

1 Samuel Chapter 19

Verses 1-7: Jonathan's approach with his father produced a temporary reconciliation ("as in times past"), between David and Saul. He also proved that his word to David could be trusted.

1 Samuel 19:1 "And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David."

"Should kill David": Saul no longer tried to disguise or cover his evil intent toward David, but ironically made known his intent to those who held David in the highest esteem (compare 16:18; 18:1-4). God, in His mercy, made sure that David had sympathetic ears within Saul's court to inform him of Saul's evil plans (e.g., 19:7; 20:2).

Saul's hate for David had now grown into murder. He really brought all of this on himself, when he sinned so badly that the LORD removed his blessing and gave it to David. David and Jonathan had made a covenant for everlasting friendship. Saul has told the wrong person by telling his son Jonathan. He, at first, wanted no connection to David's death. He wanted the Philistines to do it for him. Now he is getting desperate and really does not care how it happens, he wants David dead.

1 Samuel 19:2 "But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret [place], and hide thyself:"

In his company and conversation; he loved him with a love of complacency, and was constant and steadfast in it, and which was a kind providence to David. For by this means he came to the knowledge of Saul's designs upon him, and could the better guard against him.

"And Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee": To inform him of which was acting the part of a sincere and faithful friend.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, take heed of thyself until the morning": It seems it was now evening when he informed him of it; and as he knew not what emissaries Saul might have out that night in quest of him. He advises him to take care of himself, and not expose himself to any danger, and to keep a strict guard about him; and in the morning he would try to conciliate his father to him. When he might hope, having slept upon it, that he would be in a better temper, and more disposed to hear what might be said to him.

"And abide in a secret place, and hide thyself": He seems to suggest as if it was not safe for him to be in his own house, and in his own bedchamber that night, but that it was advisable to retire to some private place, where it might not be known or suspected that he was there. By what follows he means some field, and a private place in it.

Jonathan's and David's friendship went much deeper than his loyalty to his father in doing this evil thing. Jonathan warns David and tells him to hide from the servants, who will be after him.

1 Samuel 19:3 "And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou [art], and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee."

In the morning, at the same time his father used to take his morning walk.

"And stand beside my father in the field where thou art": On that side of him next to David, that he might not see him, and yet be so near, that David might hear what passed between them.

"And I will commune with my father of thee": Speak in favor of him, and endeavor to dissuade him from attempting to take away his life, which was of so much importance and usefulness in the commonwealth of Israel.

"And what I see that I will tell thee": What David could not well hear he would inform him of, and what he could perceive in the countenance of Saul, as well as conclude from his words, that he would make known to David. That so he might know better what he had to do, and provide for his safety.

We see from this, that Jonathan's loyalty is with David. He will stay close by his father Saul and then report back to David what they are planning, so they will not catch David unaware.

Verses 4-5: "He hath not sinned": Jonathan reminded Saul that David had done nothing to deserve death; in fact, he was worthy of honor for his good works toward the king and Israel. Jonathan knew that the spilling of innocent blood would affect all Israel, not just the house of Saul (Deut. 21:8-9).

1 Samuel 19:4 "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works [have been] to thee-ward very good:"

"Jonathan spake good of David": Jonathan attempted to persuade his father with calm reason. Jonathan's reason was tempered by a godly attitude centered on a remembrance of the Torah (14:6; compare Num. 11:23; 14:19), and a covenantal loyalty toward and faithfulness for David.

Jonathan tries to put in a good word for his friend David. He is telling the truth as well. David had never tried to take the kingdom from Saul. Saul's fears of losing the kingdom have caused him to want to kill David.

1 Samuel 19:5 "For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest [it], and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

David exposed himself to the utmost danger, when no one in all the camp of Israel would do the like.

"And slew the Philistine": Goliath of Gath, who defied the armies of Israel; against him he went unarmed, only with his sling and stones, and fought him, and slew him.

"And the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel": By his hand, so that they were delivered from their enemies, who fled before them and they pursued them, and got a complete victory over them.

"Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice": He was an eyewitness of David's going forth against the Philistine, and slaying him, and of all the happy effects of it, which then greatly affected him, and he could not forbear expressing great joy on that occasion.

"Wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?" and so entail the guilt of it on himself and family.

This is a very bold statement to make to Saul in behalf of David. Jonathan tries to remind Saul of all of the good things David had done, and to remind Saul that David had done no wrong to him. Jonathan is endangering his own life to save David. Jonathan goes even further and tells Saul, that to kill David would be shedding innocent blood. Saul had been very joyful, when David killed Goliath and saved them all. He has forgotten all the good David did and wants him killed for no good reason.

1 Samuel 19:6 "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, [As] the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain."

"He shall not be slain": Saul temporarily responded to reason and conviction in his heart. His mental capacity was so unbalanced, however, that this response would not last for long.

Saul listens to what Jonathan has said, and takes an oath that he will not kill David. Even though Saul sware, with the LORD as witness, he may not keep his oath. He is not true to his oaths.

1 Samuel 19:7 "And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past."

Out of his lurking place in the field after Saul returned home.

"And Jonathan showed him all these things: which had passed between him and his father, and particularly the oath he had made that he should not be slain.

"And Jonathan brought David to Saul": Introduced him at court again, and into the present chamber of Saul; who in appearance, received him courteously, and a reconciliation was seemingly made.

"And he was in his presence as in times past"; when he was first received at court, and in great esteem both with Saul and his courtiers.

For the moment, everything is fine with Saul. He does allow David to come back and live with them. David believes that Saul truly changed his mind and will keep his oath.

1 Samuel 19:8 "And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him."

Between Israel and the Philistines; it does not appear that either of them sent out their whole force, only some parties or detachments, between which there were skirmishes.

"And David went out and fought with the Philistines": He went out with his thousand men, over which he was made captain (1 Sam. 18:13); for he had not the command of the whole army; that belonged to Abner.

"And slew them with a great slaughter, and they fled from him": He killed many of them in his engagements with them, and the rest fled, and he returned victorious. Which this stirred up the envy and increased the jealousy of Saul.

It seemed there was no problem with Saul and David until David fought against the Philistines. David won a great victory and killed many Philistines. It would appear that would make Saul more receptive to David, but instead, he became very jealous.

Verse 9-11: No longer did Saul passively hope the enemy would kill David (18:17, 21, 25). After two failed attempts to try to kill David himself, he now involved some of his "messengers" in a plot.

1 Samuel 19:9 "And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand."

"The evil spirit": Jealousy, rage, and anger once again dominated Saul, who was enraged by David's success against the Philistines (see 6:14; 18:10).

Jealousy, hate, and murder are all the same evil spirit. They are just different steps in the same spirit. He was first jealous of David, it grew to hate, and now he has murder in his heart. David is playing his harp to calm Saul. Saul's response is to grab the javelin that is near. He wants to kill David.

1 Samuel 19:10 "And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night."

"Smite David even to the wall": Saul's already diminished capacity for reason was once again completely clouded by anger, and he responded toward David with murderous intent (18:10-11).

David did not try to kill Saul. He jumped out of the way of the javelin, and it stuck in the wall. David could have taken it and killed Saul, but he did not want to kill Saul. He ran for safety, instead.

Verses 11-12: (In Psalm 59), David clarifies the difference between what he felt and what he believed in response to this event.

1 Samuel 19:11 "Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, tomorrow thou shalt be slain."

“Michal ... told him”: Michal, far from being a “snare” (18:21), to David, was instrumental in saving his life. Michal, at this time in her relationship with David, displayed a covenantal love and faithfulness similar to that of Jonathan (see the title of Psalm 59).

It appears that David ran to his own home and his wife, Michal. She rushes David off, because she knows that Saul's men will be there at daybreak to kill him. He must get away during the night.

1 Samuel 19:12 "So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped."

In like manner as Rahab let down the spies from her house in Jericho, when the king's messengers were in quest of them (Joshua 2:15); and as the disciples let down the Apostle Paul at Damascus, to preserve him from the designs of the Jews upon him.

"And he went, and fled, and escaped": He departed from his house, and ran with all the haste he could, and escaped the messengers that had beset the house, and were waiting for him.

Michal was like Jonathan, she loved David. She helped him get away, by letting him out a window.

Verses 13-16: For household images (see Genesis 31:19).

1 Samuel 19:13 "And Michal took an image, and laid [it] in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' [hair] for his bolster, and covered [it] with a cloth."

“Image”: Hebrew teraphim. The writer of Samuel draws a parallel between David/Michal/Saul and Jacob/Rachel/Laban (see note on 18:17), in that both Rachel and Michal employed the use of household gods “teraphim”, in trickery and out of loyalty for their husbands rather than their fathers (Gen. 31:30-35).

The word used for “image’ refers to smaller household idols (Gen. 31:19, 30-35; Judges 18:17-26). Apparently, it was not difficult for Saul’s daughter to locate idols in the palace.

This image was in the shape of a man's head and shoulders. Micah made it look like David was in her bed. She even put goats' hair on the head to make it look like human hair.

1 Samuel 19:14 "And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He [is] sick."

There were either the same who in the morning inquired for David or those staying longer than Saul expected. Then fearing they were negligent or corrupted, he sent others.

"She said, he is sick": And in bed, and cannot be spoke with. This lie she told through her affection to David, and to preserve his life. And this stratagem she devised to gain time, that while she was amusing the messengers with this tale of hers, before they could discover the truth of the matter David would be out of their reach. Whereas, had she denied his being at home, or signified that he had made his escape, they would have immediately pursued after him, and he would have been in danger of being taken by them.

She was stalling for time, to give David enough time to get away.

1 Samuel 19:15 "And Saul sent the messengers [again] to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him."

Not to visit him, or to see how he was, or inquire of his health, in a kind manner, but to see his person, whether he was sick or not. And whether he was there or not. For Saul might suspect some deceit was used, because the messengers took the report of Michal, and saw not David, nor attempted to see him. But now they have strict orders to see him, and not take Michal's word as before (1 Sam. 19:14). Wherefore the supplement again may be left out.

"Saying, bring him up to me in the bed": If so bad that he was not able to rise, or not fit to be taken out of his bed, his orders were, that he should be brought to him in it. Resolved he was to have him, sick or well.

"That I may slay him": Not content that he should die a natural death, or willing to wait for it, he is in haste, being full of wrath and malice, to slay him himself.

Saul did not care that he might be sick. He told the men to just bring him, bed and all, that he might kill David.

1 Samuel 19:16 "And when the messengers were come in, behold, [there was] an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' [hair] for his bolster."

They went into David's house and into the room where he was supposed to lie.

"Behold, there was an image in the bed to their great surprise": They expected to see David, but instead of him the teraphim (as in 1 Samuel 19:13); if they had been in the room before, and

thought they had seen David in the bed, they might be the more surprised to find that it was only an image they saw.

"With a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster (See 1 Sam. 19:13).

Michal had helped David have time to get away. She had endangered herself in doing this. This time she had stalled the discovery of David's absence, giving him several hours head start. Saul had planned for Michal to deceive David, instead she deceived Saul.

1 Samuel 19:17 "And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?"

"He said unto me": Michal lied in telling Saul the exact opposite of what she said to David (verse 11).

About the only answer that would have saved her life was the one she gave. She tells her father that David threatened to kill her, if she did not do this.

1 Samuel 19:18 "So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth."

"Ramah": With the mention of Samuel's birthplace, the author establishes a verbal link (with 1:1), and also reminds the reader of Saul's first encounter with Samuel the seer in Zuph (Ramathaim-zophim).

"Naioth": Perhaps dwelling or quarters within the town limits of Ramah, where Samuel and his company of prophet-disciples met for training, prayer and fellowship (Elisha at Gilgal, 2 Kings 6:1-2).

It appears that David ran to Samuel, because he was the spiritual leader of the land. Many believe that David had been trained by Samuel and he ran to him, knowing the respect that the whole nation had for Samuel. Even Saul would not dare attack Samuel.

"Saying, behold, David is at Naioth, in Ramah": Or near it; according to R. Isaiah, Ramah was the name of a hill, or mountain, so called from its height, and Naioth the name of a place on it. It signifies pastures and pleasant places, as meadows and pastures are; and here in the fields near Ramah was the house of doctrine, as the Targum calls it, or the school of the prophets, being pleasant and retired, and fit for study.

1 Samuel 19:19 "And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David [is] at Naioth in Ramah."

By some officious persons who saw David at Ramah, and observed that he and Samuel went together to Naioth.

Naioth was where the students dwelled, when they went to study under Samuel. This then was like a dormitory at Ramah where Samuel lived. We see that someone saw David running to Samuel, and reported it to Saul.

Verses 20-24: The “Spirit of God” thwarted the messengers’ evil intentions. Even Saul was overcome and was stripped of his dignity in the process, just as he would soon be stripped of his throne. No one can frustrate God’s purposes.

1 Samuel 19:20 "And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing [as] appointed over them, the spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied."

Samuel’s headship over the “company of the prophets” may indicate the origin of the later prophetic schools (see the note on 1 Kings 18:4).

“Company of the prophets prophesying”: These prophets were declaring the Word of God, probably with musical accompaniment. Saul’s messengers could not fulfill their task of taking David captive because they were irresistibly led to join the prophets and speak for and praise God.

1 Samuel 19:21 "And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also."

That the messengers he had sent, instead of seizing on David, they were prophesying of him, or however were attending to services of a different nature than what they were sent upon.

"He sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise": When they came to the same place.

"And Saul sent messengers again a third time, and they prophesied also; joined the rest in singing praises, or foretelling future events.

It is so beautiful what God can do to someone, who comes to the place of worship. The messengers from Saul came with evil intent to David, but when the Spirit of the LORD entered into them, they started to prophesy themselves as the prophets had. Three different groups of messengers came and the same thing happened to them. God transformed the messengers.

Verses 22-24: Like the men sent before him to find and apprehend David, “Saul” was overpowered by the “Spirit of God” so that he, too, joined in prophesying and praising God.

Saul’s actions do not give evidence that Israel’s prophets were mere ecstatic’s, as charged by some. Saul alone behaved himself in this manner on this occasion. Rather, one must remember

that Saul's unstable makeup, his disturbed emotional state, and his conduct may reflect God's judgment upon him by allowing his dementia to bring on personal humiliation and shame.

1 Samuel 19:22 "Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that [is] in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where [are] Samuel and David? And [one] said, Behold, [they be] at Naioth in Ramah."

That is, Saul; his messengers not returning to him, when he sent one after another to take David, at length he set out himself from Gibeah to Ramah.

"And came to a great well that is in Sechu": Which was either the name of a man, the owner of the well, or a place near to which the well was, and is commonly thought to be the same with Shochoh (1 Sam. 17:1). At such places, there was generally a concourse of people at certain times, to fetch water for the inhabitants of the place, and for the watering of flocks and herds, and so a proper place to stop at and ask the following questions.

"And he asked and said, where are Samuel and David?" for his messengers not returning to him, he could not be sure where they now were, though he had heard they were at Naioth.

"And one said, behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah": At the house of doctrine, or school in Ramah, as the Targum; thus, one at the well replied in answer to his question, who had seen them go there, or knew they were there.

"Great well ... Sechu": The exact location is unknown; the probable location was approximately two miles north of Ramah.

The well was where the people gathered for water. Someone there would know exactly where Samuel and David were. He inquired and they told him where they were.

1 Samuel 19:23 "And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah."

The inspiration seized Saul even before he reached the company of prophets. He was to be convinced of the irresistible might of the Divine Spirit against whose influence he had striven. He was to be taught, if his heart was not already too utterly hardened to learn, that in fighting against David he was fighting against God, and engaging in a futile struggle.

"The spirit of God was upon him": This was the last time the Spirit of the Lord would rest on Saul. God turned Saul's heart to prophesy and not to harm David (see note on 16:13).

1 Samuel 19:24 "And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, [Is] Saul also among the prophets?"

"Stripped off his clothes": Saul removed his armor and royal garments (compare Jonathan, 18:4), prompted by the Spirit of God, thus signifying God's rejection of Saul as king over Israel.

“Lay down naked”: without the royal garments, Saul was figuratively “naked,” perhaps so overwhelmed by the Spirit of God as to be in a deep sleep. Other than Saul’s utter despair and pitiful state at the home of the witch at En-dor (28:20), and his end at Mt. Gilboa (31:4-6), this episode represents one of the severest humbling in Saul’ life.

For this reason, Saul, as the chief agent in David’s persecution, was struck down more completely than his servants, and lay there unconscious “all that day and all that night.”

“Is Saul also among the prophets?” This is a final editorial comment tying together the Spirit of God’s presence at Saul’s inauguration (10:10-11), and the final departure of the same at his rejection (19:24).

The spirit of God came upon Saul as well, and he began singing to the LORD. As he arrived at the place of worship, he stripped all of his clothes off and lay naked all night. Saul has thrown his clothes down in grief, for the great fall he had taken from the time Samuel had anointed him king. He was momentarily remorseful for the terrible things he had done. He is regretful of the oath he has now broken about David. Naked he came into the world. This nakedness shows the condition of us all, as we stand before the LORD. We will have nothing to offer but ourselves, stripped of all the things of this world. Saul’s clothing was the clothing of a king on this earth. Before God, he was naked as a new-born baby.

1 Samuel Chapter 19 Questions

1. Who did Saul speak to, and tell them to kill David?
2. David and Jonathan had made a _____ of everlasting friendship.
3. Who had Saul first wanted to kill David?
4. What did Jonathan do about this?
5. Why would Jonathan go and stand by his father?
6. Jonathan spoke _____ of David to Saul.
7. What reason did Jonathan give Saul for not killing David?
8. What has caused Saul to want to kill David?
9. Who had David killed, that none of the other Israelites would even try to fight?
10. How did this pleading from Jonathan affect Saul?
11. Why did Jonathan believe Saul?
12. Did David come back with Jonathan?

13. In verse 8, there was war with the Philistines, and David _____ them.
14. Instead of Saul being proud of the victory against the Philistines, it made him _____ David.
15. The evil spirit from the _____ was upon Saul, when he took the javelin in his hand.
16. _____, _____, and _____ are all the same evil spirit.
17. What does David do, when Saul tries again to kill him with the javelin?
18. When had Saul's messengers planned to kill David?
19. How did Michal help David escape?
20. What did Michal put in her bed to pretend it was David?
21. When the messengers from her father came to get David, what did she tell them?
22. What did Saul tell the messengers to do, even if he was sick?
23. What had she put on the head of the image, to make it look like human hair?
24. What excuse did Michal give Saul for deceiving him?
25. Where did David flee to?
26. Where did they tell Saul that David was?
27. What happened to the messengers Saul sent to get David?
28. What caused them to prophesy?
29. Where did Saul stop and ask where David and Samuel were?
30. What happened to Saul, when he arrived where Samuel was with David?