

SETTING THE STAGE (VERSES 1-3)

Chapter 23 concludes with Saul inadvertently aiding David's escape. Upon learning David is in Engedi, a lush oasis in the Judean Desert, Saul mobilizes 3,000 men to capture him and his 600-strong group.

Engedi, known for its springs and vegetation, provides refuge. Its hills, cliffs, and caves give David a strategic edge. Variations in Engedi's spelling are due to differing transliteration methods.

The term "Rocks of the wild goats" alludes to the area's rocky habitat suited for these animals. "Sheepcotes" probably denote natural caves used as shelters.

Desert shepherding requires knowledge of water and grazing locations. The herds consist of sheep and goats adapted to desert living. Shepherds move their flocks seasonally, facing harsh temperatures, scarce water, and predators.

David, a shepherd, is familiar with the terrain. The phrase "to cover his feet" is a euphemism for relieving oneself. Saul, unaware of David in the cave, implies David's group might not be with him due to space constraints.

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE (VERSES 4-7)

Verse 4 attributes a quote to God, creating ambiguity. It's unclear whether God directly made this promise or if David's men inferred it. Both interpretations are plausible, but without this episode, the prophecy's fulfillment is elusive. I believe these men assumed these words from God, linking God's anointing of David to Saul being delivered to David.

This brings up an interesting point where New Testament writers are accused of inventing quotes. It reminds us that Scripture can contain unrecorded quotes.

Regardless of how the promise came about, David acted nobly and discreetly cut Saul's robe's corner, a move that may not have been viewed as noble by his men. Despite the risks, David chose not to seize this opportunity, showing his deep trust in the Lord's timing and protection. David felt remorse for his action, viewing Saul as his "master" and "the Lord's anointed," with Saul's fate being God's prerogative. Verse 7 suggests David prevented his servants from killing Saul. His command shows their obedience, and Saul lived another day. Saul's ignorance of the men in the cave highlights David's tactical skills and stealth. This stealth is again demonstrated in 1 Samuel 26, where David and Abishai sneak into Saul's camp unnoticed.

DAVID REVEALS HIS INTEGRITY TO SAUL (VERSES 8-15)

David sought to spare Saul's life and address misunderstandings. He respectfully confronted Saul, asking why he believed "David seeks your harm." David then presented a piece of Saul's robe, proof he could have killed Saul but didn't, reinforcing his peaceful intentions.

He uses metaphors, comparing himself to a 'dead dog' and a 'flea', highlighting the power difference between him and Saul. Finally, he turns to God for protection and justice, demonstrating his faith and reliance on divine intervention.

SAUL'S RESPONSE AND RECOGNITION OF DAVID'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (VERSES 16-22)

In verse 11, David respectfully refers to Saul as "my father". In verse 16, Saul reciprocates, calling David "my son," acknowledging their familial bond and David's righteousness. Saul prophesies David's ascension to the throne and implores him to honor his legacy. This moment reveals Saul's acceptance of David's future kingship and his hope for mercy towards his lineage.

A REPRISAL - 1 SAMUEL 26

1 Samuel 26, like 1 Samuel 24, reveals David's character, his strategic patience towards kingship, and Saul's deteriorating moral and royal power.

A SECOND TEST OF INTEGRITY (VERSES 1-12)

Saul, despite acknowledging David's righteousness once, resumes his pursuit, showcasing his recurring jealousy and paranoia. David, on the other hand, remains committed to righteousness, respecting the Lord's anointed.

During a night raid into Saul's camp, David and Abishai find Saul asleep, his spear, a symbol of his authority and vulnerability, by his head. Abishai sees this as a chance to end Saul's life, but David, adhering to his principle of not harming the Lord's anointed, rejects the idea, advocating for leaving Saul's fate to God. This emphasizes David's commitment to divine order and God's sovereignty over judgment. The act of taking Saul's spear and water jug, while choosing not to harm him, proves David's proximity and capacity for harm. This symbolic act, like the earlier episode of cutting a piece of Saul's robe, underlines David's integrity and ethical conduct in the face of danger and potential for revenge.

DAVID'S APPEAL TO SAUL (VERSES 13-20)

After retreating, David's dialogue with Saul showcases his rhetorical skill and moral appeal. He presents a spear as proof of his choice not to kill Saul, reaffirming his respect for Saul as God's anointed and reliance on divine judgement. His speeches, full of appeals to justice, question Saul's pursuit and invite divine discernment. This not only emphasizes David's innocence and morality, but also publicizes Saul's unjust vendetta against him.

SAUL'S MOMENTARY REPENTANCE (VERSES 21-25)

Saul has a moment of self-realization and brief repentance after David's plea. He acknowledges his faults and blesses David, foreseeing his kingship and righteousness. This fleeting acknowledgment shows Saul's pattern of clarity followed by destructive behavior.

Saul's plea to spare his life and remember his lineage reflects his concern for his legacy despite his moral decline. David's response, returning the spear and avoiding violence, underscores his commitment to justice and mercy, defining his future kingship.