DAVID AMONG THE PHILISTINES

1 SAMUEL 27:1-12
David Among the Philistines

Commentary

by

Ron Thomas

Text:

1 Samuel 27:1-12,

1. But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand."

2. So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maoch king of Gath.

3. David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal.

4. When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

5. Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"

6. So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.

7. David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months.

8. Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.)
9. Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.
10. When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites."
11. He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.' " And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory.
12. Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever." (NIV)

Introduction:

I. This is an interesting chapter for its brevity and its violence by David against the Philistines.

   A. Already we have been introduced to several ethical situations that pose some difficulties for a child of God; here we are brought face to face with more.

Commentary:

David is Wearied by Saul

1 Samuel 27:1-4, But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand." So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maoch king of Gath. David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David
had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal. When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. (NIV)

I. While David went in and out of Israel during his run from Saul, he mostly stayed within the borders of Israel where Saul had opportunity to apprehend him.

A. It is interesting to note that David entered the life of Saul because of a conflict with the Philistines, and now he departs Saul’s life via the Philistines. (27:4)

1. 1 Samuel 27:4, When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. (NIV)

B. David is wearied by his having to constantly avoid Saul.

1. He not only went to Gath for his own benefit, but also for the benefit of those who were with him.

C. The six hundred (600) men do not include family members and, perhaps, other non-military type stragglers.

II. The Philistine city Gath.

A. Achish was king.

1. David had earlier feared king Achish.

a. 1 Samuel 21:10-15, That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: "'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'?" David took these words to
heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard. Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?" (NIV)

2. Now at this juncture David resided with Achish and the Philistines.

B. Why the change?

1. Earlier David feigned madness as a means of escaping from the Philistine king.

C. In some way David convinced Achish that he was no longer insane and that he might be of some help.

D. King Achish knew about the conflict between David and Saul and it is reasonable that the king saw in David an enemy of Israel.

E. Unknown to king Achish, however, was David’s loyalty to the Lord and to the nation.

III. Saul abandoned the search for David when he went into exile. (27:4)

A. 1 Samuel 27:4, When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. (NIV)
David Slaughtered the Philistines

1 Samuel 27:5-12, Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since. David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months. Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish. When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites." He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.' " And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever." (NIV)

I. These verses appear harsh, but how else can they be described?

A. It is easy to suppose – without understanding the potential history of the situation – that David’s actions were completely unjustified.

B. The sentiment of man today is that such drastic actions could have been and should have been avoided.

C. However, one should be cautious in judging a situation being three thousand (3,000) years removed.
II. David presented himself as non-threatening to the king and graciously requested a place of residence in the country.

A. David was well aware of his earlier encounter with the king; he also knew what the people were saying about him as the “king of Israel.”

B. Thus, he knew that to live in Gath was going to result in tension, and tension was not needed.

C. David appealed to the king for a place of residence and Achish gave him Ziklag.

1. It has been said the reason for this was that the king now had a warrior to take care of marauders who continually plagued Gath and others in the area.

D. David was in the land of the Philistines sixteen (16) months.

1. Josephus wrote that David was in the land of the Philistines four (4) months and twenty (20) days (Antiquities, 6.13.322).

   a. There is actually a disagreement on the interpretation. Note John Gill: “or days and four months; days being sometimes put for a year, Judges 17:10; though some interpret it not of a year, but of some few days out of the fifth month, besides the four months; so Jarchi and Kimchi; and Josephus (h) make his abode to be four months and twenty days; but, according to the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions, it was only four months; and so it may be rendered, ‘days, that is, four months’; for according to the Jewish chronology (i) Samuel died four months before Saul, and this flight of David was after the death of Samuel, and when Saul
died he left the land of the Philistines, and took the throne of Judah” (E-Sword).

2. Klein (p. 264) states that the literal translation would be “days and four months” and he takes the idiom to be a year and four months as the common translations have it.

3. 1 Samuel 29:3, The commanders of the Philistines asked, "What about these Hebrews?" Achish replied, "Is this not David, who was an officer of Saul king of Israel? He has already been with me for over a year, and from the day he left Saul until now, I have found no fault in him." (NIV)

E. Ziklag was originally given to Judah (Joshua 15:31), but it is clear that Judah never took the city. (27:8)

1. Joshua 15:31, Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, (NIV)

2. 1 Samuel 27:8, Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) (NIV)

3. This small, but not insignificant, fact could play a role in understanding the next section.

III. David’s raids.

A. 1 Samuel 27:8-12, Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.
When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites." He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.' " And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever." (NIV)

B. The Canaanites were still in the land.

1. 1 Samuel 27:8, Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) (NIV)

2. If the failing of the Israelites’ coming out of Egypt prompted David to attack those cities, or if he felt that he needed to secure his borders when he became king, (whatever his reasoning, 1 Samuel 30:26), it just seems to be a tragedy.

   a. 1 Samuel 30:26, When David arrived in Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the elders of Judah, who were his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the plunder of the LORD's enemies." (NIV)

C. When King Ashish asked David where he raided, David lied in order to avoid any suspicion that otherwise might be formed in the king’s mind. (27:11).

   1. 1 Samuel 27:11, He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.' " And
such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. (NIV)

2. David, however, attacked and destroyed all those who were enemies of the Lord.

   a. Clearly this was entirely justified in the mind of David.

   b. There is nothing to suggest, in one direction or the other, the Lord’s thinking on this.

D. Achish believed what David said, and thought he had an ally, a warrior with him continually. (27:12)

1. 1 Samuel 27:12, Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever." (NIV)
Questions

1 Samuel 27:1-12

(Questions based on NIV text.)

1. Why did David go to the land of the Philistines? Was David correct in his reasoning? ____________________________________________
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2. What previous dealing had David previously had with King Achish?
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3. Who were with David in Gath? ______________________________
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4. What request did David make of Achish? Why was this request made?
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5. What city was designated as David’s place of residence? How long did David live in Philistine territory? ____________________________

6. Identify Maoch, the Geshurites, Girzites and the Amalekites. Geographically locate Shur, the Negev of Judah and the Negev of the Kenites. ___________________________________________________

7. Why did David go on raiding parties? What did he do on these raiding parties? Was his conduct justified? ____________________________

8. What question did Achish ask David? What answer did David give? Did David lie to Achish? If so, why did he lie and, if so, was he justified in lying? ____________________________
9. Was David justified in killing all the defeated people? Why did he kill all of them? ____________________________________________
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10. David used deceit in regard to Achish who had befriended him. Why did Achish trust David? ________________________________
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11. How do you determine whom you can trust and whom you cannot trust? ________________________________________________
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12. After carefully reading 1 Samuel 27 again, write all the descriptive words that may rightly describe David. Let’s start with polygamist.
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14. In which situations did he do the right thing? In which situations did he do the wrong thing? ________________________________
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15. In those situations in which David did the wrong thing, what other course of action would you have followed? What would have been the consequences of following your advice? ________________________________
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