

1Samuel 18:1 ¶ And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

1Samuel 18:2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

1Samuel 18:3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

1Samuel 18:4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

This chapter appears to continue the narrative from the previous chapter. David and Jonathan talked after his time with Saul. It seems that they were “best friends forever” from the first, and they made a covenant to confirm their relationship. We are told that Jonathan loved David “as his own soul.” That is another way of saying that he would give his life for him if necessary. Jonathan took off his princely robe and gave it to David; he also gave him his sword, bow and belt.

JFB informs us: “To receive any part of the dress which had been *worn* by a sovereign, or his eldest son and heir, is deemed, in the East, the *highest* honor which can be conferred on a subject.”

The NIV Commentary makes an even stronger statement: “When Jonathan took off his robe and gave it to David, he was in effect transferring his own status as heir apparent to him.”

David was not allowed to go back home to his father; he was to remain in full time service to Saul from that time on.

1Samuel 18:5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

David served in obedience to Saul going wherever he was commanded and behaving wisely. Saul placed him in charge of the men of war. I assume even over Commander Abner. David had the support of all the people and those who served Saul. I assume that included his brothers.

1Samuel 18:6 ¶ And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

1Samuel 18:7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

1Samuel 18:8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

1Samuel 18:9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

As Saul and his troops returned home following the defeat of the Philistines, the women welcomed them with joyful singing and dancing to the music of their instruments. There was one problem, however; they only credited Saul with killing thousands while crediting David with killing ten thousands. They should have realized that they were dishonoring the king with such a song. This provoked Saul to jealousy and made him very angry. His reasoning—"What can he have more but the kingdom?" In other words, he was afraid the people would try to make David their king. This fear was probably exacerbated by his memory of Samuel's declaration that God had chosen another man to be king in his place. No longer did Saul trust David.

1Samuel 18:10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand. **1Samuel 18:11** And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

On the next day the evil spirit "from God" once again troubled Saul. I believe that God allowed this because Saul had basically rejected Him as his king. Why an evil spirit would cause Saul to prophesy is a mystery to me. What did he prophesy? Adam Clarke offers the following insight: "Let it be observed that the word ויתנבא *vaiyithnabbe* is the third person singular of the future hithpael; the sign of which is not only to do an action on or for one's self, but also to feign or pretend to do it. The meaning seems to be, Saul pretended to be praying...and render David unsuspecting."

David was called to play for him as usual. This time, however, Saul was holding a javelin; and he threw it at David trying to kill him. This happened two different times.

1Samuel 18:12 ¶ And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

1Samuel 18:13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

1Samuel 18:14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him.

Saul knew that the LORD was with David. Because he also knew that the LORD had departed from him, I think he put two and two together; he now feared David. Saul's solution was to send David out to war as captain over the troops. I am sure he was hoping that David would be killed in battle. However, David achieved great success (from the Hebrew for "wisely") because the LORD was with him.

1Samuel 18:15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

1Samuel 18:16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and

came in before them.

Because David led the troops with such good success, Saul feared him even more. All the people of Israel and Judah, however, loved David for leading their men in victory after victory.

So Saul may have succeeded in getting David out of his sight, but certainly not out of his mind.

1Samuel 18:17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD'S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

1Samuel 18:18 And David said unto Saul, Who *am* I? and what *is* my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

1Samuel 18:19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

One day Saul told David that he was willing to give his elder daughter Merab to him as his wife if he continued to prove himself in “the LORD’S” battles. I think that statement was a bit hypocritical on Saul’s part. If he considered them to be “the LORD’S” battles, why wasn’t he leading them? Not only was it hypocritical, he was acting with evil intent. He was hoping that the Philistines would kill David.

Not only that, Saul’s daughter should already have been given to David as his wife as his reward for killing Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:25 “And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.”

David demurred, noting that he was not worthy to be the king’s son-in-law.

When the time came that Merab should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as his wife—revealing that Saul really didn’t want David as his son-in-law.

1Samuel 18:20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

1Samuel 18:21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in *the one of the twain*.

Michal, Saul’s younger daughter, loved David. When Saul found that out, he was very pleased and hoped to use her to his advantage against David. Saul lied to David and told him that he still wanted him as his son-in-law—by his second

daughter was implied.

1Samuel 18:22 And Saul commanded his servants, *saying*, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law.

1Samuel 18:23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you *a light thing* to be a king's son in law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

1Samuel 18:24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David.

Saul directed his servants to help him in his deceit. He told them to tell David that the king really liked him and wanted him as his son-in-law. David again responded that to be the king's son-in-law was an exalted position, one of which he was not worthy; he was but a poor man.

Saul's servants then reported back to Saul what David had said.

1Samuel 18:25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

1Samuel 18:26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired.

1Samuel 18:27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

foreskin = Webster: "The fold of skin which covers the glans of the penis."

Saul then instructed his servants to go back and tell David that the only dowry he wanted was the foreskins of 100 Philistines to avenge him of his enemies. What Saul really wanted was for the Philistines to kill David.

JFB gave an explanation for Saul's choice of dowry: "Saul's willingness to accept a public service had an air of liberality, while his choice of so difficult and hazardous a service seemed only putting a proper value on gaining the hand of a king's daughter. But he covered unprincipled malice against David under this proposal, which exhibited a zeal for God and the covenant of circumcision."

The IVP Commentary adds the following insight: "The request for foreskins would have proven that the victims were Philistines, because many of the other neighbors of Israel would have practiced circumcision."

I also liked Guzik's observation: "Saul works as a clever manipulator. He takes advantage of David's loyalty and patriotism (only be valiant for me). He takes advantage of David's courage and heart for the LORD (fight the LORD's battles)."

When the servants told David what the king had said, he decided that he wanted to be the king's son-in-law. It seems that Saul had set a deadline for this accomplishment, so he proceeded to lead his men out to battle. He (and his troops) killed 200 Philistines and collected their foreskins; then David presented them to the king.

Saul had no choice but to give Michal to David as his wife.

1Samuel 18:28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

1Samuel 18:29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

1Samuel 18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

Again it was affirmed to Saul that the LORD was with David; he also knew that Michal truly loved David. This made Saul yet more afraid of David, and he was now a confirmed enemy of David.

I got to thinking. Most of us fear the attack of the enemy because we look at Satan as so powerful in comparison to us. The truth is that Satan fears the man or woman of God that truly follows the LORD in faith and obedience. It will not deter him from continuing to try to get us to fall for the temptations he puts before us to sin or his attack on our flesh (if permitted). We can be assured, however, that God will give the victory to the person that is walking in faith and obedience to Him.

The NIV translation of verse 30 reads more clearly: *"The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul's officers, and his name became well known."*