1Samuel 23:1 ¶ Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.
1Samuel 23:2 Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

Word came to David that the Philistines were attacking the city of Keilah and stealing the grain of their harvests. David enquired of the LORD as to whether he should lead his men against the Philistines. The LORD revealed to David that he should go against the Philistines in battle to save Keilah.

1Samuel 23:3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?
1Samuel 23:4 Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.
1Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

David's men, however, admitted that they were afraid to go against the Philistine army. It was scary enough just to be back in Judah. David decided to seek the LORD's guidance yet again. The LORD confirmed that they should go down to Keilah because He would give them a victory over the Philistines.

With the LORD's promise to give them the victory, David and his men went to Keilah and defeated the Philistines. They killed them with a great slaughter and took their livestock as the spoils of war. David (and his men) saved the people of Keilah because the LORD gave them the victory.

Isn't it sad that the king of Israel would not go to the defense of the people of Keilah. That David was willing to be led by his faith in the LORD rather than let fear dictate his actions again provided a contrast between the kind of king Israel deserved vs. the kind of king they had in Saul.

1Samuel 23:6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, *that* he came down *with* an ephod in his hand.

It is noted at this point that it was when David was in Keilah that Abiathar escaped and ran to join him. Significant is the fact that he brought the ephod with him.

This just makes me wonder how David had enquired of the LORD before coming to the rescue of Keilah. Maybe it was through the casting of lots. Maybe God again used the prophet Gad to direct David.

1Samuel 23:7 ¶ And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering

into a town that hath gates and bars.
1Samuel 23:8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

Eventually, word came to Saul that David was in Keilah. This pleased Saul because he took this information as a sign that the LORD had delivered David into his hands. Saul was totally self-deceived to think that the LORD was on his side.

Saul knew that Keilah was a town protected with gates and bars, and David and his men were shut inside the town. Saul called for his military to prepare to go to Keilah and set a siege to capture David and his men.

1Samuel 23:9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.
1Samuel 23:10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.
1Samuel 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.
1Samuel 23:12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver *thee* up.
1Samuel 23:13 Then David and his men, *which were* about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbare to go forth.

David found out that Saul was plotting against him and told Abiathar to fetch the ephod. When Abiathar returned with the ephod, David declared before the "LORD God of Israel" that Saul was planning to come to Keilah and destroy the city because they harbored David. David asked the LORD two questions: Would Saul come down to Keilah as he had heard? And, Would the men of Keilah turn him over to Saul if he did? The LORD answered both questions in the affirmative.

So David and his men (about 600 strong) left Keilah to find another place of refuge. When Saul heard that they had left, he abandoned his plan to go to Keilah.

So, did God lie when He answered David's questions? Of course not! God knows everything—even though our choices and reactions will result in different outcomes. If David had stayed in Keilah, Saul would have come; and the men of Keilah would have handed him over to Saul. Based on God's revelation of those facts, David decided to leave—a decision that caused events to unfold differently. God's answer to David's question prompted him to freely make the wise decision to leave. It is also interesting that David felt no need to ask the LORD's advice as to whether to stay or leave. He knew it was wise to avoid being the cause of endangering the lives of the people of Keilah.

1Samuel 23:14 ¶ **And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.**
1Samuel 23:15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David *was* **in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.**

David and his men found refuge in the mountain strongholds of the wilderness area of Ziph. Saul came out daily to search for David and his men, but God protected them. David saw from this daily persistence to pursue him that Saul was intent on killing him.

1Samuel 23:16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.
1Samuel 23:17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.
1Samuel 23:18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Though we don't know how the meeting was set up or if Jonathan just set out to find him, we are told that Jonathan went to meet with David in his place of refuge in the wood. His motive was to encourage David and strengthen his faith in God. He assured David that God would protect him from Saul and that He would be the next king of Israel. He envisioned himself as David's second in command. Jonathan insisted that Saul knew this as well.

Once again they made a covenant before the LORD—my guess is to once again affirm their previous covenant and maybe even included a commitment for Jonathan to serve as David's second in command. Jonathan then returned home, and David remained hidden.

Jonathan was truly a special man of God. He showed absolutely no jealousy of David in spite of knowing that he would become the next king of Israel instead of him. Jonathan was more concerned with being submissive to the LORD's will. Not only that, he never let his respect for his father interfere with his love and support of David. Very few men would so willingly forfeit such a position of power and influence.

1Samuel 23:19 ¶ **Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which** *is* **on the south of Jeshimon?**
1Samuel 23:20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part *shall be* **to deliver him into the king's hand.**

Evidently, the Ziphites lived in an area close to where David and his men were hiding. They went to Saul in Gibeah and told him that David was hiding in the woods on the hill of Hachilah on the south side of Jeshimon. They proceeded then to tell the king that they would help him capture David.

It seems that there are always those ready to take advantage of others for self-serving purposes.

1Samuel 23:21 And Saul said, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.
1Samuel 23:22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, *and* who hath seen him there: for it is told me *that* he dealeth very subtilly.
1Samuel 23:23 See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

Saul responded by blessing the Ziphites for their loyalty to him. He urged them to go and find out exactly where David was hiding by asking people who could testify to having seen him. He noted that David was very cunning. He asked them to specifically identify the different locations where he might be hiding and then report back to him. Saul would then join them and vowed to search throughout the whole of Judah to find him.

1Samuel 23:24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men *were* in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.
1Samuel 23:25 Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.
1Samuel 23:26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.
1Samuel 23:27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.
1Samuel 23:28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth.
1Samuel 23:29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi.

The Ziphites returned home to gather the information. David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon in the plain south of Jeshimon. The IVP OT Commentary identifies Jeshimon as follows: "The barren strip of land running parallel to the Dead Sea on the eastern edge of the Judean Wilderness was known as Jeshimon."

Saul soon followed with his band of men to search for David. David was made aware that Saul was closing in on his pursuit. When David realized that Saul and his men were on the other side of the mountain from him, he hurried to get away before Saul's men could surround him and his men.

Unexpectedly (with supernatural intervention I believe), a messenger arrived

urging Saul to hurry back because the Philistines were invading the land. So he had to give up his pursuit of David to go defend the land against the Philistines.

Adam Clarke adds this note in reference to Selahammahlekoth: "That is, the rock of divisions; because, says the Targum, the heart of the king was divided to go hither and thither. Here Saul was obliged to separate himself from David, in order to go and oppose the invading Philistines."

David left that area to go in hiding in the strongholds of Engedi. The IVP Commentary adds this information about Engedi: "The oasis of En Gedi lies midway down the Dead Sea and approximately thirty-five miles southeast of Jerusalem. Fed by a continuous spring, it is a splash of life and color in the midst of an otherwise barren landscape…. David's choice of this area was probably based on the large number of nearby caves and the water supply."