

1st Samuel

Lesson 55

(2) Achish's Conversation with David (29:6-11)

And so, we hear Achish's conversation with David as he sends him and his men away. Verse 6.

"Then Achish called David and said to him, 'As the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army are pleasing in my sight; for I have not found evil in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, you are not pleasing in the sight of the lords.'⁷ Now therefore return and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines."⁸ David said to Achish, 'But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant from the day when I came before you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?'"⁹ But Achish replied to David, 'I know that you are pleasing in my sight, like an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He must not go up with us to the battle.'¹⁰ Now then arise early in the morning with the servants of your lord who have come with you, and as soon as you have arisen early in the morning and have light, depart."¹¹ So David arose early, he and his men, to depart in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel." (29:6-11)

On the day of the battle that will kill Saul, David and his men left the camp of the Philistines and started the eighty-mile trip home to Ziklag. With the Hebrews gone, the Philistines moved from Aphek to camp at Jezreel, next to the army of Israel. On the same morning that David left, Saul arrived from the witch's house.

1 Chronicles 12:19–22 tells us the names of more men who defected to David at this time.

19 Some men from Manasseh defected from the Israelite army and joined David when he set out with the Philistines to fight against Saul. But as it turned out, the Philistine rulers refused to let David and his men go with them. After much discussion, they sent them back, for they said, "It will cost us our heads if David switches loyalties to Saul and turns against us." 20 Here is a list of the men from Manasseh who defected to David as he was returning to Ziklag: Adnah, Joabab, Jedaiel, Michael, Joabab, Elihu, and Zillethai. Each commanded 1,000 troops from the tribe of Manasseh. 21 They helped David chase down bands of raiders, for they were all brave and able warriors who became commanders in his army. 22 Day after day more men joined David until he had a great army, like the army of God. (1 Chronicles 12:19–22)

Chapter 30

c) David Victor for Ziklag

(1) David's Ziklag Raided (30:1-5)

It is interesting that the compiler of 1st Samuel continued with the story being told in the last passage and the eyewitness testimony of that writer, probably Gad who was with David, even though it passes by the events of the battle where Saul dies and tells of the three-day journey they made when they left the Philistines at Aphek and what they found when they arrived at Ziklag. It is the story of David as the victor for Ziklag, but it is also the story of David's Ziklag being raided.

"Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire;² and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way.³ When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.⁴ Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until

there was no strength in them to weep. ⁷ Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Abinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite." (30:1-5)

The only way that the writer knew how to give this summary of what David and the men found when they arrived at Ziklag, was to be writing after David had led his men to retrieve all the families. Perhaps when David and his men arrived at Ziklag, they were puzzled because no bodies were dead in the village. That point alone would have told the Hebrews that their families had been led away. But as for their current safety, them not being in the town did not guarantee that they were still alive.

No doubt, Gad is with David while Nathan is with Saul. This passage is taken from the chronicles of Gad which we have identified previously (1st Chronicles 29:29).

(2) David's Men Embittered (30:6)

The writer tells us of David's men embittered at David because of their loss of family and possessions. Verse 6.

"Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God." (30:6)

David must have been distressed because he was the one who lied to Achish of Gath and agreed to, along with his men, become the body guards of Achish and accompany Achish on the military campaign to defeat the Israelites. When all the lords of the Philistines rejected David and his men, they returned to Ziklag and found that they had been plundered. At this point we must wonder who would do such a thing. We will soon find out that David and his men were the catalyst for the raid because they had done the same to the family members of the raiders. They did not know that David was the cause, but they knew the ones who raided their families previously came from the area of the Philistines.

With all seeming to be lost, the warriors of David considered stoning him. This can be a lesson in "no good deed goes unpunished." The majority of these men had voluntarily joined David in two waves. A few had joined sporadically through the two years. David had fed them, their families, and led them successfully through many skirmishes without the loss of one man. They came to him because they knew he was the anointed next king of Israel. In addition, they came to him because they did not like the deeds of King Saul. Then, in one moment of arriving at Ziklag, some of their hearts turned against David with the thought of stoning him. How quickly loyalties turn. But David gathered himself from his distress and decided to trust in the LORD and let Him give him strength and guidance.

(3) David's Prayer Answered (30:7-8)

In order to gather strength and guidance from the LORD, David needed to pray. We find David's prayer answered. Verse 7.

"Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. ⁸ David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue all." (30:7-8)

Abiathar was a priest who was permanently attached to David since he escaped being killed along with his father and more than eighty-five other priests by Saul. Abiathar was at the Rock of Wild Goats with David. He was living in the Philistine area with David. He had been on the raid with David and the men against the Amalekites and two other families. He had been to the valley of Jezreel to support Achish in their attack on the Israelite army of Saul. He had just arrived with David at Ziklag after the three-day journey from Jezreel. When David called for the ephod, David was not going to put it on. David was calling for Abiathar to put it on because Abiathar was a priest, and David needed to pray and receive an answer from the LORD. The prayer had to be given in the right way, in the right dress, in the right attitude, and David felt that only with Abiathar could that happen. The LORD heard David's prayer, and the LORD answered – immediately. David was

cleared to go. As we will see, there must have been more to the LORD's answer than we are told in this passage. How did David know which way to search for the bandits? We do not know, but the LORD must have given David the direction to search for their families.

(4) David's Men Exhausted (30:9-10)

From Ziklag, all David and all his men headed west and came to the brook Besor. The men had already traveled at least twenty miles that day on the last leg of their trip home to Ziklag. They were not empty-handed. They carried everything they needed to survive on the road and camped for battles. Now, with the answer from the LORD, all the men marched another twenty miles that same day to arrive at the brook Besor late in the day. Forty miles can be walked, but it is a trek. When they arrive at the brook, we hear that some of David's men are exhausted. Verse 9.

"So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those left behind remained. ¹⁰ But David pursued, he and four hundred men, for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor remained behind." (30:9-10)

Where was the brook Besor? Besor was a stream that flowed into the Mediterranean Sea located about five miles south of the Philistine city of Gaza, one of the five major cities in the Philistine land. It was on the west border of the tribal area with its western wall near the Mediterranean Sea. It was also the southernmost city in the Philistine area. Other villages that Gaza supported were further south than Gaza, but they were supported by Gaza and the inhabitants ran to Gaza, the walled city in the area, in times of distress. How did David know to take the road west out of Ziklag which would have taken them to Gath where they would have picked up the trade route going southwest to Gaza? We do not know, but surely the LORD told David that information when He answered David's prayer.

Once David and his six hundred men arrived at the brook Besor, two hundred men were too exhausted to continue on. David and four hundred men were intent of continuing their trek to find their families.

(5) David's Egyptian Informant (30:11-15)

On the same third day that David and his men arrived at Ziklag, then journeyed to Besor, David and his four hundred men pressed on westward even into the night. On the way, an Egyptian was discovered. We will call him David's Egyptian informant. Verse 11.

"Now they found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him bread and he ate, and they provided him water to drink. ¹² They gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins, and he ate; then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. ¹³ David said to him, 'To whom do you belong? And where are you from?' And he said, 'I am a young man of Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind when I fell sick three days ago. ¹⁴ We made a raid on the Negev of the Cherethites, and on that which belongs to Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire.' ¹⁵ Then David said to him, 'Will you bring me down to this band?' And he said, 'Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this band.'" (30:11-15)

Notice that the Egyptian was willing to spill the beans on his master if David would not harm him or return him to his master. But then, there is more in this passage than just that point.

First, we learn that the Egyptian master was an Amalekite. Does that ring a bell? David and his men had made a raid on the Amalekites, the Geshurites, and the Girzites just a short time before this in the story. Although David killed every Amalekite, Geshurite, and Girzite in the villages they raided, they did not kill all the Amalekites in the Wilderness of Shur. David did not leave any witnesses, but that does not mean that the Amalekites did not see them as they returned to the land of the Philistines. The Amalekites did not know who was specifically responsible for the deaths of their relatives, but they knew they came from the Philistine areas and the Negev of southern Judah. This raid by the Amalekites had to be an attempt to revenge their dead.

Second, notice the timing in the passage. The Egyptian had been left by his master three days before. Three days before, David and his men were just leaving the Valley of Jezreel. This information means that when the Amalekites heard that the Philistines were making their way to the Jezreel, which was a three-day journey, the Amalekites began to plunder all the areas told to David by the Egyptian upon the exit of the Philistines from their homeland. The Amalekites had raided all they wanted to raid before the Philistines arrived at the Jezreel and rejected David and his men, causing them to return to Ziklag. This information meant that if Ziklag was the last plundered by the Amalekites, they were three days ahead of David because they had left this Egyptian in a field near the road just a little way from Besor three days before. Fortunately, the Amalekites did not have much further to go to be near their homes in the Wilderness of Shur.

David must have agreed to the Egyptian's request. We are not told whether or not he did. But, by the following report, David must have agreed.

(6) David's Property Recovered (30:16-20)

David and his men took the Egyptian with them. He led them to the camp of the Amalekites, where we hear of David's property recovered. Verse 16.

"When he had brought him down, behold, they were spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil that they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. ¹⁷ David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. ¹⁸ So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. ¹⁹ But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought it all back. ²⁰ So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle which the people drove ahead of the other livestock, and they said, 'This is David's spoil.'" (30:16-20)

The fight was not quick. Tired from the more than forty-mile journey that day, David and his men came to the camp of the Amalekites as the sun was going down, and they fought until evening (our afternoon) the next day. They were all surely exhausted by then. We do not know whether or not they rested before returning to Besor, but surely, they did. What we do know is that everyone rescued their families alive, and not one was missing. Even the families of the two hundred men, who were left at Besor watching the baggage, were rescued. And everyone found all the items that were taken from Ziklag. But there were more than just the things that belonged to the Hebrews in Ziklag; there were the things that belonged to all the other areas that were raided. All the extras were called "David's spoils."

(7) David's Spoils Divided (30:21)

When David with his four hundred men returned to Besor with all the family members and spoils, David greeted the two hundred who watched over the baggage with joy. It was time for David's spoils to be divided. Verse 21.

"When David came to the two hundred men who were too exhausted to follow David, who had also been left at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him, then David approached the people and greeted them." (30:21)

The men left at Besor could not have been happier as when they came out to meet their fellow warriors and met their love ones coming to be with them. It was surely a time of great joy, but that joy would soon be dampened with the words of some worthless men in the group who had continued with David that day.

(a) The Decision of the Worthless Men (30:22)

The writer tells us of the decision of the worthless men. Verse 22.

"Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David said, 'Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away and depart.'" (30:22)

The worthless, wicked men were willing for the exhausted two hundred to have their families back but they did not want them to share in the spoils of the victory.

(b) *The Correction of the Worthless Men (30:23-25)*

But David had a say in the division of the spoils because the spoils belonged to David. He quickly mandated the correction of the worthless men. Verse 23.

“Then David said, ‘You must not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us.’²⁴ And who will listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike.”²⁵ So it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.” (30:23-25)

When the men left with David to go to the Jezreel, each man took everything he needed to camp along the way, which included the bedding, shelter, and food. On the way back to Ziklag, the men still had the same supplies. They were traveling heavy. When they left Ziklag, they were still traveling heavy with all their supplies all the way to Besor. But at Besor, because there were enough exhausted men, the four hundred could leave most of their gear and travel on their way light. To David, those who guarded the baggage were just as important to the battle as those who fought. Therefore, every warrior would receive a share and share alike portion of David’s spoils. We also find a clue as to when this passage was recorded. *“So it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.”* David did not have the authority to make that ordinance on that day. Yet, he did. By this day, Saul had been dead for four days, but David did not know about it. Also, David would not become the king of Israel for two years. In order for this ordinance to become an order for the nation of Israel, this passage had to be written after David became the king of Israel, three years after this point in the storyline.

(8) *David’s Spoils Shared (30:26-31)*

David’s spoils were shared, but he did not share then all with his warriors. He had in mind some others with whom he wanted to bless. Verse 26.

“Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, ‘Behold, a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD:’²⁷ to those who were in Bethel, and to those who were in Ramoth of the Negev, and to those who were in Jattir,²⁸ and to those who were in Aroer, and to those who were in Siphmoth, and to those who were in Eshtemoa,²⁹ and to those who were in Racal, and to those who were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to those who were in the cities of the Kenites,³⁰ and to those who were in Hormah, and to those who were in Bor-ashan, and to those who were in Athach,³¹ and to those who were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go.” (30:26-31)

From the time David started his run from King Saul, David was blessed to be helped by many people in different places. When the six hundred men came to be with David; the food need alone was staggering. We are not told this to be a fact, but more than likely, the people who lived in the areas mentioned in this passage all helped feed David’s men. Because they were kind to him, David had more than enough to share with them. The clue to this is found in verse 31, which says, *“and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go.”* These had to be the places David and his men went for help in times of need.

The writer of this part was telling David’s storyline. Once he chronicled the time from the Jezreel to Ziklag, to Besor and back to Ziklag, we know about six days had passed. But he then spoke for the sharing of the spoils with folks which would have taken several days to complete. Therefore, our timeline is lost in this book. But in the first verses of 2nd Samuel, we will learn that David was at Ziklag for two days when the messenger came to David with the news of Saul’s death. But with the next and last chapter, the compiler turns back the clock and takes us to the day David and his men left the Valley of Jezreel.