

# The Jewish Kingdom - Lesson 24

## David Spares Saul

David has narrowly escaped from Saul and the Philistines and is on the run, but not alone. Meanwhile, Saul commits one of the most heinous crimes in the history of Israel.

### 64. David and Saul at Engedi - I Samuel 24:1-22

- Saul appears to have been victorious over the Philistine invasion he was forced to fight in I Samuel 23:28. Still his obsession is David, and he soon receives a report of David's whereabouts.
- vs. 2 - Saul takes 3,000 men compared to David's 600 (I Samuel 23:13)
- vs. 2 - rocks of the wild goats - rugged terrain upon which only the wild mountain goats could climb. Saul is taking no chances and scouring even the most inhospitable areas.
- vs. 3 - sheepcotes - pens built in or around shelter. This shelter was often a cave if there was one available.
- vs. 3 - "cover his feet" - this phrase has two possible meanings. First, that Saul was sleeping. This could be supported by referencing how Ruth uncovered the feet of Boaz in Ruth 3:7 and would make sense to seek the shelter of a cool cave to nap in during the heat of the day. Second, it could be an euphemism for a, well, bowel movement (let's leave it at that, shall we?). The story of Ehud in Judges 3:20-24 could go either way. Most modern scholars take it to mean the latter. Maybe it was both?
- vs. 4 - we can have no doubt how Saul would have handled himself if the roles here had been reversed. There is an echo here of I Samuel 15:27-28 where Samuel illustrated the kingdom being taken from Saul by rending his own robe. The importance of the event is that David had the opportunity to slay his rival, but instead chose to show insubordination in a prank-like manner.
- vs. 5-6 - David's conscience cannot bear that he had acted in such a demeaning manner towards God's anointed king.
- vs. 7 - Note that David had to stop his men from slaying Saul.
- vs. 8-12 - David in sparing Saul has gone against everything Saul has accused him of.
- vs. 13 - the gist of the proverb is that the wicked will fall in their own wickedness regardless of how someone righteous may try to cause their fall.
- vs. 14 - note that dogs at that time and place were not afforded the same status as now. This is a very demeaning comparison.
- vs. 16 - note that Saul says "my son David". He usually calls David the son of Jesse, but David's actions and speech have stirred Saul's sentiment towards him.
- vs. 16-21 - Note that nowhere in Saul's speech does he ever repent or show remorse for his actions. He is impressed by and thankful for David sparing his life, which was something he surely would not have done.

- vs. 20-21 - Saul presses David to promise not to destroy his royal house. David just spared his life, why should he think David would not do so to his relations? Saul is still paranoid.
- vs. 22 - Such an anticlimactic conclusion. Saul goes home. David and his men go quickly back into hiding as they do not trust Saul. It is well that they don't, as soon will be back after David soon enough.
- So, David spares Saul at this time but also Saul spares David in a sense. He has David in his sights with an almost three to one numerical advantage over him. Why doesn't Saul press his advantage? Was he embarrassed at how he almost fell to David? Was he genuinely moved by David's actions? I really doubt that one. In all probability, David's very public speech would have swung public opinion in his favor.