

1 Samuel 21. 10 – 22. 5. Shurdington Chapel. 23 September 2020

Good morning.

I begin with the scripture reading.

1 Samuel 21. 10-15

That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath.

But the servants of Achish said to him, 'Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands"?"'

David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath.

So he pretended to be insane in their presence;

and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

Achish said to his servants, 'Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me?

Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?'

1 Samuel 22. 1-5

David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there.

All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him.

From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, 'Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?'

So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.

But the prophet Gad said to David, 'Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah'. So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

First, a brief word about the context of our passage for today.

This is sandwiched between two sections which concern Ahimelech and the priesthood at Nob.

Last week, you considered the first of those sections, which covered David's visit to Ahimelech.¹ God willing, next week you will be looking at the sad sequel to that visit – the section which records King Saul's massacre of Ahimelech and more or less the entire priesthood at Nob for their alleged conspiracy with David.²

Following David's recent conversation with Jonathan about the murderous intentions of King Saul,³ David was now convinced that for him to remain in Israel was risky to say the least.

And so he 'fled', not only from Saul, but from the very land of Israel, to the land of the Philistines ... 'to Achish king of Gath'.⁴

In the title of Psalm 34, Achish⁵ is called 'Abimelech',⁶ called '(the) Abimelech', that is. 'The Abimelech' was a Philistine royal title⁷, in the same way that 'Pharaoh' was a title of the Egyptian kings, that 'Agag' was a title of the Amalekite kings, and that 'Caesar' was a title of the later Roman emperors. That is, Abimelech was the man's royal *title*, and Achish was his personal *name*.

It would be true to say, therefore, that David journeyed from Ahimelech⁸ at Nob to the Abimelech at Gath.

It is at least possible that David had travelled the road to Gath before. After he had defeated Goliath, the army of Israel had pursued the Philistines 'to the entrance of Gath'.⁹ It is at least possible that David had been among the

conquering forces that day. If so, how things have changed for him. Now, he approaches Gath, not pursuing others fleeing to Gath, but as a fugitive fleeing there himself.

But why seek shelter in Gath of all places? To head for somewhere else in the land of the Philistines (the land of Israel's inveterate enemies) would have been bad enough ... but Gath!

For Gath was the very city from which Goliath had come.¹⁰ I suspect that, apart from the likely presence in Gath of Goliath's own family (including Goliath's formidable brother Lahmi¹¹), he had been something of a hero there – someone that everybody looked up to (ahem!)¹² – the proverbial 'local boy makes good'!

You would have thought that Gath would have been the very last place on earth for which David would make a beeline, the more so as he was carrying the very sword (the very *conspicuous* sword) with which he had publicly severed the head of the 'local boy made good'!

I can't believe that David was so naïve as to hope that, in spite of his sword, the Philistines would fail to recognize him. We need to remember that for much of the intervening period since the death of Goliath, David had maintained such a high profile in Israel's conflict with the Philistines that, predictably, 'his name became well known'.¹³ There had been the gruesome 'foreskins' incident, which had not only left 200 Philistine widows, but had brought national disgrace on the 'uncircumcised' Philistines¹⁴ – which they were unlikely to forget or forgive for a long, long time.¹⁵ In the very last recorded conflict between Israel and the Philistines, David had led Israel into battle against the Philistines, 'and struck them with such force that they fled before him'.¹⁶

Make no mistake, David would have been as conspicuous in the court of Achish as Winston Churchill with his overcoat, black hat and cigar would have been in wartime Berlin!

Go incognito? Not a hope! Then why in the world go there?

Well, first, it does seem that the city of Gath was a convenient and an attractive place of refuge for any fleeing Israelites. Indeed, David himself would head there again in a later moment of despondency and weak faith.¹⁷ And, later again, two of the slaves of Shimei, the stone-throwing relative of Saul, would flee there from their master.¹⁸

As an aside, it is lovely to contrast the crossing of the brook Kidron by Shimei's slaves and its crossing by David's 'Greater Son'! Shimei's slaves crossed 'the Kidron Valley' to escape from their bondage.¹⁹ My Lord didn't flee across 'the Kidron Valley' to escape from bondage; He crossed 'the Kidron Valley' to confront His foes,²⁰ and, through His suffering and death, to free me from my bondage!

As I see it, David deliberately chose to change his postcode to Gath because he knew that he *would* be recognized. That, in his desperation, he pinned his hopes on being welcomed with open arms by the Philistines ... for, after all, why shouldn't they regard the defection of Israel's most famous military leader as a tremendous coup for them.

But, *if* that was David's hope, he was sadly disappointed!

As expected, David was instantly recognised. But then, with the words of the King's officials, things took a decided turn for the worse.

I should note that the royal title²¹ which the Philistines gave David was not as surprising as might first appear. Technically, of course, Saul was still king, and would be for some time yet. But, to Philistine eyes, David's military exploits had already thrown Saul into the shade. After all, it had been David, and not Saul, who had achieved such a 'stunning' victory over their seemingly 'indestructible' champion²² – as celebrated by the famous song which *they* all knew by heart! And it had been David, and not Saul, who had subsequently distinguished himself in the continuing hostilities between the two nations.²³ To the Philistines, David was sovereign over Israel in all but name.

It is almost as if the Philistine officials had become the Lord's prophets to confirm His earlier word to Samuel concerning Jesse, 'I have chosen one of his sons *to be king*'.²⁴ In a somewhat similar vein to Caiaphas in John 11, they spoke beyond themselves.²⁵

I guess that, in other circumstances, David could have drawn much needed encouragement from having the royal title ascribed to him, but, coming from whom it did and from where it did, it carried an unpleasant and ominous ring about it!

Clearly the 'song and dance' which the women of Israel had made about David following his triumph at Elah,²⁶ had become public knowledge in Gath. Even the officials in the court of Achish knew the lyrics of the popular ditty.

'And what was it, pray', they wanted Achish to remember, 'that had inspired the words of the song? What else but the spectacular – and wholly unexpected – defeat which we had suffered! And who, pray, O King, were the "tens of thousands" who this legendary David was credited with slaying? Who? Philistines ... that's who!'

For his part, 'David took these words to heart', we read, 'and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath'. And well he might be.

The clear implication of the words 'in their hands' is that David had, in effect, been 'arrested', which is confirmed by the heading of Psalm 56, which speaks of the Philistines in Gath as having 'seized him' (as having 'taken hold of him').²⁷

David's prospects were grim in the extreme. It was Death Row for the son of Jesse!

It had not been long since he had confided to his older friend Jonathan, 'there is only a step between me and death'.²⁸ That distance had now been reduced to a very short step!

What a predicament. In fleeing from Saul to Achish, David had well and truly jumped out of the frying pan right into the fire! Or perhaps I should say in biblical language: it was 'as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear'.²⁹

What, if anything, could David do?

Well, there were two things he could do. And he did both!

Our chapter speaks of the one, and two of his psalms speak of the other.

First, let's consider what our chapter says that he did.

'He pretended to be insane ... and ... acted like a madman'. That is, David decided to live by his wits by making out that he had lost them!

And, fair play, it was a brilliant idea of David's to pretend to be mentally ill, and that for at least three reasons.

First, this would be seen as entirely consistent with his totally unexpected presence at Gath. Surely the Philistines must have wondered about David's sanity when he turned up there. They must have questioned whether anyone with David's military history would ever have ventured there if he was in his right mind.

Second, David had spent many hours at close quarters with Saul, at times when Saul was 'tormented' by an 'evil spirit'.³⁰ David had therefore had every opportunity to witness at first hand the symptoms of madness and frenzy during Saul's outbursts. He may well have felt that he was well qualified to have a go at imitating those symptoms.

Third, David would have known of the 'reverence' which the Philistines (along with all other nations in the Ancient Near East) showed for those who suffered from madness. Because insanity was believed to be an affliction of the gods, mad persons were treated as 'sacred' and 'taboo',³¹ and *were not therefore to be harmed*.

And so this man, who had always acted *wisely* when *servicing* in the court of *Saul*,³² now chooses to act *the fool* when *seized* in the court of *Achish*.

Yes, it did mean that David would have to humiliate himself before Achish and his officials. But better disgraced than dead!

And so we witness David 'making marks on the doors of the gate',³³ in all likelihood, the gate of the city.³⁴

You will remember that Samson once 'took hold of the doors of the city gate (of Gaza, another of the Philistines' five major cities) ... tore them loose ... lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of a hill'.³⁵

David didn't have the strength to walk off with the doors of the gate of Gath, but he did have – and took – the opportunity to 'make marks on' them³⁶ ... to 'scratch' or 'scribble' on them.

And his '*saliva down his beard act*' was especially convincing, because in the Ancient Near East any indignity to the beard was considered an intolerable insult.³⁷ Only a man who had lost all his marbles would ever dream of doing something which adversely affected his *own* beard.

Personally, I find it sad to see God's 'anointed' king with his spittle running down his beard. Did David, I wonder, think then (as he did when he later wrote Psalm 133) of the 'precious oil' which had once run 'down on the beard' of Aaron, of God's 'anointed' priest.³⁸ What a stark contrast!

'Look at the man!' Achish called to his officials, 'He is insane!' Perhaps tapping the side of his head, the king of Gath declared David positively certifiable.

David's début as an actor had proved an outstanding success. The nonsense graffiti and the messy beard (David's 'scribble and dribble act', if you like) had Achish completely fooled.³⁹

'Why bring him to me?' the king demanded. As if to say, 'What do you think this is? A mental asylum?'

With a touch of humour, Achish declared that he already had a full quota of madmen around him, and that he didn't need one more, thank you very much! It was the King's way of saying that he did not want to see David again, and certainly not as his house-guest.

It is just as well that Achish wasn't able to see the *King James Version* translation of his words in verse 15.⁴⁰ Or Achish might have cottoned on to the fact that it was *all an act*, in which case David would have been awarded either (i) an Oscar for his convincing performance, or, more likely, (ii) a death sentence.

And so David, having received 'the left foot of fellowship' from Achish, was run out of town. We read in the title of Psalm 34 that Achish 'drove him away, and he left' (presumably post-haste!). As we will see in a few moments, he 'escaped to the cave of Adullam'.⁴¹

And it was, no doubt, a much relieved David who hotfooted it back to the land of Israel that day. But we know that David was more than relieved!

When commenting earlier on verse 12, I claimed that 'there were two things which David could do' when the Philistines seized him, and that 'he did both.'

Verse 13 has told us of the one thing which he did.

It is left to two of David's psalms (Psalms 34 and 56, both of which were written concerning this very incident) to tell us of the other. And the second thing was by far the sanest thing which David could have done in the circumstances – and indeed in any circumstances. He could pray!

I suspect that both of these Psalms were written after David reached a place of safety, quite possibly the cave of Adullam.

Both Psalms give us a welcome insight into David's inner feelings at this seriously low point of his life.

In Psalm 56, David expresses his faith *during* his hour of danger.⁴²

It is wonderful to observe that, at a time when he had fled to Gath for fear of Saul⁴³ and had there been 'very much afraid' of Achish,⁴⁴ he could pray, 'When I am afraid, I put my trust in you',⁴⁵ and twice assert, 'in God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me?'⁴⁶

But if in Psalm 56, David expresses his confidence in God during his hour of danger, in Psalm 34, he expresses his thanksgiving to God when he had been delivered from that danger.⁴⁷

By pretending to be insane and acting the part of a madman, David had, of course, done everything in his own power to save himself from the Philistines. But David clearly saw nothing inconsistent with doing this while simultaneously calling out to God to save him. And so, when looking back on his deliverance, he gladly recognised that, though the Lord had used his own efforts to that end, ultimately it had been the Lord Himself who had delivered him.

After his narrow escape, David travelled about twelve miles further inland to a cave near the town of Adullam, an ancient royal Canaanite city.⁴⁸ This cave stood only a few miles south-east of the valley of Elah, the scene of David's dramatic battle with Goliath. Did David, I wonder, ask himself how it was that, following such a spectacular victory, now back almost at the same spot, he should find himself compelled to flee like a criminal, and to seek refuge in one of the many limestone caves nearby.⁴⁹

Adullam was situated not very far over the border between the land of the Philistines and David's own tribal area of Judah in the land of Israel.⁵⁰ From David's point of view, it provided an ideal hideout ... being far enough from Gath for him to be safe from Achish, but not close enough to Gibeah to be in any immediate danger from Saul.⁵¹

David's time in the cave of Adullam marked the turning of the tide for David. For it was here that he transitioned from being a lone outlaw (accompanied, if at all, by a few young men⁵² – probably his servants from his days in Saul's court) to being the 'commander'⁵³ (the 'head', the 'captain') of a band of 400 men, which, using his God-given abilities, he shaped into an outstanding fighting unit.

It seems that, for one reason or another, David's family⁵⁴ no longer felt safe in their home town of Bethlehem, and so they 'went down' from the higher ground there to join David in his hideout.

It is possible that they sought refuge from Saul. After all, it was by no means unlikely that Saul would search for David at his home town, and if Saul was prepared to let fly violently at his own family,⁵⁵ there was no saying what he would be prepared to do to David's. It was not uncommon in the ancient world for a whole family to be put to death on account of an action by just one member, as Saul's massacre of the priests of Nob was soon to demonstrate.⁵⁶

Alternatively, it may have been the approach of a Philistine garrison⁵⁷ which made David's family pack their bags and skedaddle off to Adullam.

But, one way or another, David's 'brothers and his father's household' (his family, that is) decided to link up with him. I think that we can assume that David's oldest brother Eliab had come to regret his earlier snide remark about David's leaving 'those few sheep in the wilderness'.⁵⁸

But, in fact, David's experience as a shepherd boy stood him in very good stead as preparation for his current role in Adullam's cave. There was probably no better training ground for knocking the motley assortment of men who soon gravitated to him into shape (not to say, into a first-class fighting unit) than having had to handle flocks of unruly sheep.

Indeed, those early days 'tending the sheep' were an essential part of David's preparation by the Lord for the time when he would become 'the shepherd' of the whole nation of Israel.⁵⁹

It was no doubt at this point that David's three nephews,⁶⁰ Joab, Abishai and Asahel (each of whom features later in David's life story), threw in their lot with him. It is clear that their home was also at Bethlehem; for we read that, following Asahel's death at the hand of Abner, he was buried 'in the sepulchre of his father, which was at Bethlehem'.⁶¹

But it was not only David's family which felt the drawing power of the son of Jesse.

For David acted as a strong magnet to draw to him many in Israel who had reason to groan under the burden of Saul's leadership. Samuel had long before warned the people about some of the unpleasant consequences of having a king like Saul.⁶²

And now there were hundreds of men who found themselves in Israel's '3Ds' classification!

There were 'those who were':

(i) In distress. Those who had become hard-pressed, harassed, in desperate straits.⁶³

(ii) In debt. It is not difficult to imagine how Saul's royal status had resulted in conditions which caused many to fall into debt.

(iii) Discontented. In deep anguish. Literally, 'bitter of soul'.⁶⁴ The expression suggests that many in Israel were in despair at the conditions which prevailed throughout the kingdom.

Such was the unpromising human material which David managed, not only to keep in order, but to coach, shape, and train, until they became the formidable military unit which they did.⁶⁵ Doubtless, some of these 'rough-diamonds' later earned their place among David's 'mighty warriors', whose remarkable exploits and acts of bravery are recounted later.⁶⁶

It may be that one of those very exploits was actually performed while David and the 400 were now at Adullam. We read later⁶⁷ of 'three of the thirty chiefs' who 'came down to David' while he was at 'the cave of Adullam'. It seems that Abishai was chief of the three heroes who fought their way to the well of Bethlehem and back. We noted earlier that Abishai and his two brothers were from Bethlehem.⁶⁸ He would therefore have been familiar both with the area and with the exact location of the well.

The 400 men, I note, 'gathered around him' – around David. As such, they stand in marked contrast to Saul's troops. To the last man, David's 'men'⁶⁹ were all willing volunteers, whereas all of Saul's men were conscripts.⁷⁰ Saul took only the best; David took whoever came – and, when they came, they were anything but the best!

And that expression 'gathered around him' turns my mind to the New Testament and to the One who is infinitely greater than David. For I cherish both (i) His matchless promise, 'Where are two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them',⁷¹ and (ii) the hope that one day, at His coming, we (His people) shall all

be 'gathered to Him' in glory.⁷² Truly, both in the present and in the future, He (our Lord Jesus) is our gathering centre!⁷³

In the same way that there were two of David's psalms which gave us an insight into his feelings when in danger at Gath,⁷⁴ I think it likely that another two of his psalms (Psalm 57 and Psalm 142⁷⁵) afford us an insight into his feelings when in the cave of Adullam.

David's 'heart scan' in Psalm 142 reveals that there had been moments at Adullam when David felt downcast and thoroughly discouraged.⁷⁶

But David had soon risen above those moments of dejection, and in both Psalms he affirms strongly that his real trust lay, not in the cave, but in the Lord as his true 'refuge'.⁷⁷

From Adullam, David 'went to Mizpah in Moab', the name 'Mizpah' signifying a 'watch-tower' or 'a mountain height'.⁷⁸

By taking his journey into Moab, David, himself a Bethlehemite,⁷⁹ was treading in the steps of two other Bethlehemites who had gone that way many years before⁸⁰ – and without whose journey there he would never have been born.⁸¹ But whereas Elimelech and Naomi went (rightly or wrongly) to Moab to escape the ravages of a famine, David went to ask a favour of Moab's king.

David's parents were now well past their sell-by date,⁸² and David could see that there was no way they would be able to cope with the hardships and rigours of being constantly on the move. After all, zimmer-frames simply weren't designed for rapid movement from one hideout to another!

Apart from the fact that David's great-grandmother had been a Moabitess,⁸³ Saul had earlier waged war against Moab,⁸⁴ and it was by no means impossible that the king of Moab would therefore be only too glad to support someone who was in Saul's bad books, and so to grant royal protection to David's aged parents.

We read no more of David's father and mother in scripture. But, in spite of a Jewish tradition to the effect that, for reasons unknown, the king of Moab betrayed David's trust and murdered his parents,⁸⁵ I read verse 4 as meaning that they returned safely to David at some future date.

I can only admire the care and consideration which David showed for his elderly parents. Surely, at this time, he had more than enough troubles of his own. But the law of God, in which David constantly meditated,⁸⁶ had taught him, 'Honour your father and your mother'.⁸⁷ And that commandment still stands today!⁸⁸

David left the king of Moab in no doubt that, although he was careful to do all in his power to provide for his father and mother, he was firmly of the belief that God controlled his destiny ... that he would wait, as he said, 'until I learn what God will do for me'.⁸⁹

And we discover that the first thing that God did 'for' David was to send one of His prophets to bring him an important message.

That prophet was Gad. He was one of three named prophets of God with whom David had dealings – Samuel, Gad and Nathan – to each of whom you and I owe a great debt for they wrote up 'the events of King David's reign'.⁹⁰

I take it that the Lord was directing David to leave the stronghold which he then occupied in the land of Moab,⁹¹ and to return 'into the land of Judah', with all its dangers – mainly on account of the malice of King Saul. But then what had David to fear from Saul? Had he not recently composed the words of verses 4 and 11 of Psalm 56: 'In God I trust and am not afraid. What can man do to me?'

I note also that David will later provide one very good reason for moving from Moab into God's land; namely, that he was well aware that, in a land like Moab, with its own gods (principally Chemosh⁹² and Ba'al), he was always exposed to the temptation to worship idols.⁹³ David was clearly alive to the spiritual dangers of mixing too long and too closely with the pagan nations around.

And so David 'left', in one sense, following in the footsteps of his great-grandmother Ruth, who had accompanied her mother-in-law Naomi when she 'returned from Moab' 'back to the land of Judah'.⁹⁴

And I guess that the man who had recently written, '*I* will take refuge in the shadow of your wings'⁹⁵ could *do no better* than to follow the example of one who, according to the testimony of her husband-to-be, had 'come to take refuge' under 'the wings' of the Lord God of Israel.⁹⁶

And I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that we can *do no better* either!

Notes

¹ 1 Sam. 21. 1-9.

² 1 Sam. 22. 6-18. 'Saul was unwilling to kill the wicked Amalekites, but he murdered God's priests', W. Wiersbe.

³ 1 Sam. 20. 33-42.

⁴ 1 Sam. 21. 10.

⁵ Achish was called a king – cf. 27. 2 – whereas the usual rulers of Gath and the other Philistine cities are called lords; 5. 8 etc.

⁶ Meaning 'The king is my father'.

⁷ Compare Gen 20.2-18; 21.22-32; 26.1-16, 26.

⁸ Meaning 'the king is my brother'.

⁹ 1 Sam. 17. 52.

¹⁰ 1 Sam. 17. 4.

¹¹ 1 Chron. 20. 5.

¹² 1 Sam. 17. 4.

¹³ 1 Sam. 18. 30; cf. vv. 13-14.

¹⁴ It was a sure – but simple – way of ensuring that the Philistines were in fact dead. Such gruesome methods of keeping tally of the numbers of enemies slain were common. There is evidence that the Assyrians counted heads. Not much room for error there!

On an interior wall of his mortuary temple at Medinet Habu, Rameses III (1198-1166 B.C.) commissioned scenes depicting the counting of hands which had been severed from his enemies in battle – as a means of establishing a body count. As it happens there is a panel on the same temple walls which has been interpreted by some scholars as picturing a pile of foreskins collected for the same purpose – possibly (wait for it) from Philistines – whose armies were driven out of Egypt by Rameses III. It does seem that the Egyptians sometimes cut off and counted the male organs of the sea peoples they killed in battle. (See Claus Schedl, *History of the Old Testament*, 5 vols, vol. 3, page 118.)

So the first, and obvious reason, for requiring a fixed number of foreskins was that this guaranteed that the numbers hadn't been fiddled.

But there was a second, and less obvious, reason for opting for the foreskins of Philistines – as opposed to their heads or hands. Philistine males did not practice circumcision on principle – which, not only Israel, but many other ancient nations did – such as the Moabites and Ammonites. The Philistines were distinctively – and were so deliberately – 'the uncircumcised'. They hated circumcision. And so, for David not only to slay Philistines, but then to desecrate their bodies by mutilating their male organs would completely outrage the Philistine people. In their eyes, it would be the ultimate form of humiliation and dishonour. It is difficult to imagine a more provocative course of action. The Philistines would be looking for revenge – and guess who would be in their sights!

¹⁵ 1 Sam. 18. 27.

¹⁶ 1 Sam. 19. 8.

¹⁷ 1 Sam. 27. 1-2.

¹⁸ 1 Kings 2. 39.

¹⁹ 1 Kings 2. 37, 39.

²⁰ John 18. 1-5.

²¹ The Philistines recognised what Jonathan, Michal, Samuel, Abigail and Ahimelech did, and (in his heart of hearts) Saul also did.

²² 'How ironic that the two men who faced each other in the middle ground came from two towns at either end of it. The Valley of Elah begins just east of Gath and ends near Bethlehem', Wayne Stiles, *The Valley of Elah*, accessed at <https://waynestiles.com/the-elah-valley-how-your-ordinary-becomes-extraordinary>.

²³ 1 Sam. 18. 30 – his name was highly esteemed because of his military successes against the Philistines – and 19. 8 – they fled from him.

²⁴ 1 Kings 16. 1.

²⁵ Caiaphas said to the Council, 'Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. This spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation', John 11.50-51.

²⁶ 1 Sam. 18. 6-7.

²⁷ See the same word in describing how 'the Philistines *took* Samson and put out his eyes, Judg. 16. 21. Also of the 'ram *caught* in a thicket', Gen. 22. 13.

²⁸ 1 Sam. 20. 3.

²⁹ Amos 5. 19.

³⁰ 1 Sam. 16. 23; 18. 10; 19. 9.

³¹ 'It is well known that among oriental, as among most semi-civilized nations, madmen were looked upon with a kind of reverence, as possessed of a quasi-sacred character. This arises partly no doubt from the feeling, that one, on whom God's hand is laid heavily, should be safe from all other harm; but partly also from the belief that the loss of reason and self-control opened the mind to supernatural influence, and gave it therefore a supernatural sacredness', *Smith's Revised Bible Dictionary*.

³² 1 Sam. 18. 5, 14, 15, 30 (literally).

³³ 1 Sam. 21. 13. The Septuagint uses a word (*τυμπανίζω*) which means 'to beat as a drum' or 'to beat with a stick'.

³⁴ The Hebrew word is used very frequently for the 'gate' of a city; for example, 'the gates of Ekron', 1 Sam. 17. 52.

³⁵ Judges 16. 3.

³⁶ The Greek Old Testament uses a word (*τυμπανίζω*) which means 'to beat as a drum' or 'to beat with a stick', suggesting that David banged with his fists on the doors.

³⁷ See 2 Sam. 10.1-6.

³⁸ Psa. 133. 2.

³⁹ Some thousand years before, Abraham had deceived another 'Abimelech', for which deceit the monarch reproved him, Gen. 20. 1-10. Thankfully for David this 'Abimelech' didn't see through the deception, or quite likely the deceiver would have been dead.

⁴⁰ 'That ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence'. The Hebrew word means simply 'to show madness' or 'to be a madman'.

⁴¹ 1 Sam. 22. 1.

⁴² It is possible that the musical notes which appear in the titles (the 'superscriptions') of 39 of the psalms are actually 'subscriptions' of the *preceding* psalms. (This does not affect the main titles, which do refer to the psalm to which they are currently attached.) This argument, partly based on sections of Isa. 38 and Hab. 3, is advanced by Chuck Missler at : khouse.org/articles/biblestudy/20010201-322.html. If this so, the expression 'Al-taschith' (which features in the present titles of Psalms 57, 58, 59 and 75) is really connected to Psalms 56, 57, 58 and 74. 'Al-taschith' means, 'Do not destroy' – see AV margin and NIDOTTE, Vol. 4, page 93. It may be, of course, that the expression is no more than the name of a musical tune. But, *if* its meaning does carry significance, the words 'Do not destroy' would be particularly appropriate for Psa. 56.

⁴³ 1 Sam. 21. 10.

⁴⁴ 1 Sam. 21. 12.

⁴⁵ Psa. 56. 3.

⁴⁶ Psa. 56. 4, 11. The word in verse 4 is (literally) 'flesh'; i.e. man as frail and mortal.

⁴⁷ Psa. 34. 4, 6; cf. 'delivers' in vv. 7, 17, 19. Note the four references in Psa. 34 to the 'all' (fears and troubles) from which God delivers; vv. 4, 6, 17, 19. The relation of Psa. 56 'to Psa. 34 resembles that of Psa. 51 to Psa. 32', Delitzsch on the inscription to Psa. 34.

⁴⁸ Josh. 12. 15; for its long history see Gen. 38. 1.

⁴⁹ There are many very large caves burrowed into the limestone hills south of the valley of Elah, several of which I understand could accommodate over 400 people. Although it is claimed that 'Hebrew syntax permits of the use of the word "cave" collectively; it may denote a group or a region of caves; it is not shut up to the meaning that there was one immense cave in which David and his 400 men all found accommodations at once', *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

⁵⁰ Josh. 15.20-21, 35. Josephus noted, 'When David had escaped in this manner out of Gath, he came to the tribe of Judah, and abode in a cave by the city of Adullam', *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VI, Chapter XII, para.3.

⁵¹ 1 Sam. 22. 6.

⁵² 1 Sam. 21. 4; Matt. 12. 4.

⁵³ He had once been the 'commander' (same word) of either 'a thousand' or 'a military unit' (the Hebrew word *eleph* can mean either), 1 Sam. 18. 13.

⁵⁴ The name 'Adullam' reminds the reader of David's ancestor taking similar refuge. In Genesis 38, Judah himself pitches his tent with Hirah the Adullamite in order to separate himself from his brothers after deceiving their father about the fate of Joseph. Here in 1 Samuel 22, Adullam is a place where David is re-connected with his brothers.

⁵⁵ 1 Samuel 20. 33.

⁵⁶ 1 Samuel 22. 16-19.

⁵⁷ 2 Sam. 23. 13-14.

⁵⁸ 1 Sam. 17. 28.

⁵⁹ Psa. 78. 70-72.

⁶⁰ The 'sons of Zeruah', 26.6; 2 Sam. 2.13, 18; 3.39; 8.16; 14.1; 16.9-10; 17.25; 18.2; 19.21-22; 21.17; 23.18, 37; 1 Kings 1.7; 2.5, 22; 1 Chron. 2.16; 11.6, 39; 18.12, 15; 26.38; 27.24 – the elder of David's two sisters, 1 Chron. 2.16.

⁶¹ 2 Sam. 2. 32.

⁶² 1 Sam. 8. 14-18.

⁶³ See *TWOT*, Vol.2, page 760; *NIDOTTE*, Vol. 3, pages 786-788.

⁶⁴ Used, for example, to describe Hannah, 1 Sam. 1. 10.

⁶⁵ Fighting, as David himself, the Lord's battles, 1 Sam. 25. 28; not waging war against king Saul, but against enemies such as the Philistines, which Saul's own pre-occupation with killing David prevented him from doing, 1 Sam. 23. 1-8.

⁶⁶ 2 Sam. 23. 8-39 and 1 Chron. 11. 10-47.

⁶⁷ 2 Sam. 23. 13-17 and 1 Chron. 11.15-19,

⁶⁸ 2 Sam. 2. 32

⁶⁹ By the time we reach 1 Sam. 23. 13, a period of months, it had reached 600.

⁷⁰ 1 Sam. 14. 52.

⁷¹ Matt. 18. 20 lit.

⁷² 'Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him', 2 Thess. 2.1.

⁷³ Remember the Lord's words, 'I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd', John 10.16 JND. It has been said that 'a fold is a circumference without a centre, but a flock is a centre without a circumference'!

⁷⁴ Psa. 34 and Psa. 56.

⁷⁵ It is possible that David wrote either (or, indeed, both) of these psalms when he and his men took refuge in the cave at En-gedi, 24.1-8, rather than when he was at Adullam. But, speaking personally, I think the evidence points to them having been written in the cave of Adullam.

I note that there are certain similarities between Psa. 57 and Psa. 56 - which latter was certainly written either just before or during the time when David was at Adullam. Psalm 57 'is, in many respects, a companion Psalm to the preceding Psalm 56. the structure is similar, with two divisions concluding with the same refrain, and there are certain phrases which are common to both Psalms. The tone and the spirit of the two Psalms are almost identical', J. Flanagan, 'Psalms' in the '*What the Bible Teaches*', page 248.

'The psalm is similar to Psalm 56 in thought and structure. They both express great confidence in the midst of life-threatening danger. They both begin the same with an appeal for God to be gracious. And they both have the same description of the ferocity of the enemy', Allen Ross, pages 280-281. If anything, Psalm 57 has a more triumphant tone than Psalm 56. 'The circumstances of both Psalms are in the general the same, the prayer, the confidence, the exultation at the assurance of being heard, the promise of thanks. Both Psalms begin with the words, "Be gracious to me," and in both is the enemy marked out by the peculiar designation of one snuffing after', Hengstenberg, the title of Psalm 57. To me these literary affinities suggest that they were written around the same time.

In that both the titles to both Psa. 57 and Psa. 142 use the identical and unqualified expression 'in the cave', I suspect that David wrote both these psalms concerning his time in the same cave.

⁷⁶ My spirit grows faint within me ... there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.

I cry to you, Lord ... Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; those who pursue me ... are too strong for me. Set me free from my prison ...

[An apt description from someone holed up in a cave.]

⁷⁷ 'Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge ('a place of trust'), until these calamities be overpast', Psa. 57.1, and, 'I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my refuge ('a shelter') and my portion in the land of the living', Psa. 142.5.

⁷⁸ See *Gesenius and the New Brown Driver Briggs, Strong's code 4707/4708*

⁷⁹ 1 Sam. 16. 1.

⁸⁰ Ruth 1. 1-2.

⁸¹ Ruth 4. 23-24.

⁸² 1 Sam. 17. 12.

⁸³ 'Now what principle of preference may be imagined to have governed David when he committed his family to the dangerous keeping of the Moabites? Was it a mere matter of chance? It might seem so, as far as appears to the contrary in David's history, given in the Books of Samuel; and if the Book of Ruth had never come down to us, to accident it probably would have been ascribed. But this short and beautiful historical document shows us a propriety

in the selection of Moab above any other for a place of refuge to the father and mother of David ; since it is there seen that the grandmother of Jesse, David's father, was actually a Moabitess; Ruth being the mother of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse. And, moreover, that Orpah, the other Moabitess, who married Mahlon at the time when Ruth married Chilion his brother, remained behind in Moab after the departure of Naomi and Ruth, and remained behind with a strong feeling of affection, nevertheless, for the family and kindred of her deceased husband, taking leave of them with tears. She herself then, or, at all events, her descendants and friends, 'might still be alive. Some regard for the posterity of Ruth, David would persuade himself, might still survive amongst them. An interval of fifty years, for it probably was not more, was not likely, he might think, to have worn out the memory and the feelings of the relationship, in a country, and at a period, which acknowledged the ties of family to be long and strong, and the blood to be the life thereof. Thus do we detect, not without some pains, a certain fitness in the conduct of David in this transaction which marks it to be a real one. The forger of a story could not have fallen upon the happy device of sheltering Jesse in Moab, simply on the recollection of his Moabish extraction two generations earlier; or, having fallen upon it, it is probable he would have taken care to draw the attention of his readers towards his device by some means or other, lest the evidence it was intended to afford of the truth of the history might be thrown away upon them. As it is, the circumstance itself is asserted without the smallest attempt to explain or account for it. Nay, recourse must be had to another book of Scripture, in order that the coincidence may be seen'.

J. J. Blunt, '*Undesigned Coincidences in the Writings Both of the Old and New Testament*', pages 122-123.

⁸⁴ 1 Sam. 14. 47.

⁸⁵ 'A Jewish tradition relates that the king of Moab betrayed his trust and murdered David's parents', A. F. Kirkpatrick, '*The First Book of Samuel*' (Cambridge Bible), page 187.

⁸⁶ Psa. 119. 15, 78.

⁸⁷ Exod. 20. 12. A responsibility hammered home in NT 'Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever' (1 Tim 5:8).

⁸⁸ Eph. 6. 2.

⁸⁹ 1 Sam. 22. 3.

⁹⁰ 1 Chron. 29. 29. Given the fact that Gad is mentioned last there, and that he was certainly still active when David foolishly numbered the people at a very late stage in his reign Gad must have been a young man at this time. Although Samuel had not yet died (see 25.1), he may well have been too feeble to travel from Ramah. It was possibly for this reason that God chose to send the younger man. We do not read of Gad again until David came to reign, when Gad held the official position of David's 'seer', 1 Chron. 21. 9. There seems to be no real distinction between a 'seer' and a 'prophet'. Gad is called both in 2 Sam. 24.11. Cf. the identification of the two offices in 2 Kings 17.13; Isa. 29.10; Amos 7.12. Also the use of two different words for 'seer' along with the word 'prophet' in 1 Chron. 29.19. Those who formerly were spoken of as 'seers' became known as 'prophets', 1 Sam. 9.9. See *NIDOTTE*, Vol. 2, page 60, and *TWOT*, Vol 1, page 275.

⁹¹ We know that there were strongholds in Moab, Jer. 48. 41.

But it may well be that the 'hold/stronghold' in question wasn't in Moab, but rather that at Adullam. It is possible that the description 'hold/stronghold' is used of Adullam also in 2 Sam. 23.14//1 Chron. 11.16. The Hebrew words used for 'hold/stronghold' are often used of natural fortresses. At this time of his life, David moved from one natural stronghold to another, 1 Sam. 23.14, 19, 29 (note the plural in 23.19 and 29). See *NIDOTTE*, Vol. 2, page 1064 – curiously reproduced on page 1069!

If the reference is to Adullam, which was itself in the territory of Judah, the expression 'land of Judah' must refer here to some other area in that territory. This more limited meaning finds support in the words of David's men in 23.3; 'Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah'. Given that Keilah, as Adullam, was itself within the land of Judah, Josh. 15.44, David's men appear to have been using the word 'Judah' in a special and restricted sense – perhaps to describe the area of the lowlands around the actual towns.

⁹² See ... <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Chemosh>, and
<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4296-chemosh>.

⁹³ 1 Sam. 26. 19.

⁹⁴ Ruth 1. 6-22.

⁹⁵ Psa. 57. 1.

⁹⁶ Ruth 2. 12.