

## 1 Samuel Chapter 25

Verses 1-17: It was customary in the sparsely populated regions near the border for groups of soldiers or mercenaries to provide protection for the local “shepherds”. David and his 600 men safe guarded Nabal’s men (“a wall ... day and night”), in this way.

**1 Samuel 25:1 "And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran."**

“All the Israelites ... lamented him”: The death of Samuel, the last of the judges, brought Israel to the end of an era. So widespread was Samuel’s influence among the people that all Israel gathered to lament his death.

“Wilderness of Paran”: A desert area in the northeast region of the Sinai Peninsula.

Samuel had a school for the prophets. He really was one of the more prominent judges. The law was not always well understood, and Samuel tried to make the people understand and keep the law. His ministry was during a time when the people were very casually keeping the law. It was in fact, a time when the law was being changed to fit the needs of the people, which was not permissible with God. Samuel was a very powerful, spiritual man with the people. It would have been correct for them to greatly mourn his death. This is possibly, speaking of him being buried on his property somewhere. He probably wanted to be buried at Ramah. This is speaking of David and his men moving to the wilderness. They were a fairly large group and would have to move pretty often to have food to eat. Paran was in the Arabia. It was a vast wilderness.

**1 Samuel 25:2 "And [there was] a man in Maon, whose possessions [were] in Carmel; and the man [was] very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel."**

“Carmel”: “Vineyard land,” “garden spot.” This is located about 7 miles south of Hebron and one mile north of Maon. This was the same spot where Saul erected a monument in his own honor (15:12).

Maon was an elevated town of the tribe of Judah. It was 7 miles south of Hebron. This man of Maon was a very wealthy man. Notice that he was working in Carmel. Mount Carmel is the same place where Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal.

Verses 3-11: the name “Nabal” (meaning fool), in biblical terms, this represents one who tries to live without God. As if Nabal’s stingy refusal to repay David for his protection was not foolish enough, he also treated David with contempt. Apparently, this was not a momentary attitude but a lifestyle (25:17).

**1 Samuel 25:3 "Now the name of the man [was] Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and [she was] a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man [was] churlish and evil in his doings; and he [was] of the house of Caleb."**

“Nabal”: “Fool.” An appropriate name in view of his foolish behavior (verse 25).

“Abigail”: “My father is joy.” This was the wife of Nabal who was intelligent and beautiful in contrast to her evil husband.

“House of Caleb”: Nabal was a descendant of Caleb and lived in Caleb’s tribal holdings (Joshua 14:13; 15:13), but did not possess the spiritual qualities of his illustrious forefather.

The name "Nabal" means foolish. Nabal was descended from Caleb. Caleb and Joshua were the only two who had brought back the good report, when they first searched out the Promised Land. "Churlish" means severe, cruel, grievous, and hard. It also means obstinate, rough, and stubborn. This Nabal was probably all of these things. His wife appeared to be the opposite of him. "Abigail" seemed to be a source for joy. She was a beautiful woman, as well as being a joyful person.

Verses 4-5: “Shear his sheep”: While hiding out in the wilderness, David and his men took the job of protecting the flocks of Nabal (verses 7:15-16). Upon hearing that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David sent 10 of his men to collect their rightful compensation for the good they had done (verse 8).

**1 Samuel 25:4 "And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep."**

In the wilderness of Paran, where he was, and a wilderness it was to him, being in want of food, as the following relation shows.

"That Nabal did shear his sheep": When there was generally good living, and so a proper person, and a proper time, for David to apply for the relief of his needs.

It appears that David was trying to find Nabal that he might speak to him.

**1 Samuel 25:5 "And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:"**

Such persons, and such a number of them, he sent to show honor and reverence to Nabal.

"And David said, unto the young men, get ye up to Carmel; which lay higher than the wilderness, in which he was.

"And go to Nabal, and greet him in my name": Ask him of his peace and welfare, as the Targum; and wish all health and happiness in my name; present my service and best respects to him.

**1 Samuel 25:6 "And thus shall ye say to him that liveth [in prosperity], Peace [be] both to thee, and peace [be] to thine house, and peace [be] unto all that thou hast."**

That lives, while others, as David and his men might be rather said to starve than live. They lived in great meanness, but he in great abundance, and therefore in a capacity to give to others, and particularly to relieve them. Or the sense is, they should say to him, "thus" shall it be, or may it be "for life": for the time of life, for the year to come; at this time next year, at next sheep shearing, mayest thou be in as great prosperity then as now, and even all the days of thy life.

"Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast": That is, all prosperity to thy person in soul and body, to thy family, wife, children and servants, and let the same attend thy estate, cattle, farms, fields, vineyards, and all that belong to thee. And wish for a blessing on him, and his, and all that were his, or he had; a more extensive one could not well be made.

David wanted to make peace with Nabal. David had probably, over 600 men at this time. He needs food for his men, but he can furnish protection for Nabal's animals. David sends ten men to represent him to Nabal. The number "ten" has to do with world government. David is trying to deal with a very worldly man. David does not want any trouble with Nabal. Since they will be neighbors, it would be to both of their advantages to get along.

**1 Samuel 25:7 "And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel."**

These words doubtless refer to the protection which David's armed band had afforded to the herdsmen against the frequent raids of the neighboring people, the Philistines and other more savage and unscrupulous tribes who dwelt on the borders of Palestine. The request was certainly a fair one, for, as Lange and Ewald remark, "apart from the Eastern custom of giving largely at such great merry-makings, according to which such a request would seem in no way strange, David had a certain right to ask a gift from Nabal's wealth. He had indirectly no small share in the festal joy of Nabal and his house. Without some part of the superfluity of the inhabitants whom he protected, he could not have maintained himself and his army."

It seems from this, that David had been protecting Nabal's shepherds. David sends word that they had not harmed the shepherds, even though they had great opportunity to do so. David did not allow his men to take any of the sheep from Nabal.

**1 Samuel 25:8 "Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."**

"A good day": A special day of rejoicing over the abundance of sheared wool from the sheep (compare verse 11).

This is saying that Nabal can ask his own young men, and they will tell him that David and his men have done them no harm. In fact, they had protected them from other raiders. David needed food for his men. He was not, however, asking for charity. He is asking Nabal to pay him for the services they have rendered, so that he can feed his men. David speaks of himself as son of Nabal. This is just a son in age. He was not David's father.

**1 Samuel 25:9 "And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased."**

When the young men came to Camel, they delivered their message punctually and exactly, in the very words, or however according to the purport of them, in David's name, as he requested them.

"And ceased: from speaking, waiting for Nabal's answer": Or "they rested", from the fatigues of their journey; which they did not until they delivered their message to Nabal. And then they took the liberty to sit down and rest themselves. But the former sense seems best, and is preferred by Maimonides.

It is apparent that the ten young men of David went to Nabal with the message from David. They brought the exact message. They have explained the circumstances of David and his men being fugitives. They also, have told that David is the son of Jesse.

Verses 10-11: This pretended ignorance of David was surely a sham. The knowledge of the young king-elect was widespread. Nabal pretended not to know to excuse his unwillingness to do what was right.

**1 Samuel 25:10 "And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who [is] David? and who [is] the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master."**

This evident insult indicates that Nabal was of the faction of Saul at this time, was reckoned among those who hated David. It was the report of these words, no doubt, which so furiously excited David. In Nabal, the rich sheep-master, the churlish refuter of the fairly earned gift, he saw a deadly political adversary. One who, with men like Doeg and Cush, would hunt him down like a wild beast. Without this explanation, David's wrath and determination to take such speedy and bloody vengeance on a mere selfish churl is inexplicable. With the light, however, which such an open declaration of deadly hostility on the part of Nabal throws on the transaction, the subsequent passionate conduct of David, although deeply blamable, is not difficult to understand.

It is obvious that the personality of Nabal was one that insulted people. He has no respect for David. He would never say these things to David's face. He is speaking these insulting things to David's servants. He is saying that Saul was David's master and that David was no more than a servant.

**1 Samuel 25:11 "Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give [it] unto men, whom I know not whence they [be]?"**

Which include all food and liquors, everything eatable and drinkable; and "water" may be particularly mentioned, because very scarce in the wilderness, and so precious; though the Septuagint version has "wine" instead of "water".

"And my flesh which I have killed for my shearers": Whether oxen, or sheep, or lambs, as there might be of each sort, for an entertainment made on such an occasion.

"And give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?" which is another argument Abarbinel makes use of that he meant not David, but his men only, because he did not know who and from whence they were.

These foods and drink are the things necessary to exist in this hostile environment. Notice the word "my". Nabal is a selfish man, who does not care for the needs of others. He refuses food for David and his men.

**1 Samuel 25:12 "So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings."**

Their backs on him, without making any reply; and though they did not return railing for railing, they treated him with silent contempt. Though they did not offer to do any injury to his person, nor to take anything away by force, yet they were determined to report this usage to David, who they doubted not would avenge the affront put on him and them.

"And went again": To the wilderness from whence they came.

"And came and told him all these sayings": Rude and reproachful ones, just as they were delivered.

**1 Samuel 25:13 "And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff."**

The formal preparation and the largeness of the force showed how terribly David was in earnest, and how determined he was on wiping out the insult of Nabal in blood. From the view we have taken of the transaction above, David's anger is quite to be accounted for, though not to be excused.

David had offered them a peaceful solution, but Nabal was too evil to accept it. Now they will have to face David and four hundred of his men in battle. The reply of Nabal had greatly angered David and he will go against this evil man. There were marauders in the area, so David left two hundred of his men to protect his camp.

**1 Samuel 25:14 "But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them."**

“Railed”: David sent his messengers to “greet” (literally “bless”) Nabal, but David’s men were viciously rebuffed by Nabal. This term emphasized the wickedness of Nabal’s action.

Nabal not only refused to acknowledge David’s requests (verses 10-11), for compensation for guarding his flocks (verses 15-16, 21), but threw out insults at David’s “messengers”. Whatever his name was originally intended to signify, his actions betray the character of the name: Nabal means “Foolish.” The word is used of a person who is devoid of spiritual sensitivity or ethical standards (compare verse 25). He was, as his servant recognized, a “son of Belial” (verse 17). For this latter term (see the note on Judges 19:22).

We remember from earlier in the lesson, that Abigail was the opposite of her husband. The young men had to be in attendance, when Nabal said these terrible things to David's servants. The young men knew the things Nabal had said were wrong, because they use the word (railed).

Verses 15-16: The testimony of one of Nabal’s men affirmed the value of David’s protection. It was like a fortress “wall” enclosing a city, providing total security.

**1 Samuel 25:15 "But the men [were] very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:"**

Very kind and civil, yea, very useful and serviceable, even all the messengers David sent and Nabal railed on, yea, all David's men, and therefore deserved better treatment than they met with from Nabal.

"And we were not hurt": Neither by them nor others.

"Neither missed we anything": Of our flocks, or anything belonging to us; they neither robbed us themselves, nor suffered others to rob us.

"As long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields; feeding the sheep by them: thus he confirms everything that David said of himself and his men (see 1 Sam. 25:7), and says even more of them to their commendation, as follows.

**1 Samuel 25:16 "They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep."**

Protecting and defending them against the Philistines, who, as they robbed the threshing floors of Keilah, would have plundered the flocks of Nabal. Or it may be rather against the incursions of the Arabs in the wilderness of Paran, the posterity of Ishmael, who lived by plunder, and against the wild beasts of the desert, who otherwise would have carried off many of their sheep and lambs, by night or by day.

"All the while we were with them keeping the sheep": All which showed how reasonable it was that Nabal should have treated them well, and given them a portion of his entertainment at his sheep shearing. For had it not been for them, he would not have had so many sheep to shear as he had.

They knew the men of David had protected them over and over. The men of David needed food, but they would not take it from the servants of Nabal. They undoubtedly have tried to tell this to Nabal, but he would not listen. He was a very stubborn, selfish man who would not listen to his own men. These servants knew that Abigail was a fair woman and they have brought this message to her.

**1 Samuel 25:17 "Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he [is such] a son of Belial, that [a man] cannot speak to him."**

"A man cannot speak to him": Nabal was a "son of Belial", a worthless fellow (see note on 2:12). Nabal's situation was the product of his own wickedness. His unwillingness to seek the counsel of others ultimately led to his demise.

These young men feared for the family of Nabal. They were aware that David's army was powerful enough to destroy them and take what they needed. They also knew that David's servants have taken the insulting message back to David. They fear that David and his men will come and destroy them all. They have come to Abigail to see if she can do something that will stop this. "Belial" means worthlessness. It also, is a description of a naughty, ungodly man.

Verses 18-35: Abigail's quick and wise actions saved David from making a rash mistake by retaliating. She also prevented him from sinning ("coming to shed blood and ... avenging" himself). Her response models the importance of wisdom in everyday living, especially in the face of someone else's foolishness.

**1 Samuel 25:18 "Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched [corn], and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid [them] on asses."**

The prudence and address of Nabal's wife were the means of saving him and his family from utter destruction. She acknowledged the demand of her formidable neighbors; but justly considering, that to atone for the insolence of her husband, a greater degree of liberality had become necessary. She collected a large amount of food, accompanying it with the most valued products of the country.

**1 Samuel 25:19 "And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal."**

“Told not her husband” Abigail knew that Nabal would disagree with her actions, but knowing the Lord’s choice of David (verse 28), she recognized the consequences involved in Nabal’s cursing of David. By her actions, she chose to obey God rather than man (see Acts 5:29), as a wife may sometimes need to do.

**1 Samuel 25:20 "And it was [so, as] she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them."**

After her servants.

"That she came down, by the covert of the hill": By the side of it, which was covered with bushes, and she rode among them, in a way that led through them, and so was not seen by David and his men. Or by the shadow of the hill, toward the bottom of it, where by reason of that, and the opposite hill, it was darkish, and they could not see each other.

"And, behold, David and his men came down against her": Came down a hill opposite to that she came down.

"And she met them": In the valley between two hills.

We see the wisdom of Abigail far surpasses the wisdom of her husband Nabal. She does not tell her husband, because his greed will not allow him to do this. From the list of things she has taken to give to David above, we can see that she has enough that all of the men can enjoy some of this. She sent the gifts in front of her, so that David would be more receptive to her. She is just in time to stop the attack from David. In fact, she meets David and his men on the way to destroy Nabal and his servants. It appears she is in a covering underneath the road that David is coming on.

**1 Samuel 25:21 "Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this [fellow] hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that [pertained] unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good."**

When the messengers returned and told him how they had been used by Nabal; or he "said", or was saying within himself, or to his men, what follows, just as Abigail met him.

"Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness": Which shows that he was in a violent passion, and had Nabal in the utmost contempt and indignation, in that he mentions not his name. Only he says "this", this man or fellow; leaving a blank to be filled up with the most ignominious name and character that could be thought of. And regrets he had taken so much care of his flocks when they were feeding by him in the wilderness.

"So that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him": And seems to have wished he had suffered his flocks to have been robbed by the Arabs, or worried by wild beasts, since he had been such an ungrateful wretch to him.



"And he hath requited me evil for good": He had requited evil to him by denying sending him any of his provisions, and by abusing him and his men with insulting language. And this was done in return for the good deeds he had done in protecting his servants and his flocks in the wilderness, and for the good words and respectful message he had sent unto him.

**1 Samuel 25:22 "So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that [pertain] to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall."**

"So and more also do God": A strong oath of self-imprecation. David swore that he would kill every male in Nabal's household by day-break.

At this point, David has planned to kill all the males of the family of Nabal and all of his servants. He regrets that he had spared their flocks, because of the greed of Nabal. He had tried to be friends with Nabal, and Nabal had refused his friendship. David had done nothing but good to Nabal and his men. Nabal had done evil to David. David has every intention of killing them and taking their flocks.

## 1 Samuel Chapter 25 Questions

1. In verse 1, we read that \_\_\_\_\_ died.
2. Where was he buried?
3. Samuel had a school for \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Samuel was a very powerful, \_\_\_\_\_ man with the people.
5. The rich man, in verse 2, had \_\_\_\_\_ sheep.
6. Where was he shearing sheep?
7. What was the name of the rich man?
8. What does his name mean?
9. What was his wife's name?
10. What type of person was she?
11. What does "churlish" mean?
12. How many men did David send to speak to Nabal?
13. What did David ask of Nabal?
14. Why should he do this for David?

15. Who knew what David and his men had done, and could speak for them?
16. How did Nabal answer David's young men?
17. What foods did Nabal refuse to send David?
18. When David heard Nabal's answer, what did he tell his men to do?
19. Who did the young men of Nabal go to, and tell what happened?
20. What did the young men tell her?
21. What did they call Nabal in verse 17?
22. What did Abigail do, immediately?
23. Why does she not tell her husband?
24. What were David's intentions toward Nabal?