

## 1 SAMUEL 22:6-23: MASSACRE AT NOB

In 1 Samuel 22, David's fortunes changed as he found refuge in the cave of Adullam, gathering around him people in distress, debt, or discontent, becoming the leader of 400 men. As David's influence grew, so did Saul's paranoia.

### SAUL'S PARANOIA | VV. 6-8

Saul learned of David's presence and his followers, either due to David's increasing fame or due to David's bold confrontation with Saul as directed by Gad. Saul was in Gibeah at the time, described as "abiding under a tree," symbolizing his kingly duties or court-holding, a common imagery in Near Eastern literature.

"Ramah" in verse 6 likely refers to a "high place" or "hill" in this context. Saul's paranoia, an irrational fear of conspiracy, surfaces in verses 7-8. He suspects his servants are siding with David for potential benefits, despite no evidence of David seeking the throne, confirming Saul's paranoia.

Saul likely knew about the covert "shooting arrow" signal between David and Jonathan, fueling his suspicion. Jonathan, presented positively in the scripture, strived to support his father and protect David, further indicating Saul's paranoia.

### DOEG'S REPORT | VV. 9-10

Remember Doeg the Edomite from 1 Samuel 21:7, when David visited Nob and met High Priest Ahimelech? He reappears, eager to share a report. "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob," Doeg announces in v. 9. He informs that Ahimelech "inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath" (v. 10). Doeg's satisfaction is palpable.

This passage confirms Ahimelech "inquired of the LORD for him." It may remind you of 1 Samuel 21:9, about the sword "wrapped in a garment behind the ephod," which I've previously commented.

I want to provide support for another idea, held by ancient sages of Judaism like Rashi and Jonathan. This idea is that "behind the ephod" should be translated as "following the ephod," with the suggestion that the ephod (including its Urim and Thummin) gave divine guidance for Ahimelech to give Goliath's sword (wherever it was kept) to David.

This idea seems confirmed with the report from Doeg that Ahimelech "inquired of the LORD for him."

### SAUL'S CRUELTY | VV. 11-19

King Saul interrogates Ahimelech the priest and his family from Nob, accusing them of conspiring with David. Ahimelech defends his actions, stating his services to David were routine priestly duties, not a conspiracy. In verse 15, he clarifies that he's regularly consulted God on behalf of others, including David, as

part of his priestly role. His service to David wasn't unique or motivated by disloyalty to Saul.

Ahimelech's explanation is ignored by the paranoid Saul, who commands his footmen to execute the priests. They refuse, adhering to their moral principles. Saul then orders Doeg the Edomite, who without hesitation, executes 85 priests. He further devastates the priestly town of Nob. This brutal act symbolizes the depth of Saul's paranoia.

### ABIATHAR'S ESCAPE | VV. 20-23

Abiathar escapes the massacre and informs David, who is filled with regret, recognizing his role in the tragedy. He assures Abiathar of protection, demonstrating empathy and responsibility. In Chapter 23, we see the event's significance. The Ephod, a means of communication with God and kept by the high priest, is now with Abiathar, the sole surviving priest. Abiathar, now high priest of Israel, aligns himself with David.

### THE PSALM 52 CONNECTION

The drama intensifies when linked to Psalm 52, believed to be David's response to the Nob massacre. David expresses his horror at the violence by Doeg the Edomite and condemns those who deceive and destroy, referencing Doeg's report to Saul that instigated the massacre. This connection underscores the events in 1 Samuel 22 and their profound impact on David.

But it also gives us prophetic insight. In the prophetic nature of the Psalms, the wicked man is almost always a prophetic reference to the coming Antichrist. This makes Psalm 52 a prophecy of the Antichrist, and Doeg a "type" of the Antichrist. Interestingly, King Herod, who was also an Edomite, is often considered another type of Antichrist.

In his work "The Numerical Bible," F. W. Grant suggests that Doeg the Edomite serves as a relatively weak representative, or typology, of the ultimate enemy of God and humanity in the end times, often referred to as the Antichrist. This interpretation further underscores the biblical narrative's prophetic undertones. Grant calls Doeg, "a feeble representative of the great enemy of God and man at the time of the end."<sup>1</sup>

From this perspective, we might question whether Doeg's action against Ahimelech reflects future events. Could it be possible that the Antichrist will kill the priests of Israel, except for one who manages to escape?

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, 1 Samuel 22:6-23 reveals Saul's paranoia and its violent result, the massacre at Nob. Amidst this, divine providence is evident as Abiathar escapes to David with the ephod. The chapter highlights the dangers of unchecked paranoia, the necessity of truth and reason, and David's empathetic leadership. As we continue our study, these events' significance and implications for Israel's future will be further explored.

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Grant, *The Numerical Bible; Being a Revised Translation of the Holy Scriptures with Expository Notes: Arranged, Divided, and Briefly Characterized according to the Principles of Their Numerical Structure: The Psalms (Study Text)* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1897), 210.