

1 Samuel 22 Chapter Introduction

At the outset of chapter 22, David had escaped from Gath by the strong and good hand of God, and now he has fled to a cave near the ancient Canaanite city of Adullam (cf. Joshua 15:35), a location 10 miles from Gath and 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem (or called Jebus at this time). As word got out of David's whereabouts, first his family in Bethlehem went to be with him, then many others as well assembled to David, those distressed, down-and-out, hurting, and outcasts (a foreshadowing of the ministry of Jesus, the Son of David). Ironically, David would – in short time - weld these men into an "effective" military force (initially 400, later 600).

From Adullam David traveled to the city of Mizpeh in Moab on the east side of the Dead Sea (a *one way* journey of 80-100 miles). Why such a journey? Given the murderous intent David had witnessed in Saul's heart, he likely feared greatly for the lives of his parents, his brothers and the entire family household. Why Moab? Perhaps David had previously forged a favorable relationship with the Moabite king, or because of some continued contact with Moabite kin from his great grandmother Ruth, a Moabitess. Whatever the reason, David sought safety for his father and mother with the king of Moab on the back side of the Dead Sea, out of the reach of Saul.

Rather than staying on foreign soil, David was directed by Gad the prophet of God to return to Judah. As Eugene Merrill points out, this was clearly a divine directive for David to "be among his own people over whom God had anointed him to reign" (Eugene Merrill, BKC).

Back in Gibeah, Saul knew of David's return and sought from his staff information about the son of Jesse's whereabouts. Doeg, the Edomite, supplied Saul a detailed account of David's visit to the priests at Nob. Immediately, Saul summoned the priests of Nob. Ahimelech, the high priest and 84 other priests appeared before king Saul, who was tormented by unending thoughts of treachery. Regardless of Ahimelech's explanations and assurances, Saul was sure the city of priests had conspired together with the son of Jesse against him. Clearly out of his mind, Saul committed the mass murder of all the priests and residents of the city of Nob, except for one priest whose life God preserved. This atrocious act rivals and perhaps foreshadows a later mass murder of children by king Herod. Both were for the same reason, attempting the destruction God's anointed Davidic ruler.

The chapter ends with Abiathar, the one and only priest to survive, fleeing to David to report this horrific incident. The burden of the weight of all the innocent lives lost must have given David much to reflect upon the rest of his life. Again, through times of great affliction and trials, God continued to shape the heart of David, His appointed and anointed king.