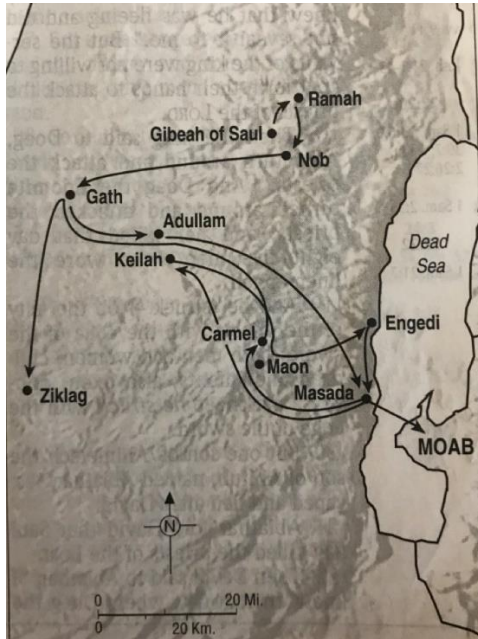


1 Samuel 20 & 21

In **1 Samuel 20** we see David under great stress. It has become clear to him that Saul is determined to kill him and, at the end of our last chapter, he had fled to Samuel at Ramah.

See also handout with Map of where David fled (chs 20 & 21):
Gibeah to Ramah to Nob to Gath.



20:1 David first goes to Jonathan because of their special friendship.

20:2 Jonathan finds it hard to believe that Saul wants to kill David for 2 reasons:

- When we love people, we tend to think the best of them.
- Saul had made an oath to Jonathan (1 Sam 19:6), but Saul is an unstable man.
James 1:8 = **“the double-minded man”**

20:3-7 David and Jonathan’s plan to find out the truth.

20:8 David refers to himself as “your servant” with Jonathan. (3 times in vs 7 & 8). He recognizes his subordinate position with Jonathan.

- David asks Jonathan to **“deal kindly”** = show **HESED** (Hebrew word), as in 20:14-15;
HESED = mercy, kindness, lovingkindness, loyal love, steadfast love.
- **HESED**: used about 250 times in the Old Testament
- See also Psalm 136, Ps. 63:3
- **HESED** has the idea of loyal love to someone with whom you have a commitment. God had a commitment (covenant) with Israel. In some cases, His **HESED** with Israel caused Him to judge Israel’s enemies.

20:9 Jonathan makes an amazing decision. When there is conflict of loyalty, the decision will usually be “blood is thicker than water” or “my family, right or wrong.” Jonathan decides to be loyal to David if Saul is found to have evil plans against David.

20:10-12 Jonathan will “sound out” his father about David and let David know.

20:13-15 Jonathan understands David will be the next king:

“...may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father.”

- Vs. 13: Implies that David will be king. The Lord had been with Saul but was not with him now.
- Vs. 15: Their covenant extended to their families after them forever.

20:17 Jonathan’s love for David is perhaps the most memorable friendship in the Bible.

Prov 17:17 **“A friend loves at all times & a brother is born for adversity.”**

20:18-24 Jonathan and David work out a plan using arrows in the field to let David know about Saul’s intentions. Jonathan assumes Saul will have men watching him. (Note: The Bible doesn’t defend deception.)

20:25-34 Dinner at the palace; Saul doesn’t say anything until the 2nd day.

- **vs 30**—Refers to Jonathan’s mother (Saul’s wife, Ahinoam) in a disparaging way: **“the shame of your mother’s nakedness”** = an idiom meaning the shame of the mother who bore you.
- **vs 31**—Saul knows David should be king, but he **COMMANDS** Jonathan to bring David so that he can be put to death.

20:35-40 The plan with the arrows takes place, and David knows that he will have to run for his life.

20:41 David bows 3 times, showing subordination to Jonathan who is legally the crown prince, but Jonathan kisses him, showing equality.

20:42 Go in peace = *shalom*, that is, safety.

I Samuel 21

21:1 David goes to Nob where the tabernacle is at this time. The ark was still in Kiriath-Jearim.

See Handout on Aaronic Priesthood: Aaron to Ahimelech (including Eli’s line).

21:1 Ahimelech asks David, **“Why are you ALONE?”** Compare 22:10—David had come to inquire of the LORD.

21:2 David gives Ahimelech a thin excuse, saying he has been sent on a mission by the king with no time to prepare.

21:3-4 **“five loaves of bread”** = refers to the table of shewbread in the tabernacle.



For more information, see Ex 25, 40 and Lev 24; it is also referred to as the “bread of the presence.” This bread was full of significance.

- 12 cakes = one representing each tribe of Israel
- The word for “cakes” indicates they were pierced or punctured.
- Each loaf was made with 2/10 of an ephah of fine flour.
- Ephah = 3 pecks + 3 pints or 25 1/2 qts of flour; each loaf = 20 cups of flour
- Frankincense was added to each row.

Was giving David some of the shewbread technically illegal according to the Mosaic Law?

Matthew 12:1-7 Jesus uses this situation with David as an example to the Pharisees.

Principle: When two laws clash, we must make a choice to favor the more important law. It is then with great reluctance that we violate one of the laws.

21:7 Doeg, the Edomite = the chief of Saul's shepherds; he witnessed what was happening between David and Ahimelech. See also I Sam 21:9.

21:8-10 David asks for a spear or sword and is given Goliath's weapons. He then goes to GATH (a Philistine city) to Achish, the king of Gath. The king of the Philistines would have welcomed someone who would defect from Israel, especially the great warrior, David.

21:11-15 David pretends to be insane so that the Philistines will leave him alone.

LESSONS: 1 Samuel 20 and 21

1. Lessons in loyalty (I Sam 20)

- Someone has said, "The strength of a country or code lies in the true sense of loyalty it can arouse in the hearts of its people" (Louis G. Gerstein).
- We see little of that in "fair-weather friends."

2. Limits of loyalty and obedience (1 Sam 20:31)

- Jonathan is ordered by Saul (20:31), "send and bring him to me, for he must surely die," but Jonathan does not obey Saul, his father, also his king. He is loyal to David, but not to his father's command to sin.

3. When two laws clash, what do you do? (1 Sam 21:4, bread; Mat 12:1-7)

Examples:

- circumcision the 8th day; the doctor works
- pulling an animal or child out of a well on the Sabbath (**Lk 14:5**)
- Jesus' answer in **Mat 12:4** (said of David): "He ate the consecrated bread which was NOT lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone."
- Jesus' summary in **Mat 12:7**: "But if you had known what this means, "I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent."

4. God's provision and encouragement (1 Sam 21)

- sustained with bread; protected by providing a sword

5. What David learned during this time: Psalm 34

- 34:1—Praise Him continually.
- 34:4-7—Pray and He will answer, protect, rescue.
- 34:9-10—Fear the Lord, and He will provide for you.
- 34:12-14—Don't lie.
- 34:17-18—God hears your cry, is near to the brokenhearted.
- 34:19—Expect stress in your life.