

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 26:1-25

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1 Samuel 26:1-25

Verse 1

¹ The Ziphites went to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding on the hill of Hakilah, which faces Jeshimon?”

- Once again, the Ziphites went to Saul and betrayed David’s whereabouts to him (see 1 Samuel 24). While chapters 24 and 26 appear, at first, to be telling the same story, the differences between them, make it clear that chapter 26 is the story of a second attempt by the Ziphites to help Saul capture David.
- It is important to note the vow/covenant David and Saul made at the end of chapter 24 (see 24:8-20). Saul was not a man of his word. In no time, he violated his covenant with David and again sought David’s life.

Verses 2-5

² So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. ³ Saul made his camp beside the road on the hill of Hakilah facing Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul had followed him there, ⁴ he sent out scouts and learned that Saul had definitely arrived.

⁵ Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him.

- Saul took his special troops to search for David. But initially, David stayed in his camp. He apparently could not believe that Saul was breaking his word so quickly and so easily. David sent out scouts. They confirmed the news that Saul had come to the area to kill David. David moved his men to the place where Saul was encamped.
- Saul was sleeping in the very center of the camp. Abner, the chief general in Saul’s army, slept near Saul. Saul was surrounded by his men. Apparently,

Saul did not want to repeat the scene that happened in the cave (see 24:3-4). David would not be given the chance to sneak up on Saul again!

Verses 6-8

⁶ David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?"

"I'll go with you," said Abishai.

⁷ So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

⁸ Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won't strike him twice."

- David asked Ahimelek and Abishai, two emerging leaders among his men, to accompany him to Saul's camp. Abishai agreed to go with David. Ahimelek did not.
- David and Abishai went to Saul's camp. They could see the place where Saul slept surrounded by his men. Apparently, whatever guard that had been set had also fallen asleep, leaving Saul and his army defenseless.
- Abishai volunteered to kill Saul with Saul's own spear. He boldly proclaimed that it would all be over with one thrust of the spear. Saul would be dead and David would be king. He believed that this is God's will!

Verses 9-11

⁹ But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? ¹⁰ As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. ¹¹ But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go."

- But David would not allow Abishai to kill Saul because Saul was Israel's anointed king. David said that God must act to remove Saul from the throne, but he would not act to kill the king.
- He told Abishai to get Saul's spear and Saul's water jug and the two of them left Saul's camp.

Verse 12

¹² So David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the LORD had put them into a deep sleep.

- Note that the sleep which fell on Saul and his entire army was OF the Lord. It was a sign from God that He was protecting David as He had promised He would. Saul's pursuit of David was outside of God's will and God would not permit Saul to be successful.

Verses 13-16

¹³ Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. ¹⁴ He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, "Aren't you going to answer me, Abner?" Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?"

¹⁵ David said, "You're a man, aren't you? And who is like you in Israel? Why didn't you guard your lord the king? Someone came to destroy your lord the king. ¹⁶ What you have done is not good. As surely as the LORD lives, you and your men must die, because you did not guard your master, the LORD's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"

- David stood on a hill some distance from Saul's camp and called out to Abner. He accused Abner and his men of dereliction of duty. They had been charged to protect Saul. But "someone" had come close enough to kill Saul and not one of Saul's men had moved to protect him. The proof was that Saul's spear and his water jug were missing from the camp.
- David contended that Abner's failure to protect the king demanded that Abner and the entire army be executed.

Verses 17-20

¹⁷ Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is that your voice, David my son?" David replied, "Yes it is, my lord the king." ¹⁸ And he added, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of? ¹⁹ Now let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. If the LORD has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If, however, people have done it, may they be cursed before the LORD! They have driven me today from my share in the LORD's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.' ²⁰ Now do not let

my blood fall to the ground far from the presence of the LORD. The king of Israel has come out to look for a flea—as one hunts a partridge in the mountains.”

- Saul recognized David’s voice. Remember, this had all happened before (see chapter 24).
- David responded to King Saul just as he did before. He claimed that he had not done anything to hurt Saul in any way. He suggested that Saul had listened to poor advisors. He implied that these advisors acted against him to steal his inheritance in Israel. He begged Saul to reconsider his position.

Verse 21

²¹ Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have been terribly wrong.”

- As in chapter 24, Saul repented. He admitted that he had wronged David and vowed that he would not move against David again.

Verses 22-25

²² “Here is the king’s spear,” David answered. “Let one of your young men come over and get it. ²³ The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The LORD delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed. ²⁴ As surely as I valued your life today, so may the LORD value my life and deliver me from all trouble.”

²⁵ Then Saul said to David, “May you be blessed, David my son; you will do great things and surely triumph.”

So David went on his way, and Saul returned home.

- David returned the things that he had taken from Saul.
- David told Saul that He prayed that YHWH would deal with him as he had dealt with Saul.
- Saul then blessed David and acknowledged that he knows David will triumph.
- Then Saul went home but David stayed in the desert. David knew that he could trust God but not Saul.

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