>22</sup> Then David said to Abiathar, 'I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about the death of every person in your father's household.'<sup>23</sup> Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me."* (22:20-23)

David blamed himself for the deaths of the priests. David's dishonesty with Ahimelech had great and grave consequences on so many others who paid with their lives for his lie. David had lied to Ahimelech. David had sinned. When we sin, we forget about the long tentacles of sin that reach out and hurt others. So many times, I have had people tell me, "I like what I am doing and I know it is a sin. It may hurt me but it does not hurt anyone else." That my friends is a blatant lie in itself. Your sin always hurt or harms those around you. Looking at the story here, Ahimelech and all his family were killed because of his loyalty to David whom he thought was doing the work of the king. David sinned against Ahimelech and that sin reached out to all of Ahimelech's family. But Saul had sinned against David and, that, too, reached out to Ahimelech and all of his family. In reality, Ahimelech and his family died because of the sins of Saul and David. Death is the ultimate of persecution of innocent people because of the sin of others, but death is not always the only persecution. When a son garners a reputation for being a sinner, forever his family members are tainted by his sin. People will say, so-in-so is the father, mother, brother, sister, or cousin of so-in-so. Therefore, the sin of so-in-so sticks forever to the relative. In the meantime, sin always leads to the gutter of life's circumstances. In the gutter, daily provisions for sustaining life are absent. In trouble, because of sinful decisions, the sinner reaches out to family and other for assistance. The family and others

give the sinner what he needs to sustain life, costing the family and others resources that should be used on widows and orphans in the family. But the sinner is not providing for his own way, therefore he is costing his family and others what they have earned to provide for themselves. Finally, the family and others come to the end of their ability or desire to help the sinner. The sinner then lashes out and blames the family and others for his plight in life. Sin always costs others. The family members who have need to take the child born in the sin of another family member puts on hold the dreams of the righteous to do what is right to help the innocent product of sin. That is not to say that caring for the child is wrong for it might be in the LORD's plan, but the sin still costs those who did not do the sinning. Such is the case in our story with Ahimelech. Saul and David were the sinners. Ahimelech and his family paid the price for the sin of Saul and David. Even though that happened, the whole incident fulfilled the plan of the LORD to punish the sin of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas. It is truly interesting how the LORD works all things together – the acts of the righteous and the acts of the sinners.

Be that as it may, David made Abiathar stay with him to protect him from Saul in the future. From this day on, Abiathar will be a priest, and David's companion. Abiathar will serve under Zadok as a priest, but never the high priest (1 Chronicles 15:11; 1 Kings 2:26; 1 Chronicles 27:34). Abiathar will be alive when Solomon becomes king more than forty years after this story. He will be an old man. Solomon will banish Abiathar to his home in Anathoth because Abiathar anointed Adonijah king of Israel while David was still alive on his bed. Abiathar's action, in concert with Adonijah's desire, and with Joab, caused David to call for Zadok to anoint Solomon as king that day when David resigned his kingship to do so. Solomon took away the priesthood from Abiathar.

*“So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD, which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.” (1st Kings 2:27)*

The LORD will allow Solomon the privilege of fulfilling His will concerning the line of Eli as priest in Israel. But for now, Abiathar will be protected by David until after David's death. Also, for now, Abiathar is with David in the forest of Hereth where he hid when Gad warned him to leave Moab and go back to Judah.

1 Chronicles 12:7–18 tell us of some of those who defected to David at this time. Here is that record.

*7 Joelah and Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham from Gedor. 8 Some brave and experienced warriors from the tribe of Gad also defected to David while he was at the stronghold in the wilderness. They were expert with both shield and spear, as fierce as lions and as swift as deer on the mountains. 9 Ezer was their leader. Obadiah was second. Eliab was third. 10 Mishmannah was fourth. Jeremiah was fifth. 11 Attai was sixth. Eliel was seventh. 12 Johanan was eighth. Elzabad was ninth. 13 Jeremiah was tenth. Machbannai was eleventh. 14 These warriors from Gad were army commanders. The weakest among them could take on a hundred regular troops, and the strongest could take on a thousand! 15 These were the men who crossed the Jordan River during its seasonal flooding at the beginning of the year and drove out all the people living in the lowlands on both the east and west banks. 16 Others from Benjamin and Judah came to David at the stronghold. 17 David went out to meet them and said, “If you have come in peace to help me, we are friends. But if you have come to betray me to my enemies when I am innocent, then may the God of our ancestors see it and punish you.” 18 Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, the leader of the Thirty, and he said, “We are yours, David! We are on your side, son of Jesse. Peace and prosperity be with you, and success to all who help you, for your God is the one who helps you.” So David let them join him, and he made them officers over his troops. (1 Chronicles 12:7–18)*

More of David's music came at this time. So let us worship as we read the words of his psalms.

*A prayer of David. 1 O LORD, hear my plea for justice. Listen to my cry for help. Pay attention to my prayer, for it comes from honest lips. 2 Declare me innocent, for you see those who do right. 3 You have tested my thoughts and examined my heart in the night. You have scrutinized me and found nothing wrong. I am determined not to sin in what I say. 4 I have followed your commands, which keep me from following cruel and evil people. 5 My steps have stayed on your path; I have not wavered from following you. 6 I am praying to you because I know you will answer, O God. Bend down and listen as I pray. 7 Show me your unfailing love in wonderful ways. By your mighty power you rescue those who seek refuge from their enemies. 8 Guard me as you would guard your own eyes. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. 9 Protect me from wicked people who attack me, from murderous enemies who surround me. 10 They are without pity. Listen to their boasting! 11 They track me down and surround me, watching for the chance to throw me to the ground. 12 They are like hungry lions, eager to tear me apart— like young lions hiding in ambush. 13 Arise, O LORD! Stand against them, and bring them to their knees! Rescue me from the wicked with your sword! 14 By the power of your hand, O LORD, destroy those who look to this world for their reward. But satisfy the hunger of your treasured ones. May their children have plenty, leaving an inheritance for their descendants. 15 Because I am righteous, I will see you. When I awake, I will see you face to face and be satisfied. (Psalm 17).*