

Exegetical Notes – 1 Samuel 30:7-30

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(Ziklag, David's city had been attacked and burned to the ground by the Amalekites. David's family and the families of David's men, along with all their possessions, had been taken as plunder. David and his men were in despair and David's men were thinking of killing David.)

1 Samuel 30:7-30

Verses 7-8

⁷ Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, ⁸ and David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?"

"Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."

- David summoned Abiathar, Israel's high priest. He requested that Abiathar bring the ephod, the garment of the high priest in which was kept the Urim and the Thummim, the tools used by the high priest to determine the will of YHWH. In the proper way, through the use of these tools, David consulted God. He asked God if he should pursue the Amalekites, and if he would successfully overtake them.
- God told David to pursue the Amalekites and that he would succeed in rescuing his wives and those of his men.

Verses 9-10

⁹ David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Valley, where some stayed behind. ¹⁰ Two hundred of them were too exhausted to cross the valley, but David and the other four hundred continued the pursuit.

- David and his men set out to rescue their families from the Amalekites, but 200 of David's men were exhausted from the March away from Ziklag and back to Ziklag. They could not go on. So David's force was reduced by 200 men. These men stayed behind in the valley of Besor. David went on with only 400 men.

Verses 11-15

¹¹ They found an Egyptian in a field and brought him to David. They gave him water to drink and food to eat— ¹² part of a cake of pressed figs and two cakes of raisins. He ate and was revived, for he had not eaten any food or drunk any water for three days and three nights.

¹³ David asked him, “Who do you belong to? Where do you come from?” He said, “I am an Egyptian, the slave of an Amalekite. My master abandoned me when I became ill three days ago. ¹⁴ We raided the Negev of the Kerethites, some territory belonging to Judah and the Negev of Caleb. And we burned Ziklag.”

¹⁵ David asked him, “Can you lead me down to this raiding party?” He answered, “Swear to me before God that you will not kill me or hand me over to my master, and I will take you down to them.”

- As David and his men pursued the Amalekites, David’s men found an Egyptian man who had been the slave of one of the Amalekites who had burned Ziklag. The man was nearly dead for he had not eaten nor had any water in three days.
- When the man was revived, David asked him if he could lead him to the Amalekite raiding party. The man agreed to do so provided that David would not return him to his master.

Verses 16-20

¹⁶ He led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah. ¹⁷ David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled. ¹⁸ David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. ¹⁹ Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. ²⁰ He took all the flocks and herds, and his men drove them ahead of the other livestock, saying, “This is David’s plunder.”

- The Egyptian slave led David to the raiding party. The Amalekites thought that they had gotten away. They took no precautions and set no guard. They were drunk when David came upon them.
- David attacked the Amalekites and killed all of the raiding party except 400 men who ran away. He recovered everything the raiders had taken.

Verses 21-22

²¹ 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. ²² But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go."

- David returned to the place where he had left the 200 men who were exhausted. He greeted these men and asked how they were.
- But some of the men who had gone with David to attack the Amalekites did not want to share the plunder that they had taken from the Amalekites. They were willing to give the 200 men who had remained behind their wives and their families back, but they were unwilling to share anything else with these men.

Verses 23-25

²³ David replied, "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and delivered into our hands the raiding party that came against us. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ David made this a statute and ordinance for Israel from that day to this.

- David rejected the opinion of these men. He ordered that the plunder be shared equally among all his men. This was because the plunder and their success in battle was by God's grace.
- The practice of equal sharing became the standard practice in Israel from that day on.

Verses 26-30

²⁶ When David reached Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, "Here is a gift for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies."

²⁷ David sent it to those who were in Bethel, Ramoth Negev and Jattir; ²⁸ to those in Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa ²⁹ and Rakal; to those in the towns of the Jerahmeelites and the Kenites; ³⁰ to those in Hormah, Bor Ashan, Athach and Hebron; to those in all the other places where David and his men had roamed.

- David sent gifts from his share of the plunder to places in Israel. This showed them that he was loyal to Israel, even if not to king Saul.

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