

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 27

David Flees to the Philistines

Then David said in his heart, “Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, and I shall escape out of his hand.” 2 So David arose and went over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3 And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel, and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. 4 And when it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer sought him. 5 Then David said to Achish, “If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be given me in one of the country towns, that I may dwell there. For why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?” 6 So that day Achish gave him Ziklag. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. 7 And the number of the days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months. 8 Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old, as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt. 9 And David would strike the land and would leave neither man nor woman alive, but would take away the sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the garments, and come back to Achish. 10 When Achish asked, “Where have you made a raid today?” David would say, “Against the Negeb of Judah,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites,” or, “Against the Negeb of the Kenites.” 11 And David would leave neither man nor woman alive to bring news to Gath, thinking, “lest they should tell about us and say, ‘So David has done.’” Such was his custom all the while he lived in the country of the Philistines. 12 And Achish trusted David, thinking, “He has made himself an utter stench to his people Israel; therefore he shall always be my servant.”

27:1 *I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul.* David falters in his faith (see 23:14; 25:29) and under pressure of Saul's superior forces feels compelled to seek security outside Israel's borders. (CSB)

Although David knew he had been anointed king, he could not bear the constant hide-and-seek existence in the wilderness for his family and small army. *perish*. Lit, “be swept away.” (TLSB)

land of the Philistines. For the second time David seeks refuge in the land of the Philistines (see 21:10–15). (CSB)

Given his earlier experience with the Philistines (21:10–15), he was courageous to return there. But this time, he arrived with a small army. Unlike earlier, the Philistines would now be aware of Saul's hostility toward David, which may have contributed to the welcome David received. David's move again demonstrates the awkward and enigmatic relationship between the Israelites and Philistines. (TLSB)

27:2 *Achish ... king of Gath.* See 21:10. In contrast to David's previous excursion into Philistia, Achish is now ready to receive him because he has become known as a formidable adversary of Saul. Moreover, to offer sanctuary under the circumstances would obligate David and his men to serve at his call in any military venture (see 28:1). (CSB)

Whether this is the Achish of ch 21 is uncertain; he may be a son. The amount of time between chs 21 and 27 is unclear. (TLSB)

27:3 *every man with his household.* Remarkable hospitality, demonstrating God's favor toward David. It must also have caused severe housing problems and other social issues. (TLSB)

27:4 *he no longer sought him.* Saul did not have sufficient military strength to make incursions into Philistine territory, and with David out of the country he no longer faced an internal threat to his throne. (CSB)

David's plan succeeded. Saul gave up the pursuit, not willing to provoke a war by entering Philistine territory. (TLSB)

27:5 *in one of the country towns.* David desired more independence and freedom of movement than was possible while residing under the very eyes of the king of Gath. (CSB)

David's suggestion would help to solve probable housing and social issues and allow the Israelites to live together as a community and maintain their own worship life. (TLSB)

Why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you? David implies that he is not worthy of this honor. (CSB)

David knew how to negotiate, enhancing his request with words the king would like to hear. (TLSB)

27:6 *Ziklag.* Location unknown, but it is included in a list of towns in southern Judah (see Jos 15:31). It was given to the tribe of Simeon (see Jos 19:1–5) and was presumably occupied by them (cf. Jdg 1:17–18), only to be lost to the Philistines at a later, undisclosed time. (CSB)

Border town between Philistine and Israelite territory, originally allocated to Simeon (Jsh 19:5; 1Ch 4:30), but likely at this time in the hands of the Philistines. Achish may have given the town to David to establish an outpost of power and order in an unruly region (cf 30:1). According to custom, all such grants were permanent. (TLSB)

it has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. As royal property. This comment implies that the book of Samuel was written after the time of the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms—an important consideration in determining the date of the writing of the book. (CSB)

Ziklag became crown property, thereafter belonging specifically to the kings of Judah as a result of this gift. (TLSB)

27:7 *David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months.* It was not until after the death of Saul that David moved his residence from Ziklag (see 2Sa 1:1; 2:1–3) to Hebron. (CSB)

David's stay in Gath and Ziklag, though little more than a year, provided further opportunity to gain the trust of the Philistines and to grow relationships with Israelites living in the area (30:26–31). (TLSB)

27:8 *Geshurites ... Girzites ... Amalekites.* Nomadic peoples living along the border between Canaan and Egypt, often plunderers of Judean and Philistine towns. David would pursue these marauders in defense of the Israelite towns, exterminate them, and take their livestock as spoils of war. (TLSB)

Geshurites. A people residing in the area south of Philistia who were not defeated by the Israelites at the time of the conquest (see Jos 13:1–3) and who are to be distinguished from the Geshurites residing in the north near the upper Jordan in Aram (see 2Sa 3:3; 13:37–38; Dt 3:14; Jos 12:5). (CSB)

Shur. Expansive wilderness area between Sinai and Egypt next to the Great Sea. (TLSB)

27:9 *he did not leave a man or woman alive*. David's reason for this is given in v. 11; his action conformed to that of Joshua in the conquest of Canaan. (CSB)

David pretended to be making raids on Judah, instead attacking the invaders and thereby actively helping his fellow Judeans. To maintain his deception, he had to make certain that none of the enemy survived. (TLSB)

strike. Raid. (TLSB)

garments. Demonstrates similarity of Israelite culture with its Semitic neighbors; their clothing must have looked much the same. (TLSB)

come back to Achish. David would return after the raids, to report and perhaps also to share some of the spoils. (TLSB)

27:10 David's responses to Achish's questions were deliberately misleading, indicating only the direction he had gone, allowing Achish to assume that the raids were against Israelites. (TLSB)

Negev of Judah. Negev in Hebrew means "dry" and designates a large area of southern Palestine from Beersheba to the highlands of the Sinai peninsula. (CSB)

Lit, "Southland," regularly used for the southern part of Judah, divided into districts according to population. The center of the Negeb of Judah was Beersheba. A relief at Karnak, describing the victories of Pharaoh Shishak over Rehoboam and Jeroboam (c 926 BC), includes a list of Judean place-names. The "highlands of Dwt," which likely transliterates David's Hbr name Dawid, appears in the list associated with the Negeb. (TLSB)

Jerahmeel. The Jerahmeelites were descendants of Judah through Hezron (see 1Ch 2:9, 25). (CSB)

Occupied land south of Beersheba. (TLSB)

Kenites. Near Hebron; understood to be Israelite territory. David was listing people who would potentially rival his later rule. (TLSB)

27:11 *lived in the country of the Philistines*. David and his army were "in" but not "of" the country. (TLSB)

27:12 *Achish trusted David*. David led Achish to believe that he was raiding outposts of Israelite territory when in actuality he was attacking the Geshurites, Girzites and Amalekites (see v. 8). (CSB)

David convinced Achish that he was further alienating himself from Saul and his own people, when, in fact, he was preparing for rule in Judah. (TLSB)

shall always be my servant. Lit, "a slave of eternity," a category of bondsman that included acceptance of this status by the servant, who thereby surrendered an opportunity for freedom forever (cf Ex 21:5). Achish was somehow convinced that David would never be going back. (TLSB)

Ch 27 Tired of the constant danger and hardship of evading Saul, David shrewdly finds refuge among the Philistines. As with David's previous clever action among the Philistines, the writer makes no

indication that the Lord encouraged or approved of David's behavior. Rather than living ambiguously, live boldly and clearly for your Lord, entrusting your future to His care rather than to your cleverness or the world's favor. The Lord's favor is far more precious, redeeming your life now and for eternity. • Lord, bless and guide our earthly decisions, that they may provide opportunity for growth in faith and service before You. Amen. (TLSB)