

of the sword, from the man to the woman, from the children to the sucklings; even the oxen, donkeys, and the sheep, *he struck with the edge of the sword.*

20. Yet one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub escaped, whose name was Abiathar; he fled after David.³¹

³¹ He came to him at Keilah, see 1 Sam. 23:6.

21. And Abiathar told David³² that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD.

³² That is, when he had come to David at Keilah.

22. Then David said to Abiathar, “I knew well that day when Doeg the Edomite was there that he would certainly make it known³³ to Saul. I have given cause against all the souls³⁴ of your father’s house.”³⁵

³³ Heb. *making it known would make it known.*

³⁴ That is, people, as in Gen. 14:21.

³⁵ As if David were saying, “I am the cause of what has come upon all the people of your father’s house; it was for my sake, yet outside of my intention.”

23. “Stay with me; do not fear, for whoever shall seek my soul shall seek your soul, but you shall be with me in protection.”³⁶

³⁶ That is, God will preserve and keep us both. Or, *I take you into my protection.* Or, *for you shall be protection* (or guarded) *by me*; that is, you shall be with me to guard the service and worship of God, and I will inquire of the LORD by you in all that happens; see 1 Sam. 30:7.

CHAPTER 23

David hearing that Keilah is besieged, v. 1, relieves it and defeats the Philistines on God’s command, v. 2. Abiathar comes there to David, bringing the ephod with him, v. 6. Saul intends to trap David there and capture him, v. 7. Therefore he goes out to besiege Keilah, v. 8. Not trusting in the people of Keilah, David asks counsel of the LORD through Abiathar, v. 9. The LORD reveals to David that the people of Keilah are minded to deliver him up into the hands of Saul, v. 11. Therefore he flees from there to the Wilderness of Ziph with those six hundred men who were with him, v. 13. There Jonathan comes to him, and renews the covenant of friendship with him, v. 16, and comforts him, v. 17. The people of Ziph betray David to Saul, v. 19, for which Saul thanks them, v. 21, and exhorts them to diligently heed all things, v. 22. He pursues David with his army in the Wilderness of Maon, v. 25, where he encircles him, v. 26. Saul receives news that the Philistines have invaded the land, v. 27, so he is forced to cease pursuing David, v. 28.

1. And they told David,¹ saying, “Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah,² and they plunder the storehouses.”³

¹ That is, when he was in the land of Judah, in the forest of Hereth, see 1 Sam. 22:5. What is described here came to pass before Abiathar came and fled to David, and brought him the sad news of the murder of the priests, see 1 Sam. 23:6. Therefore some translate the first words of 1 Sam. 23:1 thus: *Now David had been told.*

² This city was located in the tribe of Judah, as is evident from Joshua 15:44.

³ Or, *threshing-floors*; that is, the grain that was gathered and laid up in the store-houses.

2. And David inquired of the LORD,⁴ saying, “Shall I go up and strike these Philistines?” And the LORD said to David, “Go up, and you shall strike the Philistines, and deliver Keilah.”

⁴ Probably through the prophet Gad (who was with him, see 1 Sam. 22:5), or through Abiathar, who came to David when he went to Keilah, see 1 Sam. 23:6.

3. Yet the men of David said to him, “Behold, we are afraid⁵ here in Judah;⁶ how much more⁷ when we shall go out to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines.”

⁵ That is, of Saul, who pursues us as enemies.

⁶ That is, here in the forest of Hereth, where they were at that time, which was located in Judah, see 1 Sam. 22:5. Keilah was also located in Judah.

⁷ Understand with this: *shall we be afraid*, that is, when we shall have the Philistines in front of us and Saul behind us, and thus have two enemies to face, instead of one.

4. Then David inquired further of the LORD,⁸ and the LORD answered him, and said, “Prepare yourself and go down to Keilah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.”⁹

⁸ Heb. *And David continued to inquire of the LORD*. Understand this thus, that David inquired of the LORD a second time, not so much with regard to himself, but with regard to his soldiers, who were afraid to go to Keilah.

⁹ That is, before Saul is able to attack you.

5. Thus David and his men went to Keilah, and he fought against the Philistines and drove away their livestock, and he struck a great slaughter among them. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

6. And it came to pass,¹⁰ when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David¹¹ to Keilah, that he came down with the ephod in his hand.¹²

¹⁰ Or, *it had come to pass*.

¹¹ See 1 Sam. 22:20.

¹² That is, when he hastily fled he took the ephod along with him in his hand, in which were the Urim and the Thummim, by which they inquired of the LORD; see Ex. 28:30. Or, *that the ephod came to him in his hand*.

7. When it was made known to Saul that David had come to Keilah, then Saul said, “God has delivered him up¹³ into my hand, for he is encircled, coming into a city with gates and bars.”¹⁴

¹³ Heb. *actually alienated*. That which is delivered up is alienated.

¹⁴ Heb. *in a city of gates and bars*; as if he were saying, “Thinking to be safe and secure in a walled city, David has as it were imprisoned himself, for when I surround and besiege the city with an army, he will by no means be able to escape.”

8. Then Saul caused all the people to be called to the battle, to go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men.

9. Now when David understood that Saul had secretly initiated¹⁵

¹⁵ Or, *devised*.

this evil against him,¹⁶ he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod¹⁷ here.”

¹⁶ Indicating that Saul continually plotted, practised, and laboured with all his sense night and day to do evil to David and kill him.

¹⁷ That is, with the breastplate, and put it on, and ask counsel of the LORD for me by the Urim and Thummim. See Num. 27:21.

10. And David said, “LORD God of Israel, Thy servant¹⁸ has certainly heard¹⁹ that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, and to destroy the city for my sake.

¹⁸ That is, I.

¹⁹ Heb. *hearing has heard*.

11. “Will the citizens²⁰ of Keilah also deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down,²¹ just as Thy servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, please make it known to Thy servant!” Now the LORD said, “He will come down.”

²⁰ Or, *the lords*; see the annotation to Judges 9:2.

²¹ Understand with this: *if I linger here*, as is evident from 1 Sam. 23:14.

12. Then David said, “Would the citizens of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They would deliver you.”²²

²² That is, if you remain within the walls of this city.

13. Then David and his men prepared themselves, about six hundred men, and they went out of Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped

out of Keilah, then he stopped going out.²³

²³ Indicating by this that Saul dismissed his soldiers, not pursuing David any further with military power.

14. Now David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and he remained there on the mountain in the Wilderness of Ziph; and Saul sought him every day,²⁴ yet God did not deliver him into his hand.

²⁴ That is, continually, from time to time, indeed as long as David remained in the stronghold; for when David went to the Philistines Saul gave up seeking him, see 1 Sam. 27:4.

15. When David saw²⁵ that Saul had gone out to seek his soul, then David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest.

²⁵ That is, came to hear, meaning, by his spies whom he had sent out, or from his friends whom he had in Judah.

16. Then Jonathan the son of Saul prepared himself, and he went to David in the forest, and he strengthened his hand in God.²⁶

²⁶ That is, he strengthened and comforted him, placing before him and reminding him of the promises of God, as appears from 1 Sam. 23:17.

17. And he said to him, “Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. But you shall become king over Israel, and I shall be the second with you;²⁷

²⁷ It seems that David had promised this to his friend Jonathan when they entered into a covenant with each other. Heb. *I will be a second to you, or let me be the second next to you*.

also my father Saul knows it well.”²⁸

²⁸ Samuel had made this sufficiently known to Saul, see 1 Sam. 15:28.

18. And they both made a covenant²⁹ before the face of the LORD;³⁰ and David remained in the forest, but Jonathan went to his house.

²⁹ That is, they renewed the covenant which they had made with each other previously, see 1 Sam. 18:3; 20:16.

³⁰ That is, a firm covenant in the presence of the LORD’s priest; or, they made a covenant, which they confirmed with an oath, and to which they called upon God as witness.

19. Then the Ziphites³¹ went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Has not David hid himself with us in the strongholds in the forest,³² on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the right hand of the wilderness?”³³

³¹ That is, the inhabitants of Ziph. There were two cites called thus: the one was located at the farthest border of Judah toward the south, mentioned in Joshua 15:24; and the other was located farther inland, near the Wilderness of Maon, of which see Joshua 15:55. That is the Ziph which is mentioned here, located on a mountain. In 1 Sam. 26:1 it is said that the Ziphites attempted for a second time to deliver up David to Saul. In this distress David went to God for refuge, see Ps. 54, which he wrote at that time.

³² As if they were saying, “David certainly hid himself with us.” Of such questions, see Gen. 13:9.

³³ Or, *which is on the south of Jeshimon.*

20. “Now then, O king, come down quickly³⁴ according to all the desire of your soul, and it

³⁴ Heb. *coming down come down.*

shall come upon us³⁵ to deliver him into the king’s hand.”

³⁵ Of this manner of speech see Micah 3:1 and its annotation.

21. Then Saul said, “Blessed are you to the LORD,³⁶ that you have compassion on me.”³⁷

³⁶ Thus he abused the holy Name of God, to stir them on to an abominable treachery.

³⁷ As if he were saying, “You are the men who deliver me out of the hand of David, who seeks my destruction.”

22. “Please go your way, and prepare *the matter* yet more,³⁸ that you know and see his place where his hideout³⁹ is, who has seen him there; for he⁴⁰ told me that he attempts to deal very craftily.⁴¹

³⁸ That is, take care that all things are cunningly arranged so that he does not slip away from us.

³⁹ Heb. *foot*; that is, where he hides himself, where he commonly abides, and trail him there closely.

⁴⁰ That is, David himself, when he was still with me, and I asked him why he was so prosperous in the war.

⁴¹ Heb. *that he dealing craftily dealt craftily.* Or, used craft.

23. “Therefore look to it, and take notice of all hiding places in which he hides. Then come to me again with a certain report, and I will go with you. And it will come to pass, if he is in the land, that I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.”

24. Then they prepared themselves and they went to Ziph before the face of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Wilderness of Maon, in the plain field, at the right hand of the wilderness.

25. Saul and his men also went to search. That was told David, who had gone down from that rock⁴² and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon.⁴³ When Saul heard that, he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon.

⁴² That is, from the hill of Hachilah in the wilderness, where he had been hiding, see 1 Sam. 23:19. From there he went into more space, namely into the Wilderness of Maon, where he would be able to escape easier, if Saul pursued him.

⁴³ See the annotation to Joshua 15:55.

26. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. Now it came to pass that David hastened to get away from the face of Saul; and Saul and his men surrounded David and his men to take them.

27. Yet a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Make haste and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Or, *have spread themselves in the land.*

28. Then Saul returned from pursuing David, and he went to meet the Philistines. Therefore they called that place Sela Machleoth.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Or, *Sela Hammachleoth*; that is, Rock of Divisions, called thus because Saul was forced to divide his people, and to leave David, in order to pursue the Philistines or resist them.

29. And David went up from there,⁴⁶ and he stayed in the strongholds of En Gedi.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ That is, from the Wilderness of Maon, where Saul had intended to take him, see 1 Sam. 23:25.

⁴⁷ Also called *Hazezon Tamar* in Gen. 14:7; 2 Chron. 20:2. This city was located in the tribe of Judah, at the Salt or Dead Sea toward the south, between high mountains and rocks, in the midst of which are many beautiful and pleasant valleys and fields, planted with multitudes of beautiful trees, such as palm trees; also many balsam trees grew there.

CHAPTER 24

Saul hears that David is at En Gedi, and pursues him there, v. 1. Saul comes into a cave, in which David is with his men, v. 3. David cuts off a tail of Saul's mantle, but will not lay a hand on him, v. 4, proving by this his innocence toward Saul, whom he follows, and speaks to, v. 8. At this Saul is moved, confesses his guilt, and takes an oath of David, v. 16.

1. And it came to pass after Saul had returned from after the Philistines,¹ that they made known to him, saying, "Behold, David is in the Wilderness of En Gedi."

¹ That is, from pursuing the Philistines who had invaded the land while he pursued David, see 1 Sam. 23:27.

2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and he went out to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats.²

² That is, in the high and steep rocks, upon which wild goats climbed and leaped.

3. And he came to the sheepfolds³ on the way where *there* was a

³ Or, *to Gidroth Tson.*