

# 1 SAMUEL 21

## 1Samuel 21:1–15

## David Goes to Nob and then to Gath

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Doctrines Alluded To			
The Destruction of Shiloh		Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God	Edom

During this period in David's life, he will write at least two psalms: Psalms 34 and 56

Psalms Alluded To	
Psalm 34	Psalm 56

**Introduction:** 1Sam. 21 is a relatively short chapter (particularly compared to the previous chapter), but it relates to us two very different incidents in the life of David. He comes to the priests in Nob and lies about the reason for his presence there. David asks for Goliath's sword, which is given to him. He will be recognized by one of Saul's shepherds, who will report him to Saul.

It is important that you recognize that David's going to the city of priests was not a matter of spiritual wisdom on his part. He did not go in order to ascertain God's will or to get some encouragement. He will lie to the head priest there, which means that gaining either encouragement or direction is out of the question. Furthermore, David's reasons for going to Nob seem to be secular one: he needs food and a weapon. He knows that he can find both in Nob.

In part 2 of this chapter (which is a very easy chapter to outline), David then changes direction (he had gone southeast from Gibeah to Nob and now he will go south-west) and goes to the city of Gath to the governor of Gath,

Achish (actually, he is brought before Achish). David will feign madness and Achish will dismiss him, having already enough madmen in his own cabinet.

There are two striking features to this narrative: (1) the vocabulary is markedly different; I find myself going into the Hebrew lexicon for more and more words that have not been used ever in the book of Samuel. This of course, could be passed off as, new situations and therefore, a new vocabulary. In any case, the result is going to be an increased amount of information concerning the vocabulary and usage of certain words. (2) However, you will recall that in previous chapters, there was really more intimate information about Jonathan and the things which occurred in his life than in David's, even though since 1Sam. 16, this book has been about David. Except for chapter 16, scenes with Jonathan and without David tend to be more detailed than scenes with David without Jonathan. At this point, it is all about David, and we get more details of his interactions than we had before. My point is, we may be dealing with a difference source. I would guess that Jonathan recorded much of what we have previously studied and that it is possible that David is recording this information. Given David's burst of psalms at this point (at least three), gives us even greater reason to think that David might record this history (at least in retrospect).

With this chapter, David leaves the capital of Gibeah, and forges a life as a fugitive. He will move from city to city, from mountain to mountain, from cave to cave. However, interestingly enough, David will always remain relatively close to Jerusalem. Edersheim suggests a twofold reason: (1) he can keep closer tabs on Saul by tapping informants for information in Jerusalem (this point is not really substantiated in Scripture); and (2) he would be reasonably close to his family.<sup>1</sup> On the second point, David moved at least his mother and father to Moab in order to insure their safety (1Sam. 22:3). It is not clear where his brothers went, or whether they remained in Jerusalem. I suspect that as a shepherd, David had taken his sheep out all around Jerusalem and that he stayed in this generally vicinity because he knew it well.

A minor point: Then end of 1Sam. 20:42 is v. 1 in the Hebrew. All of the verses which follow are therefore out of synch by one verse. In the Hebrew, there are 16 verses in this chapter.

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## David Gets Supplies from Ahimelech, a Priest at Nob

Slavishly literal:

**And so comes David to Nob unto Ahimelech the priest and so trembles Ahimelech to meet David and so he says to him, "Why [are] you to your separation and no man [is] with you?"** 1Samuel 21:1 (2)

Moderately literal:

**Then David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech was trembling to meet David and he asked him [lit., *said to him*], "Why [are] you alone and [why is there] no one with you?"**

**Then David traveled to Nob, and approached Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech was trembling when he met David, and he asked, "Why are you alone? Why is there no one else with you?"**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

#### Masoretic Text

And so comes David to Nob unto Ahimelech the priest and so trembles Ahimelech  
And so comes David to Nob unto Ahimelech the priest and so trembles Ahimelech  
to meet David and so he says to him, "Why [are] you to your separation and no man

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 487. To be fair, Edersheim was making this point specifically before 1Sam. 22.

[is] with you?” to meet David and so he says to him, “Why [are] you to your separation and no man [is] with you?”

Septuagint And David comes to Nomba to Abimelech the priest; and Abimelech was amazed at meeting him, and said to him, “Why [are] you alone and nobody [is] with you?”

Significant differences .

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV David went to see Ahimelech, a priest who lived in the town of Nob. Ahimelech was trembling with fear as he came out to meet David. “Why are you alone?” Ahimelech asked. “Why isn’t anyone else with you?”

TEV David went to the priest Ahimelech in Nob. Ahimelech came out trembling to meet him and asked, “Why did you come here all by yourself?”

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ David went to the priest Ahimelech at Nob. Ahimelech was trembling as he went to meet David. “Why are you alone?” he asked David. “Why is no one with you?”

JPS (Tanakh) David went to the priest Ahimelech at Nob. Ahimelech came out in alarm to meet David, and he said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?” [This is, of course, v. 2 in the JPS].

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David, and said to him, “Why are you alone and no one with you?”

Young’s Updated LT And David comes in to Nob, unto Ahimelech the priest, and Ahimelech trembles at meeting David, and says to him, “Why are you yourself alone, and no man with you?”

**What is the gist of this verse?** David goes to a priest at Nob and the priest is apparently very nervous to meet David. He asks David why he is alone.

## I Samuel 21:1a (v. 2a in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa or va (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
bôw’ (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #935 BDB #97
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong’s #1732 BDB #187
Nob (נוֹב) [pronounced <i>noh<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]	<i>to proclaim; prophet; and is transliterated Nob</i>	Proper noun; location with a directional hê	Strong’s #5011 BDB #611

## I Samuel 21:1a (v. 2a in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ׁel (לֵא) [pronounced <i>el</i> ]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ׁăchîymelek <sup>e</sup> (אֲחִימֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>uh-khee-MEH-lek</i> ]	<i>brother of Melek or brother of a king and is transliterated Ahimelech</i>	Masculine proper noun	Strong's #288 BDB #27
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i> ]	<i>priest</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463

We find the directional hê both here and in 1Sam. 22:9. It is possible that this is a the proper name of this city and that we find the abbreviation elsewhere. However, the simplest and most logical explanation is that the directional hê functions like our preposition *to*, and in both cases, translating this as *to Nob* is logical and apropos. *Nob* actually only occurs in two other places in this book—1Sam. 22:11, 19—and in neither place is it found with the directional hê and in neither place would it be reasonable to render it *to Nob*.

**Translation:** *Then David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest.* This is the first mention of a priest or of anything to do with the Tabernacle since 1Sam. 14. There are several misconceptions which could have been gotten from 1Sam. 14. In v. 3, we see Ahijah wearing the ephod in Saul's camp. Apparently, he functioned as their itinerant priest. Although the city of Shiloh is mentioned, this is in reference to Eli, who was [the priest of Jehovah at Shiloh](#). The camp priest's credentials were that he was the grandson of Eli (and, as you will recall, his grandfather was a corrupt priest). My point is, there is not necessarily an active priesthood functioning in Shiloh in this context of 1Sam. 14. In 1Sam. 14:18, in the Hebrew, Saul calls for the *Ark* of God, but it is actually the *ephod* that he calls for. When a king needed divine guidance, he called for the ephod, not the Ark (even though the wearer of the ephod may have been a charlatan). And even had Saul called for the Ark, it was never brought to him, as the camp of Philistines suddenly became quite noisy and confused. So, even though a priest is mentioned, along with his ephod (and possibly the Ark); this is simply a camp priest who traveled with Saul, and primarily for good luck, one might reasonably suppose.<sup>2</sup>

There are Philistine priests mentioned in 1Sam. 5 and 6; but our last true reference to God's plan for spiritual growth for the nation is at the beginning of 1Sam. 7, where the Ark of God has been returned by the Philistines and it is kept by Eleazar ben Abinadab (this is after the Israelites treat the Ark with disrespect). You may recall that in 1Sam. 7, we dealt with a long list of questions, e.g., *Why do we not have a Biblical record of the destruction of the Tent of God? Why did Samuel not set up the Ark as a part of Tent service? Was Samuel properly the High Priest successor to Eli?* In 1Sam. 6, we studied the destruction of Shiloh and the movement of the Ark.

What has occurred in the interim, between 1Sam. 7 and 21 is as follows:

### A Summary of the Events Which Have Occurred between 1Sam. 7 and 1Sam. 21

- a. Given the events which transpire during this time period, we may reasonably guess that the time period is somewhere between 20 and 40 years. Samuel is alive in 1Sam. 7 and his ministry is summarized (1Sam. 15–17). He will die in 1Sam. 25. It is from this information that we can reasonably determine the time frame.
  - i. In 1Sam. 7, the Ark is returned to Israel, but it is temporarily stored with Eleazar ben Abinadab, and it apparently remains there until David fetches it in 2Sam. 6.

<sup>2</sup> In 1Sam. 14, this topic is fully discussed.

## A Summary of the Events Which Have Occurred between 1Sam. 7 and 1Sam. 21

- ii. Israel demands and is given a king (King Saul). 1Sam. 8
  - (1) During this time period, the Tabernacle of God is moved and apparently set up again in Nob. This is obvious by 1Sam. 21. What likely occurred in the meantime was the city of Shiloh was destroyed, a fact alluded to but not recorded in Scripture.
    - (a) We have reason to believe that the spiritual provisions which God had made were temporarily shelved for several decades. That is, the Ark was not at the Tabernacle; the Tabernacle was moved and probably not set up for awhile; and rather than celebrate religious feasts as they were designed to be celebrated, such feasts had become family or palace affairs. Let's say that God had decreed that Christmas is to be celebrated in Church. Today, most Americans celebrate it, but it is with their families, at home, and with presents. That would be similar to what occurred during this time frame.
    - (b) It is apparently obvious to Saul and to Jonathan that God's true choice for king is David. For this reason, Saul seeks David's life and Jonathan seeks to protect David's life.

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We find out here that there is a functioning priesthood, they live in Nob, and the context will indicate to us that there are some traditions which are still being followed.

Nob is a city which is northeast of Jerusalem and south of Gibeah. You may recall from 1Sam. 17:54, David took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem and kept his weapons in his tent. Apparently, these were David's original intentions. However, at some point in time, Goliath's weapons ended up here in Nob (v. 9), which is fairly close to Jerusalem. Given that David's family lived in Bethlehem and that David probably traveled there on occasion, he probably kept the weapons there and they were later taken to the Tabernacle (either by David or a member of his family). Again, this is one of the many unrecorded incidents of Scripture which must be inferred. Since the Bread of Presence is mentioned, that means that some of the functions of the priesthood are being carried out.

Nob is actually mentioned very few times in Scripture. This is the first time that the city is named. We may surmise that Nob became the new location for the Tabernacle of God, given that Shiloh had been destroyed (see 1Sam. 4:2–3 Jer. 7:12 and **The Destruction of Shiloh**, which is covered in detail in 1Sam. 7:2).<sup>3</sup> One might say that this is a meek establishment of the holy city, as there are only 86 priests here (1Sam. 22:18–19) and no Ark (compare 1Sam. 7:1–2 with 2Sam. 6:4); however, they did have the ephod (1Sam. 21:9 23:6) and they baked Showbread (1Sam. 21:4, 6). It was as though they were tentatively setting up a holy city. Later on, we are going to learn reasons why this was probably an apostate priesthood when we examine [Where is the Ark and Why is it not in the Tabernacle of God?](#), a study located in this chapter (v. 7).

In 1Sam. 22:9, Doeg the Edomite will report that David was seen at Nob. Saul sends for the priests who are at Nob (1Sam. 22:11) and summarily executes them and almost everyone who lives in this city (which is also known as the *City of the Priests* in 1Sam. 22:19).

Nob was eventually resettled as a part of Benjamin in Neh. 11:31–35 and its residents may have included some priests. Our final reference to Nob is in Isa. 10:32; the context is the predicted assault of the Assyrian forces and from Nob, Sennacherib would temporarily halt (probably to organize his forces before assaulting Jerusalem) and from Nob, he would shake his fist at Jerusalem.

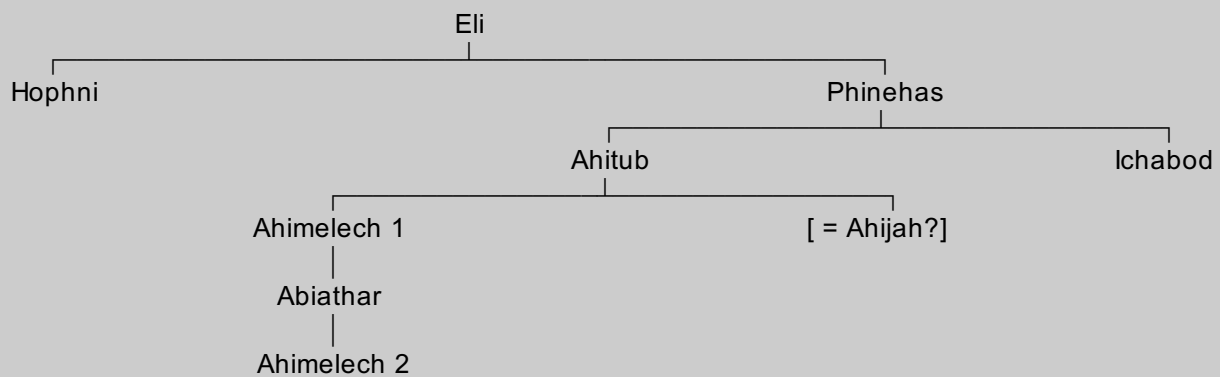
<sup>3</sup> Which is actually found in my exegesis of 1Sam. 6.

Nob is to be identified today with Ras Umm et-Tal or with Mount Scopus on the northern part of the Olivet ridge.<sup>4</sup> This general location is in agreement with all of the Scriptures referring to Nob; plus, in 2Sam. 15, David will ascend Olivet, where God was worshiped (2Sam. 15:30–32). S. R. Driver suggests a place on the Râs el-Meshârif, which is a mile north of Jerusalem, from which a person coming from the north road catches his first glimpse of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup>

We have already studied the **Movement of the Ark and the Tent of God** in 1Sam. 10. Samuel, in 1Sam. 10, prophesies to Saul how he will meet three men on the way to the hill of God which appears to be in Bethel (1Sam. 10:3–5). Gilgal, however, is given as the place where Saul should go to meet Samuel for the sacrifices. So, we really do not know exactly where the tent is set up during this time, if anywhere. It was in Shiloh; however, sometime during the time of Samuel and Saul, Shiloh was probably destroyed, although the Tabernacle of God had been saved. Whether it was reassembled elsewhere is never told to us (until Solomon fetches it). Throughout much of Saul's early reign, many religious activities take place in Gilgal (1Sam. 10:8 11:14–15 13:4–15 15:21). For that reason, it is possible that there was some sort of a priesthood functioning in Gilgal for several years. In any case, by this time, many of the priests were living in Nob and that the Tent of God is set up is implied, as they do replenish the Table of Showbread regularly (as we will see in this chapter) and the ephod is kept here as well (1Sam. 21:9). Interestingly enough, none of the cities mentioned here are specifically Levite cities (see Joshua 21).

Next, we need to deal with Ahimelech—just who is he and what sort of information can we glean from Scripture concerning him? First, we need to examine his ancestry:

### The Lineage to and From Ahimelech



All of these relationships are pretty clear and well-established. However, we do not know if Ahitub is a son of Phinehas or a half-brother to Ichabod (we would assume that he is an actual son of Phinehas, as the priesthood goes through him).

We are also unclear as to the relationship between Ahimelech and Ahijah. Ahimelech means *brother of a king*; Ahijah means *brother of Jah [Jehovah]*. Ahimelech is called the *son of Ahitub* in 1Sam. 22:9, 20 and Ahijah is called the *son of Ahitub* in 1Sam. 14:3. This suggests 3 possibilities : (1) they are the same person; (2) they are brothers; or (3) Ahijah is the father of Ahimelech (being called *the son of* does not necessarily mean direct descent).<sup>6</sup>

Many commentators lean toward them being one and the same because Ahijah is said to wear the ephod in 1Sam. 14:3, implying that he is the High Priest (or, the *acting* High Priest). Here, Ahimelech speaks to David and

<sup>4</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 448 (and their information came from J. Simons, *Geographical and Topographical Texts of the OT*, 70, 319). Grollenberg, in *Atlas of the Bible*, 1956 is in full agreement.

<sup>5</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary*; ed. J. D. Douglas; InterVarsity Fellowship, 1962; ©by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p. 892 (who references Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel*, 1913, p. 172).

<sup>6</sup> ISBE gives us the same possibilities in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; Vol. I, p. 85.

## The Lineage to and From Ahimelech

apparently has the authority to make such decisions as dispensing the Holy Bread to a common man. This would also imply the greatest authority of this priest city is vested in him. Give the relatively short time frame, the least likely scenario would be for Ahijah to be the father of Ahimelech.

Abiathar is called the son of Ahimelech in 1Sam. 22:20 23:6 30:7. He apparently named his son Ahimelech as well (2Sam. 8:17 1Chron. 18:16), probably because his father was killed by King Saul, an event that we will cover in the future. Although Abiathar is mentioned extensively throughout the books of Samuel, we don't find him in 1Chron. 6, which is the priestly line (he is mentioned several times in the book of 1Chronicles, however).

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This is the first mention of Ahimelech and, as you will read, there is no information given to us concerning his ancestry. As mentioned above, we are unclear as to the relationship between Ahimelech and Ahijah. Ahijah is first mentioned back in 1Sam. 14:3, where his lineage is given (and reproduced above). At that time, Ahijah is a priest who travels with Saul and his military. Ahijah is one of Saul's advisors because Ahijah has the ephod (which is used to determine God's will). This is all we really know about Ahijah. Ahijah and Ahimelech are never mentioned together and neither man is found in 1Chron. 6, which is the Levite line. However, they are both clearly priests and important figures during this time period. One could argue that, since Ahijah traveled with Saul and Ahimelech is found in Nob with the priests, that these are clearly different men. However, bear in mind that 1Sam. 14 occurred several years previous (perhaps as many as 10 years ago); and, if Ahijah is no longer traveling with Saul's military (which apparently functions almost apart from Saul's direct supervision during these times), then he must have some sort of function; hence, he gathers the priests at Nob. That Saul did not retain him (again, a speculative point) is simply further evidence that Saul became more and more estranged from God. Furthermore, the ephod is no longer with Saul but with the priests (see 1Sam. 23:6 30:7). So, no matter how you slice it, there are reasonable arguments for Ahijah and Ahimelech being brothers, being father and son, or being the same man. For these reason, we will treat these men separately, bearing the thought in the back of our minds that they could be one and the same.

The term *High Priest* is never applied to Ahimelech, although it is reasonable to assume that he is the man in charge in Nob; however, no one in the book of Samuel is ever called a *High Priest*. Ahimelech is clearly the man in charge and therefore the man that David speaks to. He authorizes David to take the sacred bread, which is not the sort of decision an underling would make. Ahimelech is also mentioned in the inscription of Psalm 52, one of the psalms that we will study in the near future. Given the destruction of Shiloh, it is reasonable to assume that the priests are at an uncertain stage in their existence. They do not have the approbation of Saul; Samuel is busy with his school of prophets in Naioth; and we have no mention of God speaking to any of these priests (which is a very rare event anyway). Saul no longer consults them for direction, as his estrangement from God has become more and more dramatic, as his hatred for David increases (we know this because the ephod is with Saul's army in 1Sam. 14:3, but is with a priest from Nob in 23:6). And, instead of feasts held at the holy city (which is wherever the Tabernacle is), Saul is holding feasts at the palace (1Sam. 20:24–29). Given all of this information, it would be reasonable to suppose that Ahimelech ran the show at Nob (what show there was to run), but that things were not back to normal, and that he was at best the unofficial High Priest.

It is very possible that the Tabernacle of God had just been recently revived and that those priests who remained functioned there. There is no mention in this chapter of the High Priest; and it is possible that no one had been selected as the High Priest yet. Samuel was still alive and that appeared to be his general function (although Samuel is never referred to as High Priest). It is important to note, however that *no one* in the book of Samuel is called a *High Priest*; this designation occurs only a moderate number of times and in specific books (Numbers, Kings, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Haggai and Zechariah). Samuel does not appear to be a part of the Tabernacle

ministry, as he has a seminary near his own home in Naioth (1Sam. 19:18) and that ministry seems to be tied to the prophets at this point in time rather than to the priests.<sup>7</sup>

So, here we have David at the city of Nob. We might expect him to consult with Ahimelech about the will of God. We might expect some conversation to take place about David's plight. However, even though David is first drawn to the city of the prophets and then to the city of priests, his interests are completely self-serving, and he does not express any real interest in the will of God. He knows that there is food there and he apparently knows that the priests have at least Goliath's sword there.

I Samuel 21:1b (v. 2b in the Hebrew)			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
chârad (חָרַד) [pronounced chaw-rahd]	<i>to tremble, to be terrified, to be frightened</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2729 BDB #353
ʾăchîyamelek <sup>e</sup> (אֲחִימֶלֶךְ) [pronounced uh-khee-MEH-lek]	<i>brother of Melek or brother of a king and is transliterated Ahimelech</i>	Masculine proper noun	Strong's #288 BDB #27
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l) <sup>e</sup>	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced kaw-RAW]	<i>to encounter, to befall, to meet; to assemble [for the purpose of encountering God or exegeting His Word]; to come, to assemble</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7122 & #7125 BDB #896
This is a homonym; the other qârâ' means <i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to assemble</i> .			
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

**Translation:** [Ahimelech was trembling to meet David...](#) Ahimelech is clearly nervous about meeting up with David, and we are never really told why. Whether he knew that Saul was after David is not told to us (what is recorded does not seem to indicate that Ahimelech had any idea about the estrangement between these two men). It is important to bear in mind that Jonathan was not aware of his father's intense hatred for David until a day or so previous to this. However, being priests, they may have been aware of Saul's men coming for David at Naioth (something that they might know about, but that Jonathan would not). On the other hand, given the lie that David will tell Ahimelech, this would also suggest that he was not aware of David and Saul's estrangement (obviously, Ahimelech could have chosen to believe David's lie). It is possible that a person of David's political stature showing up made Ahimelech nervous. It is possible that Ahimelech was afraid when he met David simply due to a premonition of impending doom, although he could not have clearly stated himself why he was trembling. Having a premonition of fear will prove to be justified in the next chapter. Keil and Delitzsch suggest *The unexpected appearance of David, the son-in-law of the king, without any attendants, alarmed Ahimelech, who probably imagined*

<sup>7</sup> And do not interpret *prophet* is a wild-haired man who lives out in the wilderness eating locusts and honey (like John the Baptist), but rather view the prophet as a teacher of God's Word. We do not really see much come out of this school, save for Saul and his soldiers.



that he had come with a commission from the king which might involve him in danger.<sup>8</sup> All we know for certain is that Ahimelech is somewhat taken aback—even frightened—to meet David. David will lie to him and get both food and weapons from Ahimelech in this chapter. The result will be that Ahimelech will be seen by Saul to be in cahoots with David; by extension, Saul sees the entire city of priests being in cahoots with David. Therefore, in a rage, he will kill all of the priests in 1Sam. 22:9–19.

It is Ahimelech's son, Abiathar, who will escape Saul's attack, and who will become the High Priest during David's reign. As you will see, he will name his own son Ahimelech, in honor of his father.<sup>9</sup>

### I Samuel 21:1c (V. 2c in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אמר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
madduʿa (מדוע) [pronounced mah-DOO-ahg]	<i>why, wherefore, on what account, and it is probably a contraction of a word which means what being known</i>	adverb	Strong's #4069 BDB #396
ʾattâh (אתה) [pronounced aht-TAW]	<i>you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bad (בד) [pronounced bah]	<i>separation, by itself, alone</i>	masculine singular noun with a 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #905 BDB #94
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾiysh (יש) [pronounced eesh]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʾeyn (אין) [pronounced ān]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; there is no</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34

<sup>8</sup> Johann (C.F.) Keil & Franz Delitzsch; *Commentary on the Old Testament*; 1Sam. 21:1; courtesy of e-Sword.

<sup>9</sup> There is the suggestion that the names were transposed and that the passage should read *Abiathar son of Ahimelech*; we will study that when we get to 2Sam. 8.

### I Samuel 21:1c (V. 2c in the Hebrew)

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	<i>with, at, near, by, among, directly from</i>	preposition (which is identical to the sign of the direct object); with a 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, pausal form	Strong's #854 BDB #85

**Translation:** ...and he asked him [lit., *said to him*], “Why [are] you alone and [why is there] no one with you?” This strikes the priest as odd, that David is traveling alone. If you happened to see the vice president of the United States by himself, shopping the auto supply section of Wal Mart, that would strike you as pretty odd.

This may help to explain Ahimelech’s apparent fear. A head of state has shown up suddenly, unannounced and unaccompanied at his doorstep. He would have no way of knowing what was happening. I have personally been in two meetings where something was said that made me realize that this was a life-altering situation and it chilled me to the bone, although I was unable to rationally consider all of the ramifications of such a situation at that time. This could be Ahimelech.

So, let’s summarize...

#### Possible Reasons Why Ahimelech is Trembling When He Meets David

Possible Reason	Likelihood
Ahimelech knows that David is on the run from Saul.	It appears as though David has been on the run from Saul for only a very short time. Even Jonathan was unaware of Saul’s anger until the previous day. Given Ahimelech’s question (“Why are you alone?”) and given the fact that he believes David’s lie, suggests that he was not aware of any problems between Saul and David. On the other hand, Ahimelech may have heard through the grapevine that Saul and his soldiers came for David at Naioth, which was the city of prophets. Therefore, these reasons are highly unlikely.
Ahimelech knows that David and Saul are estranged.	This is very likely, as this is exactly what took place. Ahimelech may wonder if war has broken out or some other national catastrophe has occurred. One reason that this is the mostly likely explanation is that the latter portion of this verse tells us that Ahimelech immediately asks David, “Why are you alone?” Ahimelech might have imagined that David been in a battle and had escaped alone and without a weapon; and such a scenario would mean that the enemies were close by.
David, a highly ranked official, has shown up suddenly without weapons and without an entourage at Ahimelech’s doorstep.	We do occasionally have these irrational fears which may or may not turn out to be justified.
Ahimelech has an almost irrational fear of impending doom.	This is very reasonable, as Saul is on the outs with God, which is something that the priests are probably aware (although they are apparently unaware of other political intrigues). To have a high-ranking official from Saul’s army to suddenly show up and without warning (the priests are not aware of the rift between Saul and David), this priest may be concerned that Saul will take out his anger against God on this priests and Tabernacle.

## Possible Reasons Why Ahimelech is Trembling When He Meets David

### Possible Reason

### Likelihood

These final three reasons are all things which Ahimelech is probably feeling at this time, and thus accounts for his trembling.

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It is important to note David's inclination. The first time that he is on the run, he goes to Samuel, who was, for many years, the undisputed spiritual leader of Israel. On the run again, David goes to Ahimelech, who appears to be acting High Priest (again, a term which does not ever occur in the book of Samuel). First to the city of the prophets and then to the city of the priests. You may ask, *why doesn't David go to God in prayer?* Strictly speaking, prayer is not a device used for guidance. David did not speak to God face to face (or in some way that God would manifest Himself to David) as that was an extremely rare situation enjoyed by very few saints. So David's choices are reasonable; however, he thinks only of himself and his own personal safety. David does not yet consider what bearing his actions will have on others, meaning that he is not yet ready to become king of Israel yet.

**And so says David to Ahimelech the priest, "The king commissioned me a word and so he says unto me, 'A man does not know anything the word which I am sending you and which I have commissioned you.' And the young men I have made known in a place, such a such.**

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21:2

**So David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has charged me [with] a matter and he told me, 'No one is to know anything [about] the mission [lit., word, matter] that I am sending you on and which I have commissioned you [to do].' I have made known a specific place [to] the young men [where we will meet]."**

**So David answered Ahimelech the priest, saying, "The king are entrusted me with a specific mission; furthermore, he told me, 'No one is to know anything about this mission that I have sent you on to complete.' Therefore, I have set up a specific place where I will meet up with the young men.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

#### Masoretic Text

And so says David to Ahimelech the priest, "The king commissioned me a word and so he says unto me, 'A man does not know anything the word which I am sending you and which I have commissioned you.' And the young men I have made known in a place, such a such.

#### Septuagint

And David said to the priest, "The king gave me a command today and he said to me, 'Let no one know the matter on which I send you, and concerning which I have charged you; and I have charged my servants in the place that is called *The Faithfulness of God*, phellani maemoni [a corruption of פלני אלמני].'

Significant differences .

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

#### CEV

"I'm on a mission for King Saul," David answered. "He ordered me not to tell anyone what the mission is all about, so I had my soldiers stay somewhere else.

#### NLT

"The king has sent me on a private matter," David said. "He told me not to tell anyone why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later.

TEV "I am here on the king's business," David answered. "He told me not to let anyone know what he sent me to do. As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word™* "The king ordered me to do something," David answered the priest Ahimelech, "and he told me, 'No one must know anything about this mission I'm sending you on and about the orders I've given you. I've stationed my young men at a certain place.' "

JPS (Tanakh) David answered the priest Ahimelech, "The king has ordered me on a mission, and he said to me, 'No one must know anything about the mission on which I am sending you and for which I have given you orders.' So I have directed [my] young men to such and such a place.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

NASB And David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter, and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'

NRSV David said to the priest Ahimelech, "The king has charge me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment [as per Dead Sea Scrolls and Vulgate; Compare Greek; meaning of MT uncertain] with the young men for such and such a place.

*Young's Updated LT* And David says to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commanded me a matter, and he says unto me, 'Let no man know anything of the matter about which I am sending you, and which I have commanded you; and the young men I have caused to know at such and such a place.'

**What is the gist of this verse?** David lies to the priest, telling him that King Saul has sent him on a secret mission. His young men will meet up with him elsewhere.

Going into this verse makes me think that I need to give you some introductory points, which will answer the question...

### Why Will David Spend So Much Time as a Refugee?

1. David is not ready to be king over all of Israel yet.
2. God is not ready to remove Saul completely from his throne either.
3. Most people when they think of a position of authority, what they think about is power, and secondly about recognition and possibly the material benefits associated with such a position.
4. When you have a position of leadership, a position of power, a position of authority, the last thing that should be on your mind is how cool it is to have power to wield over others.
5. The key to authority is responsibility. The key to have a lot of authority is immense responsibility. You are responsible for those over whom you have authority.
6. David needs to learn that, and this will be his first lesson.
7. One of the most difficult things for a man with a heart to bear is the suffering of others which he has caused. A husband has authority over his family. If this husband has a heart, then he is always cognizant that the decisions which he makes affects his entire family.
8. A husband who understands that is fit to be a husband.
9. A husband who cheats on his wife, and thus risks the well-being of his wife and children, is not fit to have this sort of authority.

## Why Will David Spend So Much Time as a Refugee?

10. David has to realize that everything that he does, good and bad, will impact the nation Israel over which he will rule. He must see what he is able to cause and he must see the disastrous results of bad decisions on his part.
11. In this chapter, his bad decisions will affect the priests over Israel. Had he been king, a similar bad decision would have had disastrous results which would have affected all of Israel.
12. Therefore, God is testing David and David is growing spiritually while David is a refugee.
13. Some of David's greatest psalms will come from this time period; psalms which have had an impact throughout half of man's history. This is very similar to the 4 epistles that Paul wrote while in prison. Not the best sort of circumstances, but some of the most fantastic spiritual information came out of these periods of testing.
14. We, as believers far removed from this time period, will learn a great deal about God and His plan and His timing from David during these years while David is on the run and while Saul is a lame duck king.
15. One lesson which David is able to bear is patience and waiting upon God. Had you been told by Samuel that God had chosen you as Israel's next king, you would have marched into Gibeah and told Saul to hand over the crown. David does not do that. He is given chance after chance to speed up God's plan; to put *feet* on God's plan; and David never usurps the timing of God.

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### 1Samuel 21:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
`âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
`ächîmelek° (אָחִימֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>uh-khee-MEH-lek</i> ]	<i>brother of Melek or brother of a king and is transliterated Ahimelech</i>	Masculine proper noun	Strong's #288 BDB #27
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i> ]	<i>priest</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
melek° (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i> ]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
tsâvâh (צָוָה) [pronounced <i>tsaw-VAW</i> ]	<i>to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel perfect, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #6680 BDB #845

## 1Samuel 21:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dâ <sup>b</sup> vâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAWR]	word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1697 BDB #182

**Translation:** So David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me [with] a matter... David has two approaches that he can take with Ahimelech the priest. He can either lie or he can tell Ahimelech the truth. David chooses to lie. He first says that he is there on business from King Saul. He tells Ahimelech that Saul has an assignment which he has sent David on. As we will find out, this lie will endanger all of the priests of Nob. They will all die, save one, because of David’s lie (and bear in mind, David did not think this through; he did not even think that there might be a problem that would result from lying to Ahimelech). David will, by the way, acknowledge this mistake, saying to Abiathar, the young priest who escaped, “I have brought about [the death] of every person in your father’s household.” (1Sam. 22:22b).

## 1Samuel 21:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced e/]	in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); with a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʾiysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced a/]	not; nothing; none	adverb of negation; conjunction of prohibiting, dehorting, deprecating, desire that something <i>not</i> be done	Strong's #408 BDB #39.
yâdaʿ (יָדָע) [pronounced yaw-DAHḤ]	to see; to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
m <sup>e</sup> ʾûwmâh (מְאוּמָה) [pronounced m <sup>e</sup> -oo-MAW]	anything, and it is usually found in negative sentences; therefore, with the negative, it is often rendered <i>nothing</i>	indefinite singular pronoun/adverb	Strong's #3972 BDB #548

## 1Samuel 21:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿêth (תּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dâ <sup>b</sup> vâr (דַּבָּר) [pronounced <i>daw<sup>b</sup>-VAWR</i> ]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command</i>	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʾânôkîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>awn-oh-KEE</i> ]	<i>I, me</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun (sometimes a verb is implied)	Strong's #595 BDB #59
shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAKH</i> ]	<i>to send, to send for, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth</i>	Qal active participle with a 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
tsâvâh (צָוָה) [pronounced <i>tsaw-VAW</i> ]	<i>to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Piel perfect, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6680 BDB #845

**Translation:** ...and he told me, 'No one is to know anything [about] the mission [lit., word, matter] that I am sending you on and which I have commissioned you [to do].' Not only does David tell Ahimelech that he is on a mission from Saul, but that it is a secret mission. This means that David will not have to formulate a more detailed lie as to what this mission might be. It sounds as though David is repeating himself here. He's already said that Saul has charged (or commissioned) him with a particular matter, and he says here that Saul has sent him away and commissioned (a repetition of the verb) him. David is probably making this up on the spot, and, in his nervousness, he repeats himself.

## 1Samuel 21:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (תּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84

### 1Samuel 21:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
נָאֲרָ (נֶעֱרָ) [pronounced NAH-áhrah]	boy, youth, young man, personal attendant	masculine plural noun with a definite article	Strong's #5288 & #5289 BDB #654
יָדָעַ (עַדַּי) [pronounced yaw-DAHG]	to make one know, to cause to know, to show; to direct	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Poel perfect (with a voluntative hê)	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
<p>Gesenius suggests that this ought to read הוֹדַעְתִּי rather than יוֹדַעְתִּי (however, I do not know what the first word means, and Gesenius does not bother to tell us). A NRSV footnote tells us that this should read <i>made an appointment with</i> as per the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Latin Vulgate.</p>			
אֶל (אֵל) [pronounced el]	in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
מִקּוֹמָם (מִקּוֹמָם) [pronounced maw-KOHH]	place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
כֵּן (כֵּן) [pronounced p <sup>o</sup> loh-NEE]	such a one, a certain one	pronoun	Strong's #6423 BDB #811
אֶל־מִן־נִי (אֶל־מִן־נִי) [pronounced áhl-moh-NEE]	some one, a certain one	adjective	Strong's #492 BDB #48

These two words are almost always found together and they have this rhythmic alliteration going on. Together, they mean *a certain [person or place]; a specific [person or place]; such and such*. The person or place is specific and known to the speaker but not to those whom he is speaking to.

**Translation:** I have made known a specific place [to] the young men [where we will meet]. Ahimelech posed two questions to David: (1) why are you here and (2) why are you alone? David first lies to Ahimelech about being on a secret mission from Saul; and here, he tells Ahimelech that he has set a place to meet up with his young men. By the way, there is some disagreement as to whether there are any young men with David at this time. This will be discussed later on in this chapter.

And now, what [is] there under your hand? Five of loaves give in my hand or the acquired."

1Samuel 21:3 Therefore, what [is] on hand [lit., under your hand]? Give the five loaves [of bread] to me [lit., in my hand] and [whatever else] is found."

Therefore, what do you have right there? Give those five loaves of bread to me and whatever else you might have."

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**



Masoretic Text	And now, what [is] there under your hand? Five of loaves give in my hand or the acquired.”
Septuagint	And now, if there are under your hand five loaves, give [them] into my hand what is ready.”

Significant differences .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Do you have any food you can give me? Could you spare five loaves of bread?”
NLT	Now, what is there to eat? Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you have.”

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™	⌊David added ⌋, “Now, what do you have ⌊to eat ⌋? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever you can find.”
JPS (Tanakh)	Now then, what have you got on hand? Any loaves of bread? Let me have them—or whatever is available.”

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	“Now therefore, what do you have on hand [lit., <i>what is under your hand</i> ]? Give me [lit., <i>in my hand</i> ] five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found.”
Young’s Updated LT	...and now, what is there under your hand? five loaves give into my hand, or that which is found.”

**What is the gist of this verse?** David is hungry, so he is going to ask for food.

1Samuel 21:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
‘attâh (הַתָּה) [pronounced <i>‘aht-TAWH</i> ]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong’s #6258 BDB #773
When followed by an imperative or an interrogative, w <sup>e</sup> + the adverb ‘attâh mean <i>and so, thus, things being so, therefore</i> . Sometimes, the concept of time is lost when this combination is used to incite another.			
mâh (הַמָּה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong’s #4100 BDB #552
yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaysh</i> ]	<i>being, substance, existence; used as a substitute for to be (without reference to number or tense); to be present, to be ready, to exist; the verb to be may be implied</i>	substantive	Strong’s #3426 BDB #441

## 1 Samuel 21:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath, in the place [in which one stands] [when found in accusative position]</i>	preposition	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388

I don't know at this time if *on hand* is a reasonable interpretation for this prepositional phrase. This would indicate that David could not necessarily see the bread.

**Translation:** *Therefore, what [is] on hand [lit., under your hand]?* It appears as though there is food right there in front of them; near the Table of Showbread there are apparently five loaves of bread. This is more of a rhetorical question, rather than one where David is eliciting information.

An interesting question might be posed at this point (one which I have not seen posed by any other commentator): *why didn't David simply go to a field and harvest the remnant which was left for the poor?* I honestly don't know the answer to this. My guess is that David was not really thinking clearly; he had gone to Samuel, the prophet; now he was going to Ahimelech the priest. At first, I guessed that David was looking for some sort of guidance; however, it simply turns out that he is extremely hungry. David was aware of the Showbread (as well as the other sorts of provisions), and, being famished, requested that. David does not ask for advice or guidance; nor does he reveal his true situation. Perhaps what he is hoping for is the first move to be made by an insightful priest—a priest who says, "I know your true situation, David, and here is what you need to do." Another explanation is that David was simply not thinking. He realized that there was bread available (more or less) at the Tabernacle, and therefore chose to go there. Additional narrative will reveal to us that David really has no spiritual agenda in coming here to Nob.

## 1 Samuel 21:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chămishshâh (חַמִּישָׁה) [pronounced khuh-mish-SHAW]	<i>five</i>	numeral, feminine construct	Strong's #2568 BDB #331
lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced LEH-khem]	literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3899 BDB #536
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative with the voluntative hê	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88

## 1Samuel 21:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
’ô (וְ) [pronounced oh]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and</i>	conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
mâtsâ’ (מַטְּסָא) [pronounced maw-TSAW]	<i>those acquired, those found, those present</i>	Niphal participle with the definite article	Strong's #4672 BDB #592

**Translation:** Give the five loaves [of bread] to me [lit., in my hand] and [whatever else] is found.” Apparently, even though there are generally 12 loaves of bread, there were only 5 remaining which David could see and he asks for those. This would indicate that the priests had begun to eat the bread already; seen of them had already come in to get their loaves). He also asks for whatever food is available. The idea is, he is asking this for his young men, who will be on this *secret mission* with him.

David’s purpose in coming to Nob was completely secular—he was hungry, they had food; and that is what he is asking for. Certainly, David is in a difficult situation—however, this would be the perfect opportunity for him to come clean with this priest and ask for guidance. He does not. Throughout this entire visit, David will simply lie to this priest in order to get what he wants; David does not think about the consequences and he gives no consideration whatsoever to the well-being of the priests in Nob, who might be seen as being in collusion with David.

**And so answers the priest David and so he says, “Nothing of bread commonness unto under my hand for if bread holiness there [is] (if abstained [themselves] the young men only from a woman.”**

1Samuel  
21:4

**The priest answered David, saying, “There [is] no common bread on hand [lit., under my hand] but there [is] holy bread—only if the young men have abstained from women.”**

**The priest answered David, saying, “We have no common bread on hand; however, there is holy bread—which the young men may eat only if they have abstained from sexual relations.”**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so answers the priest David and so he says, “Nothing of bread commonness unto under my hand for if bread holiness there [is] (if abstained [themselves] the young men only from a woman.”

##### Septuagint

And the priest answered David, and said, “There are no common loaves under my hand, for I have none but holy loaves. If the young men have been kept at least from women, then they will eat [these loaves].”

Significant differences .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV “The only bread I have is the sacred bread,” the priest told David. “You can have it if your soldiers didn’t sleep with women last night.”

NLT	“We don’t have any regular bread,” the priest replied. “But there is the holy bread, which I guess you can have if your young men have not slept with any women recently.”
TEV	The priest said, “I don’t have any ordinary bread, only sacred bread; you can have it if your men haven’t had sexual relations recently.”

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™	“I don’t have any ordinary bread,” the chief priest answered David. “But there is holy bread for the young men if they haven’t had sexual intercourse [today].”
JPS (Tanakh)	The priest answered David, “I have no ordinary bread on hand; there is only consecrated bread—provided the young men have kept away from women.”

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible	And the priest answered David, There is no common bread on hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.
NASB	And the priest answered David and said, “There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women.”
Young’s Updated LT	And the priest answers David, and says, “There is no common bread under my hand, but there is holy bread; if the youths have been kept only from women.”

**What is the gist of this verse?** The priest tells David that there is no common bread—that is, bread for common consumption. They have holy bread and that is available if the young men have not had sexual relations.

This verse is often misunderstood and/or poorly explained. The Tabernacle was not the place where one would go when hungry; and there are no lawful provisions associated with the non-Clergy eating sacred bread. This would be analogous today of someone entering into a church during Eucharist and eating a couple handfuls of those tiny wafers, and then polishing them off with a dozen small cups of grape juice.

## 1Samuel 21:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
ʿânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced gaw-NAWH]	<i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #6030 BDB #772
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced koh-HANE]	<i>priest</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong’s #3548 BDB #463
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong’s #853 BDB #84
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved</i> and is transliterated <i>David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong’s #1732 BDB #187

## 1Samuel 21:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾāmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾēyn (אֵין) [pronounced ān]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non- existence, absence or non- possession; there is no</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced LEH-khem]	literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3899 BDB #536
chôl (חֹל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>profaneness, commonness, unholy [thing]; common, profane</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2455 BDB #320
Although this is a masculine noun, there are several passages where this acts more like an adjective (see 1Sam. 21:4 Ezek. 42:20 48:15).			
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced el]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH- khaht]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath, in the place [in which one stands] [when found in accusative position]</i>	preposition	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
Together, these two prepositions simply mean <i>under</i> .			
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49
Together, kîy ʾîm (כִּי אִם) [pronounced kee-eem] act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered <i>but, except, unless</i> and possibly <i>only</i> . However, these particles are not used in a limiting way <i>if</i> they follow an oath, a question or a negative. Then they can be rendered <i>that if, for if, for though, that since, for if, but if, indeed if, even if</i> .			
lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced LEH-khem]	literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3899 BDB #536

## 1 Samuel 21:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced koh-DESH]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6944 BDB #871
This noun also seems to function as an adjective at times (Lev. 16:4, 32 1Sam. 21:4 1Chron. 16:10).			
yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced yaysh]	<i>being, substance, existence; used as a substitute for to be (without reference to number or tense); to be present, to be ready, to exist; the verb to be may be implied</i>	substantive	Strong's #3426 BDB #441

**Translation:** The priest answered David, saying, “There [is] no common bread on hand [lit., under my hand] but there [is] holy bread... The priests do not cook bread in general for a bread line. The holy bread that they produce is generally enough for them to eat. Therefore, all that they had on hand was holy (or, consecrated) bread. The consecrated bread was baked in groups of 12 loaves (for each tribe of Israel) and it represented God’s provision for all 12 tribes. The bread was to be consumed by Aaron and his sons (the Aaronic priesthood) (Lev. 24:5–9). Although this passage does not specifically forbid the eating of this bread by others, it reads that the sons of Aaron ...will eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him from the LORD’s offerings by fire, [his] portion forever (Lev. 24:9b). This simply does not seem to indicate that this bread available to others, even under emergency situations.<sup>10</sup> There are several commentators who talk about feeding the poor and the priests making their bread available to the poor; however, we simply do not find justification for this in the Law; and, apart from this passage, there seems to be no justification for this in practice either. Now, provision was made for the poor. A small portion of any man’s field was not to be harvested, so that the poor could come and eat from what had not been picked (Lev. 19:9 23:22 Deut. 24:19). Ahimelech should have directed David to the nearest harvest field. The Tabernacle of God was not set up to be a food kitchen.

Since I have taken this point of view, I need to explain Jesus and his disciples when they picked heads of grain to eat and they were accused by the Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus replied, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.” (Matt. 12:3b–4).

### An Explanation of Jesus’ Answer to the Pharisees Regarding David and the Consecrated Bread

1. First of all, the circumstance:
  - a. It is the Sabbath day, Jesus’ disciples are hungry, so they go to a grain field and pick grain to eat. (Matt. 12:1). As discussed, this was in accordance with Mosaic Law (Lev. 19:9 23:22 Deut. 24:19).
  - b. The Pharisees see this and approach Jesus, tell Him, “Look, what Your disciples are doing is not lawful on a Sabbath.” Matt. 12:2
  - c. Jesus first tells the Pharisees that David entered the house of God and he and his companions ate consecrated bread. He tells the Pharisees, “[This] was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone.” Matt. 12:4 Mark 2:26 adds that this took place during the time of Abiathar the High Priest (he will be the surviving priest, not the priest who gives David the bread).\*

<sup>10</sup> Edersheim would disagree, citing the love of one’s neighbor as a higher law (Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 779). However, there is no indication that the Tabernacle was opened up for a bread line during any desperate time in Israel’s history.

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- d. Jesus adds, "Have you not read [that]...David...gave it [the bread] to his companions?" (Luke 6:4b).
  - e. Jesus also makes the point, "Have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?" Matt. 12:5
  - f. Jesus concludes, telling the Pharisees, "But I tell you something greater than the Temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" Matt. 12:6–8 Hosea 6:6
  - g. Jesus also told them, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." Mark 2:27
  - h. First of all, there is no indication that David is traveling with any companions. He arrives before the priest alone (1Sam. 21:2) and lies about being on a mission from Saul and we can reasonably assume that he lies about meeting up with his young men later. Although it would not have been unusual for David to have traveled with a personal servant or two, there is nothing whatever said indicating that was the case, from the time that he was lowered down the city wall to escape Saul, to where we find him here, in the Tent of God, asking the priest for food. David's *companions* are only mentioned once by David, in what clearly appears to be part of a lie (1Sam. 21:4b); and by Jesus before the Pharisees. This leaves us with a problem—how do we explain this?
2. Most exegetes take the position that David was not breaking God's laws, but holding to a higher law—if people are hungry, then you need to feed them, regardless of the Law.† The implication would be that David did have companions with him, that they were hidden elsewhere, and that he took bread to them. This point of view also suggests that the Tabernacle could reasonably function as a *soup kitchen*.
  3. Another position would be that David took responsibility for individual men as he traveled; that is, they joined up with him, and he was their leader. These men could have joined up with him shortly after this incident in the Tent of God with the bread.
  4. Obviously, David could have traveled with a personal servant or two, and asked for them to remain out of sight on the outskirts of Nob. This would be the simplest explanation, and account for what Jesus said about David and his companions eating bread from the Tabernacle.
  5. Jesus made several points to the Pharisees, some of which go unstated:
    - a. "You don't know what the hell you are talking about" would be the first and main unstated point. The Pharisees did not know the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:29 Mark 12:24); they knew only man's distortion of the Law (Matt. 15:2, 3, 6 Mark 7:8, 9, 13). Allow me to quote at least two of these verses: "You have no trouble rejecting the commandments of God in order to keep your own traditions...Because of your traditions you have destroyed the authority of God's word." (Mark 7:9, 13b).
    - b. Therefore, they would have no clue when Jesus purposely distorted the Law Himself. They don't know enough about the Law to realize (1) that Jesus' disciples are not breaking the Sabbath and (2) this is obvious that they know little about the Law, as they do not know enough about this incident during the time of David to comment.
    - c. This situation with David, the consecrated bread and the priest is a bit more complex than its presentation here by Jesus. Jesus is **not** telling the Pharisees that, "When you are really, really hungry, you can break the Sabbath, just like when David went to the Tent of God with his companions and got bread to eat. They were really, really hungry." Although this is the view taken by many exegetes, it is goofy and without Scriptural support. Nowhere in the Old Testament is there any indication that the poor could go to the Tabernacle or to the Temple and eat the holy bread. This incident with David is the only time that this is done, and the results will be disastrous.
    - d. The man-made laws of the Sabbath had become extremely complex and excessive. According to these man-made laws, the disciples of Jesus were breaking the Sabbath. However, Jesus takes a fairly complex situation, oversimplifies it, and uses it to justify what His disciples have done.
    - e. Jesus' disciples have not done anything wrong. They have not violated the Sabbath. They have only violated distortions of the Sabbath; therefore, Jesus justifies what they did by slightly distorting a passage of Scripture.
    - f. Had the Pharisees known the Scripture, they could have said, "No, You aren't reading this exactly right;

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you have distorted this passage.” Had the Pharisees known Scripture, they could have said, “It is not even clear that David had companions with him at this time.” However, they have no argument because, even though they know enough of the manmade laws and distortions to condemn the disciples of Jesus, they did not know enough about God’s Word to recognize when Jesus is yanking their chain. Jesus has presented them with Scripture which is not really applicable to His situation; however, they do not know Scripture well enough to recognize this.

- g. When Jesus dealt with those who were on negative volition, He rarely gave them a clear, straight answer. Most of the time, he answered them with parables; however, He also spoke over their heads, He was sarcastic, and He made it a point, from time to time, to indicate that they did not know Scripture. You see, most of what Scripture taught was diametrically opposed to what the Pharisees taught.
  - h. Even though Moses gave Israel the Law, the Pharisees did not obey the Law—they continually made attempts to kill or capture our Lord (John 7:19).
  - i. Jesus takes a similar approach to Scripture in John 10:34, where he tells the Jews, “**Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, You are gods?’**” (Psalm 82:6). Jesus just plainly told the Jews that “**I and the Father are one.**” (John 10:30), and they were taking up stones to stone Him for this blasphemy.
    - i. Let me give you the short explanation: Jesus is not saying that the Jews are gods or would become God or anything like that. His making Himself equal to God was not justified by citing this passage which could be misinterpreted to say that all men are gods.
    - ii. His actual point here was this: if these Jews knew Scripture well enough to understand the meaning of the passage that He just quoted to them; then they would understand Scripture well enough to recognize that He is the Messiah.
6. Jesus also said, “**Have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath, the priests in the Temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent?**” (Matt. 12:5). Like His statement concerning David, this statement, if taken at face value, is wrought with problems.
- a. The Law is generally understood to be the first 5 books, and there was no Temple in the first 5 books. The temple was built by Solomon, and all that was added after Solomon’s day were history, poetry and prophetic books.
  - b. There is no specific statement from anywhere in Scripture that says, “The priests in the Temple (or Tabernacle) break the Sabbath and are innocent.” Still, Jesus asks the Pharisees, “**Have you not read this?**”
  - c. Again, if the Pharisees knew Scripture, they would have known that this passage is not to be found in the Old Testament, anywhere. However, if they knew Scripture that well, they would also have known that the requirements of the Law would cause the priests to sin, as per the traditions of the Pharisees.
7. Now, of course, the other option is, David did have some traveling buddies (or servants), who are not mentioned until 1Sam. 22:1–3, and they joined up with him sometime prior to his going to Nob. David therefore would have had to keep these men out of the sight of the Nob priests (they would not appear as though they had come from the palace of Saul). Apart from the New Testament, they are never mentioned in connection with Nob or David until chapter 22. Jesus would obviously know this, even though it is not clearly found in Scripture, because He is God. I should add that Jesus is very careful to say that David (not David *and* his companions) entered into the House of God; however, it is David *and* his companions who eat the sanctified bread. Even this explanation does not help us with Matt. 12:5 or John 10:34.
8. Another option is, some men joined up with David soon after Nob, and David gave him some of the bread. Again, this is not something specifically recorded in Scripture, although, of course, Jesus would know this.
9. However, even if we assume that David is traveling with some companions who are never alluded to, except in David’s story to the priest, we are still left with the problem that this passage does not justify the actions of Jesus’ disciples in the field. It is not the applicable passage.
10. By mentioning this incident, Jesus is requiring these Pharisees to think and, even more important, to do some Scriptural research. One or more of the Pharisees standing before Him is probably conflicted. Jesus’ intention is for them to question what they think they know and what they are taking for granted.



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11. What Jesus actually had to say, from a doctrinal standpoint, occurs at the end of these three passages where this incident is mentioned. These points are as follows:
  - a. **"The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath."** (Mark 2:27). The idea is that the benefits of the Sabbath were designed for man. The Sabbath taught that God completed His work on the 6<sup>th</sup> day and rested (not because He was tired but because He had finished). The Sabbath days insured that (1) doctrine would be taught via the animal sacrifices and (2) that man would have time to rest, as man, when his work was completed, was tired and needed rest.
  - b. **"Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath."** (Mark 2:28 Luke 6:5). This statement pretty much overrides everything else. Jesus is the Son of Man and He is Lord of the Sabbath. Even if Lord is understood in its least formal usage, as *an owner of*; still this is a strong statement of His deity. Jesus is telling them, "I am the One Who says what can and cannot be done on the Sabbath; not you with your lame distortions of My Law." That the Pharisees could approach Jesus, the Author of the Law, and allege that His disciples were breaking the Law, apparently with His blessing, was an affront to Him and His deity.
12. The accusing Pharisees were well-versed in the manmade laws concerning the Sabbath; they were conversely quite unfamiliar with the Scriptural teachings of the Sabbath. By referring back to this incident with David, Jesus was telling them that they really did not know Scripture.
13. A question which commentators do not deal with is, *are these disciples actually breaking the Law?*
  - a. In this particular incident, Jesus is obviously condoning what His disciples are doing. His disciples were hungry; they were traveling through a grain field; they were picking and eating the grain; and Jesus nowhere stops them, saying, "We cannot do this on the Sabbath." Therefore, Jesus has allowed them to eat from this field.
  - b. Jesus also defends them before the Pharisees, which is even more important, and indicates further that He condones their actions.
  - c. The Law forbids working on the Sabbath; however, it does not forbid eating. It is one thing to require a servant to prepare a meal for a family on the Sabbath, or for a man to go out and harvest food for his family on the Sabbath—these are both violations of the Sabbath (see Ex. 20:10 35:3, for instance). It is another thing to eat on the Sabbath, even if it involves picking fruit from a tree or grain from a stalk—this is not forbidden anywhere in the Law.
  - d. What the Jews had done was to dramatically distort the restrictions of the Sabbath day. They had developed long lists of things which could not be done on the Sabbath, which included 39 types of work which were forbidden. Rather than allow Scripture to speak for itself, the religious Jews delineated just what was and was not acceptable on the Sabbath, adding considerable text to what God had already given them.
  - e. Therefore, the disciples of our Lord were violating Jewish traditions, but they were not violating God's Sabbath.

\* It is quite unfortunate that Keil and Delitzsch report this as an error on Mark's part in their otherwise outstanding commentary. Johann (C.F.) Keil & Franz Delitzsch; *Commentary on the Old Testament*; 1Sam. 21:4; courtesy of e-Sword. It is very odd that several authors deemed it important to comment on Mark's account at this point, and the *problem* of his mention of Abiathar (which is *not* a problem and which mentioned is *not* a contradiction of anything) and yet these same authors seem to be oblivious to the greater issues of what Jesus said and meant.

† Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; pp. 779–780. In fact, it is because of Edersheim's 3 or 4 sentence quote that inspired these 3 or 4 pages of notes. See also J. Vernon McGee; *I & 11 Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; pp. 112–113; and Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 511. I purposely referenced three of the generally more accurate commentators to make a point.

Interestingly enough, I have several books which deal with *apparent contradictions* and problems with Scripture

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and not one of them deals with this particular point of David's companions.

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Regardless of which position you take, a reasonable question would be, *why didn't Jesus simply state outright, unequivocally what the Scripture said? Why did He speak in parables? Why did He on rare occasion seemingly misapply or misquote Scripture?*

### Why Didn't Jesus Simply Come Out and Say What He Meant?

1. First of all, we must recognize that our Lord, on at least three recorded occasions, did not apply Scripture as we would have expected Him to.
  - a. Jesus asks the Pharisees, what about when David got bread from the Tabernacle to feed his companions, when it does not appear as though He had any companions (the various alternative options were discussed in the previous points). Matt. 12:3–4.
  - b. Then Jesus makes a false quotation: **"Have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath, the priests in the Temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?"** (Matt. 12:5). There is no such quotation in the Bible. However, according to the traditions of the Pharisees, the current priests of the Temple were sinning essentially in the same way that His disciples were supposedly sinning (see, for instance, Num. 28:9–10). However, there is no **Biblical** statement which reads: *The priests in the Temple break the Sabbath and are innocent.*
  - c. When a clear statement by Jesus indicated that He was deity and those who heard wanted to stone Him, he quoted Psalm 82:6, which reads **"You are gods [or, You are God]."** Jesus was not implying that the Jews that he was speaking to were divine as He was, or that they would become divine beings (ala Mormonism). He simply quoted a Scripture, practically misapplying it in context, to get them to thinking and to get them to study God's Word.
2. When Jesus spoke too plainly, the Jews would attempt to kill Him (e.g., John 10:25–39).
3. I have had many times when someone would quote Scripture to me, out of context; but their quoting it made me go back into the Word and examine the passage carefully.
4. Jesus typically spoke in parables, where a clear parallel reality is laid down next to a principle, and that the truth and understanding of the principle is made clear by the parallel illustration. One of the earliest parables in Scripture is with Nathan the prophet and David. Nathan suggests to David a scenario where a rich man steals the ewe lamb—the only possession—of a poor man, and David is livid with rage against the rich man; and then Nathan tells David, "You are that rich man!" (2Sam. 12:1–7). Nathan gave David a clear parallel situation and David emphatically took a position with regards to this situation. Then Nathan made the parallel clear and David had judged himself wrong. Jesus did the same thing: he stated a principle to which all could agree, and then applied that principle to a point of doctrine; generally a point of doctrine that the listener would not have agreed to previously.
5. Jesus said things which would cause men to think and to search the Scriptures. Someone may not have gotten what they should have gotten in a conversation with our Lord; however, if this sent them to the Bible in search of truth, that was good enough, as He is the Truth.
6. What Jesus said was recorded by His disciples. They rarely understood clear statements of doctrine (except for John), so their memories of such things would not necessarily be clear. However, they often remembered situations and stories. This is human nature. I have taken a great many math classes; I have been taught many principles which I did not understand; and if I had to write down those principles from memory, even a most basic statement of what these principles were, I would be at a loss. I flat out don't remember them. However, I do recall some stories and actions of my math professors, and these I could write down. Those things which I understood and learned; I can recall those things.
7. Scripture is recorded by man as moved by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is *not* dictated by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we would expect the recording of Scripture to be, from man's standpoint, a natural recall process. Jesus presented truth in such a way that His disciples could also recall it, even if they did not

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- grasp, at the time, what was being said.
8. Obviously, in any dispute between Jesus and the religious hierarchy of His day, Jesus would always be right and the Pharisees or Sadducees would always be wrong. That goes without saying. However, there is more to a dispute than who's right and who's wrong. There was often more to these disputes apart from Jesus simply stating, "I'm right, and here's why; you're wrong, and here's why." Although this is the pattern of most theological arguments today, this was not the pattern of the theological disputes between Jesus and the religious hierarchy. Jesus intentionally made arguments, parables, and statements that men could remember, could ponder and could possibly later change their minds because of what He said.
  9. Men who listened to Jesus could walk away with what He said, although they did not always grasp, at the time, what it was that He said to them. However, given time and positive volition, what He said would make sense.
  10. I recall having a conversation with my first department head, who seemed a little spacey, mostly because he was old and very intelligent. There were comments that he made that made little sense to me; and I often dismissed these statements as the off-handed ramblings of an old man. However, eventually, these statements (some of them) gelled and resinated with me, and I had to admit on later reflection that what he said made perfect sense. But it took time for what he said to sink in. What Jesus had to say sometimes took time to sink in; therefore, He had to present the information in such a way so that it would sink in and make sense eventually. One might easily recall the parable of the prodigal son; however, it may be months later when the actual meaning of this story is apprehended. When one is able to recall the story, then it is easier for them to eventually understand what the story was teaching.
  11. So, when Jesus would use a Scripture out of context, or present it in a way that is misleading (which was only done on rare occasion), the idea would be that the listener would hear what Jesus said, wonder about it, and then question it later, looking up the references. The idea is, such a one would, in this way, come across the gospel of Christ. When a Jew studied the Scriptures rather than the Laws of the Rabbis (the Mishna and the Talmud), he would be more likely to discover our Lord.
  12. The more schooled His audience was in the Scriptures, the easier it was to present truth to them.
  13. The more schooled His listeners were in the precepts of man and the distortions of Scripture, the more difficult it was for Jesus to present divine viewpoint.
  14. It was always the desire of Jesus for men everywhere to change their minds and believe in Him. This was just as true of the religious crowd as it was of the general population of Judea and the surrounding areas.
  15. Therefore, what Jesus said was rarely in the form of, "I'm right, and you're wrong, and this is why." What He said was intended to have a greater and more long-lasting impact, both on the hearer and later on the reader, than an oversimplified, argumentative approach.
  16. The three unusual statements made by our Lord have, for instance, caused me to spend several days pondering what He said, and several hours typing out the results of this pondering. I have spent many hours pouring through the Scriptures and considering several different approaches and several different arguments. This amount of thought was put into three fairly short sentences said by our Lord. My point is, what He said caused me, 2000 years, to search the Scriptures and to ponder several points of view, and to spend hours of contemplation of the meaning and purpose of His words. In other words, what He said, worked. I was required to diligently search God's Word to understand what our Lord was saying.

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### 1Samuel 21:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾim (אִם) [pronounced eem]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49

1Samuel 21:4b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced shaw-MAR]	<i>to be kept, to be preserved; to be careful; to abstain oneself [from anything]; to beware [of anything]; to care [for something]; to take heed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Niphal perfect	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036
nā'ar (נָעַר) [pronounced NAH-ġahr]	<i>boy, youth, young man, personal attendant</i>	masculine plural noun with a definite article	Strong's #5288 & #5289 BDB #654
ʾakē (אֲכֵּה) [pronounced ahkē]	<i>surely, certainly, no doubt, only, only this once</i>	adverb of restriction, contrast, time, limitation, and exception. Also used as an affirmative particle	Strong's #389 BDB #36
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾishshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced eesh-SHAWH]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61

**Translation:** ...—only if the young men have abstained from women.” Their only condition is that the young men of which David spoke had not had relations with women; thus, they would not be unclean. The bread is also mentioned in Ex. 25:30 39:38 40:23 Lev. 24:5–9, and there is no protocol for making this bread available to those who are not priests. There are no regulations set down for the priests either with regards to eating this bread or distributing it to others. In other words, the priest to whom David is speaking is going free-form at this point. He has determined in his own mind that in order to eat the bread, a non-priest must be clean; and he then figures that abstinence from sex would make them clean. Although there are Old Testament passages where abstinence is mentioned (e.g., Ex. 19:15), there are no passages which are directly applicable. David’s request was sudden and unexpected, and the priest did not know how to respond exactly.

And so answers David the priest and so he says to him, “For if a woman was restrained to us yesterday, three days ago, in my coming out and so are vessels of the young men holy and he [is] a road profane and in fact that the day is holy in the vessel.”

1Samuel 21:5

David then answered the priest, and he said to him, “For though [or, even though, indeed if] women were kept back with regards to us previously when I went out [lit., in my going out], then the weapons [or, vessels] of the young men are consecrated even [if] it—the journey—[is] a common [one] [lit., even it (is) a common journey]. Much more is it holy by means of the weapon [or, vessel] today.”

David then answered the priest, saying, “Women have been kept from us previously when we went out and the weapons of the young men remained consecrated even on common treks. Much more is the journey holy today by the nature of the assignment.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text	And so answers David the priest and so he says to him, “For if a woman was restrained to us yesterday, three days ago, in my coming out and so are vessels of the young men holy and he [is] a road profane and in fact that the day is holy in the vessel.”
Septuagint	And David answered the priest and said to him, “Yea, we have been kept from women for three days; when I came out for the journey, all the young men were purified; but this expedition is unclean, wherefore it will be sanctified this day because of my weapons.”

Significant differences .

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV	“Of course we didn't sleep with women,” David answered. “I never let my men do that when we're on a mission. They have to be acceptable to worship God even when we're on a regular mission, and today we're on a special mission.”
NLT	“Don't worry,” David replied. “I never allow my men to be with women when they are on a campaign. And since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more on this one!”
TEV	“Of course they haven't,” answered David. “My men always keep themselves ritually pure even when we go out on an ordinary mission; how much more this time when we are on a special mission!”

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

<i>God's Word™</i>	David answered the priest, “Of course women have been kept away from us as usual when we go [on a mission]. The young men's bodies are kept holy even on ordinary campaigns. How much more then will their bodies be holy today?”
JPS (Tanakh)	In reply to the priest, David said, “I assure you that women have been kept from us, as always. Whenever I went on a mission, even if the journey was a common one, the vessels of the young men were consecrated; all the more then may consecrated food be put into their vessels today.”

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

ACV	And David answered the priest, and said to him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days. When I came out the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was but a common journey. How much more then today shall their vessels be holy?
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And David told the priest, Truly women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the food bags <i>and</i> utensils of the young men are clean, and although the bread will be used in a secular way, it will be set apart in the clean bags.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	And David answered the priest and said to him—   Truthfully     women   have been withheld from us of late through my coming out, and the wallets of the young men have become hallowed, —while [the bread]   itself   is in a manner common, and the more so since  today  [there are other loaves] to be hallowed in the vessel.
NASB	And David answered the priest and said to him, “Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels <i>be holy?</i> ”

NKJV	Then David answered the priest, and said to him, "Truly, women <i>have been</i> kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and <i>the bread is</i> in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day."
NRSV	David answered the priest, "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?"
Owen's Translation	And David answered the priest (and said to him), "Of a truth women have been kept from us as always. When I go are the vessels of the young men holy even when it is a common journey. How much more today will be holy their vessels?"
Young's Updated LT	And David answers the priest, and says to him, "Surely, if women have been restrained from us as heretofore in my going out, then the vessels of the young men are holy, and it is a common way: and also, surely to-day it is sanctified in the vessel."

**What is the gist of this verse?** David tells the priest that his men are clean. The additional information is somewhat problematic; however, what David is saying is that his men are kept from women and their weapons are consecrated even on common missions. Since they are supposedly on a special mission from Saul, their weapons are even more consecrated.

You will obviously note that I quoted a number of different translations, and you were surprised as to what a different take they each seemed to have. For that reason, we are going to break this verse up into smaller bites, so that we can better determine its meaning.

1Samuel 21:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAWH</i> ]	<i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6030 BDB #772
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i> ]	<i>priest</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55

## 1Samuel 21:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <sup>l</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced <i>eem</i> ]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49
Together, kîy ʾîm (אִם כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee-eem</i> ] act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered <i>but, except, unless</i> and possibly <i>only</i> . However, these particles are not used in a limiting way <i>if</i> they follow an oath, a question or a negative. Then they can be rendered <i>that if, for if, for though, that since, for if, but if, indeed if, even if</i> .			
ʾîshshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i> ]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61
ʿâtsar (עָצַר) [pronounced <i>gaw-TSAHR</i> ]	<i>to confine, to detain, to restrain, to refrain to shut, to surround, to enclose, to hold back, to restrain by rule</i>	feminine singular, Qal passive participle	Strong's #6113 BDB #783
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <sup>l</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced <i>k<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
t <sup>e</sup> môwl (תָּמּוּל) [pronounced <i>t<sup>e</sup>MOHL</i> ]	<i>yesterday; and is used figuratively for recently, formerly</i>	adverb	Strong's #8543 (and #865) BDB #1069
shil <sup>e</sup> shôwm (שָׁלוֹשׁ) [pronounced <i>shil-SHOHM</i> ]	<i>three days ago, the day before yesterday</i>	adverb	Strong's #8032 BDB #1026
Together, this preposition and two adverbs mean <i>as before, previously, formerly</i> .			
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yâtsâ <sup>ʾ</sup> (יָצָא) [pronounced <i>yaw-TZAWH</i> ]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3318 BDB #422

It is proper and correct to translate the bêyth preposition *when*, when combined with a Qal infinitive construct.

**Translation:** David then answered the priest, and he said to him, “For though [or, even though] women were kept back with regards to us previously when I went out [of, in my going out],... David begins by telling the priest that women had been kept from him and his men on previous missions. Now, there are no men (probably—see the discussion in the previous verse); however, David had been on previous missions. There is no previous indication that there were any commands with respect to women and David’s army. This could be true and it may be false (that is, it is possible that on a typical mission, David’s men were kept from women). David’s interest here is the bread and he is going to say whatever he needs to say in order to eat.

That an army was to maintain some sort of sexual purity is more inferred by Scripture than strictly stated. For instance, Moses is about to receive the Ten Commandments, and he tells the men to consecrate themselves, which includes not having sex with their wives for three days (“Don’t go near a woman”—Ex. 19:14–15). In Deut. 23:9–11, a man who had a nocturnal emission was separated from the other soldiers and had to go through a cleansing ritual. Thirdly, a man who had just married was exempt from military service for one year while he enjoyed sex with his new wife (Deut. 24:5). And finally, when David brought Uriah the Hittite to Jerusalem (ostensibly for a status report), Uriah chose not to go back to his home and sleep with his wife, as his fellow soldiers were at war (2Sam. 11:8–11).

### 1Samuel 21:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #1961 BDB #224
k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כְּלִי) [pronounced <i>k<sup>e</sup>lee</i> ]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong’s #3627 BDB #479
na <sup>a</sup> ar (נְעָרִים) [pronounced <i>NAH-ġahr</i> ]	<i>boy, youth, young man, personal attendant</i>	masculine plural noun with a definite article	Strong’s #5288 & #5289 BDB #654
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>koh-DESH</i> ]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	adjective/noun	Strong’s #6944 BDB #871
or			
qâdôsh (קָדוֹשׁ) [pronounced <i>kaw-DOWSH</i> ]	<i>sacred, holy, set apart, sacrosanct</i>	adjective	Strong’s #6918 BDB #872

Even though it appears as though the spelling of these two words is different, once the vowel points are removed, they are the same word (a vowel point is often used instead of the ם—the wâw cholem—in the Hebrew). This explains why Strong identifies this as #6944, but Owen suggests that it is BDB #872 instead.

**Translation:** ...then the weapons [or, vessels] of the young men are consecrated... The word k<sup>e</sup>lîy properly means *manufactured goods*; context determines what sort of *manufactured goods* that we are speaking of. Given the meaning of the Hebrew word, there would be no reason to understand the *vessels of the young men* to refer to their bodies (although a similar phrase in the New Testament with the word *vessel* would reasonably understood in that way but this is not a typical Old Testament phrase). David will use this word in v. 8 to refer to weapons, and we



will therefore understand it in that way. So, David is *not* saying that *bodies of his young men* are consecrated; however, he is saying that their weapons are consecrated, which implies that the young men are as well. This is a somewhat abstruse passage, but I would reasonably suppose that David is affirming that even the weapons of his soldiers have been consecrated (and the point here is for a typical, common mission).

### 1Samuel 21:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and; even; in particular, namely; when, since, seeing, though; then</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hûw' (הוא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>he, it</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
derek <sup>e</sup> (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced <i>DEH-rek<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>way, distance, road, journey, manner, course</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
chôl (חל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>profaneness, commonness, unholy [thing]; common, profane</i>	adjective	Strong's #2455 BDB #320

Although this is a masculine noun, there are several passages where this acts more like an adjective (see 1Sam. 21:4 Ezek. 42:20 48:15).

**Translation:** ...*even* [if it—the journey—[is] a common [one] [lit., even it (is) a common journey]. The idea here is that the mission [literally, road, journey] that David is speaking of—for which the weapons of his men are consecrated—is a common mission. So, David is telling the priest that his men are kept from women and that even their weapons are consecrated for even common or minor missions. In other words, what the priest is requesting is routine 6 for David. This is always the way things are done, is what he is affirming to the priest. Again, bear in mind the David is starving, he has not been honest with Ahimelech as to his real purpose or about his estrangement with Saul, and he is saying whatever he finds necessary in order to get what he wants, which is bread and a weapon.

### 1Samuel 21:5d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'aph (אֲפַ) [pronounced <i>ah</i> ]	<i>in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed</i>	conjunction	Strong's #637 BDB #64
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
Together, these two conjunctions mean <i>in fact, more than; but also; but even; much more; how much more</i> [when an affirmation precedes]; <i>how much less</i> [when a negation precedes]. <sup>11</sup>			
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398

<sup>11</sup> H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 69.

### 1Samuel 21:5d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qâdash (קָדַשׁ) [pronounced kaw- DAHSH]	<i>to be pure, to be clean; to be holy, to be sacred; to set apart, to consecrate, to sanctify, to dedicate, to hallow</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6942 BDB #872
<p>Rotherham tells us that this verb should be plural, as per the Syriac. The end result is, Rotherham renders this as the loaves of bread are hallowed. However, since he suggests to examine the AV and the RV for other possible renderings, that would indicate to me that he was not completely sold on his own translation, which is somewhat convoluted.</p>			
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֶּלִּי) [pronounced k <sup>ee</sup> lee]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3627 BDB #479

Although k<sup>e</sup>lîy clearly has several different uses, this word needs to be understood in context; understanding it to refer to a manufactured weapon makes more sense than any other understanding. I don't know that this word is ever used to refer to a person's body (ala, the NEB and REB); and it is never used that way in the book of Samuel, although it is used dozens of times to refer to *weapons* or *armor*.

I realize that this may seem to be somewhat of a contradiction, inasmuch as David is requesting Ahimelech to give him a weapon and yet he tells Ahimelech that all of their weapons are holy. However, this may not be exactly what David is saying (see below).

**Translation:** *Much more is it holy by means of the weapon [or, vessel] today.*" The difference today is that they are supposedly on a special mission; therefore, so much more are their weapons consecrated today. However, this is probably not what David is saying. He refers to the weapons of his compadres in v. 5b, here he is speaking of *the weapon*, which is probably a reference to Goliath's sword. This weapon is considered somewhat holy, as it represents God's deliverance of Israel and it was kept in the Tabernacle of God. So the idea is, the weapons of his young men are generally set aside unto God; however, even more so is this sword of Goliath's.

Again, all of this is a lie; David is hungry and he wants to eat; therefore, he is going to lie in order to get consecrated bread for himself. He does not realize what sort of consequences will come of this lie (which consequences we will study in the next chapter).

**And so gives to him the priest a holy [thing] for is not there bread for if bread of the faces the removed [loaves] from to faces of Y<sup>e</sup>howah to set bread of heat in a day of his being taken away.**

1Samuel  
21:6

**The priest, therefore, gave to him a holy [thing], because there was no [common] bread [lit., the bread was not there] except the Bread of Presence [which] had been removed from the Presence of Y<sup>e</sup>howah to be replaced [lit., placed] [by] hot bread the day it was taken away.**

**The priest, therefore, gave David holy bread, because there was no other bread besides the Bread of Presence which had been removed from the Presence of Jehovah and replaced by hot bread.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text	And so gives to him the priest a holy [thing] for is not there bread for if bread of the faces the removed [loaves] from to faces of Y <sup>e</sup> howah to set bread of heat in a day of his being taken away.
Septuagint	So Abimelech the priest gave him the showbread; for there were no loaves there, but only the presence loaves which had been removed from the presence of the Lord in order that the hot bread should be set on, on the day on which he took them.

Significant differences .

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV	The only bread the priest had was the sacred bread that he had taken from the place of worship after putting out the fresh loaves. So he gave it to David.
NLT	So, since there was no other food available, the priest gave him the holy bread—the Bread of the Presence that was placed before the LORD in the Tabernacle. It had just been replaced that day with fresh bread.
REB	So, as there was no other bread there, the priest gave him the sacred bread, the Bread of the Presence, which had just been taken from the presence of the LORD to be replaced by freshly baked bread on the day that the old was removed.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

<i>God's Word™</i>	So the priest gave him holy bread because he only had the [bread] of the presence which had been taken from the LORD's presence and replaced with warm bread that day.
JPS (Tanakh)	So the priest gave him consecrated bread, because there was none there except the bread of display, which had been removed from the presence of the LORD, to be replaced by warm bread as soon as it was taken away.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread, which was taken from before the Lord, to put hot bread in its place the day when it was taken away.
NASB	So the priest gave him consecrated <i>bread</i> ; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread <i>in its place</i> when it was taken away.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	And the priest gives to him the holy thing, for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is turned aside from the presence of Jehovah to put hot bread in the day of its being taken away.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The priest therefore gave David the holy Bread of Presence, as the only bread that they had there was bread that had been removed from the table and replaced by new bread.

## 1Samuel 21:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i> ]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i> ]	<i>priest</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>koh-DESH</i> ]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	adjective/noun	Strong's #6944 BDB #871

**Translation:** *The priest, therefore, gave to him a holy [thing],...* The priest was therefore caused to give David that which was holy; which, in this context, are loaves of the Bread of Presence. We do not really have a precedent for this; as mentioned, David could have gone to the fields and harvest that which remained, but there is no indication anywhere in Scripture (other than this particular passage) that the Tabernacle of God also functioned as a soup kitchen.

## 1Samuel 21:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
lô' (לֹא or אֵין) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced <i>shawm</i> ]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced <i>LEH-khem</i> ]	literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3899 BDB #536

**Translation:** *...because there was no bread [lit., the bread was not there]...* Here we are told why the priest had to give David *holy bread*; this is because there was no bread there except for the bread which had been the Bread of Presence. The exception comes up in the next phrase.

## 1Samuel 21:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced <i>eem</i> ]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49
Together, kîy ʾîm (אִם כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee-eem</i> ] act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered <i>but, except, unless</i> and possibly <i>only</i> . However, these particles are not used in a limiting way <i>if</i> they follow an oath, a question or a negative. Then they can be rendered <i>that if, for if, for though, that since, for if, but if, indeed if, even if</i> .			
lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced <i>LEH-khem</i> ]	literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3899 BDB #536
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
çûwr (צוּר) [pronounced <i>soor</i> ]	<i>to be removed, to be taken away, to be caused to go away</i>	masculine plural, Hophal participle with the definite article	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
lâmed (לְ) (pronounced ʔ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, the two prepositions and pânîym mean <i>from before, from the presence of, a from a position before a person or object, from before a place</i> . However, this also expresses source or cause, and is also rendered <i>because of, on account of</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Yehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
lâmed (לְ) (pronounced ʔ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
sûwm (שׁוּם) [pronounced <i>soom</i> ]; also spelled sîym (שִׁי) [pronounced <i>seem</i> ]	<i>to put, to place, to set, to make</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7760 BDB #962

## 1Samuel 21:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lechem (לֶחֶם) [pronounced LEH-khem]	literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3899 BDB #536
chôm (חֹם) [pronounced khoum]	<i>heat, hot, warm</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2527 BDB #328
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	<i>to be taken, to be taken away; to be brought; to be seized, to be captured</i>	Niphal infinitive construct with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3947 BDB #542

**Translation:** ...except the Bread of Presence [which] had been removed from the Presence of Y<sup>e</sup>howah to be replaced [lit., placed] [by] hot bread the day it was taken away. This is the exception. There is no bread there *except* for the bread which had been the *Bread of Presence* and had been on the holy table before God. It had been removed and replaced by warm (i.e., *fresh*) bread.

Almost every commentary that I have read gets this wrong. Even McGee talks about how *human need supercedes all ritual and ceremonial laws*.<sup>12</sup> God *did* provide for the poor and hungry in the Old Testament, and it was by requiring that the farmers leave some of their fields un-harvested so that the poor could harvest the food themselves. I want you to be clear on what David is doing here: he is simply killing two birds with one stone: he needs a weapon and he is hungry. If he goes to the holy city, which is Nob at this time, he can get both. He figures that he can talk the priest into going along with his two requests—for food and a weapon. David believes that he can smooth-talk this priest and get what he wants. He doesn't have time to stop first at a field and eat from the harvest and then go to Nob for the sword. Why not take care of both things at once, is David's thinking here. It is called expediency.

The Tabernacle was not designed to be a soup kitchen—not even in those times. The priest was flabbergasted by David's request. It was unprecedented. He did not know what decision to make. There is a high ranking official before him asking for bread and the priests did not bake bread for the poor, or for anyone else. They simply had the Bread of Presence which was replenished every week (Lev. 24:8 tells us that the bread was put out with each Sabbath day of worship; this could occur more often than every seven days, due to the various types of Sabbath days). So this priest needed to make an executive decision. He needed to determine what does one do when the Bread of Presence has been requested to eat. His solution was that David and his men must all be *clean*. Bear in mind that this was not lawful for David to eat these loaves, as Jesus told the Pharisees: **“Did you not read what David did, when he was hungry, himself and those with him? How he went into the house of God, and the loaves of the presentation did eat, which it is not lawful to him to eat, nor to those with him, except to the priests alone?”** (Matt. 12:3–4). Matthew Henry calls the priest *over-nice* if not *superstitious*.<sup>13</sup> We've already dealt with this quotation of Jesus in great detail.

<sup>12</sup> J. Vernon McGee; *I & 1Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Henry's *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword; 1Sam. 21:6.

A moderately interesting question is, *when did the priests bake the bread for the Sabbath? Weren't they breaking the Sabbath in order to bake this bread?* Obviously they did not break the Sabbath in order to bake this bread, as putting out this bread on each Sabbath day is a requirement of the priesthood. Ex. 12:16 gives us the simple solution: “You must have a holy assembly on the first day and another one on the seventh. You must not work on these days except to prepare your own meals. That's all you may do.” (God's Word™). Another obvious exception would be preparing the Bread of Presence (some of the very weird explanations was miraculous heat or some other sort of miracle which made this possible).<sup>14</sup>

**And there a man from servants of Saul in the day the that detained to faces of Y<sup>e</sup>howah. And his name [is] Doeg the Edomite, mighty of the ones shepherding [a flock] who [are] to Saul.**

1Samuel  
21:7

**Also in that day [there was] there one of Saul's servants, detained before Y<sup>e</sup>howah. And his name [is] Doeg the Edomite, a powerful [man] of the shepherds who belong to Saul.**

**Also there that day was one of Saul's servants, Doeg the Edomite, one of Saul's chief shepherds.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                      And there a man from servants of Saul in the day the that detained to faces of Y<sup>e</sup>howah. And his name [is] Doeg the Edomite, mighty of the ones shepherding [a flock] who [are] to Saul.

Septuagint                              And there was there on that day one of Saul's servants detained before the Lord, and his name [was] Doec the Syrian, tending the mules of Saul.

Significant differences              .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV    It so happened that one of Saul's officers was there, worshiping the LORD that day. His name was Doeg the Edomite, and he was the strongest of Saul's shepherds.

NLT    Now Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, was there that day for ceremonial purification.

TEV    (Saul's chief herdsman, Doeg, who was from Edom, happened to be there that day, because he had to fulfil a religious obligation.)

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™                              That same day one of Saul's servants who was obligated to stay in the LORD's presence was there. His name was Doeg. A foreman for Saul's shepherds, he was from Edom.

JPS (Tanakh)                              Now one of Saul's officials was there that day, detained before the LORD [i.e., excluded from the shrine, perhaps because of ritual impurity]; his name was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman [the meaning of the final two word uncertain].

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB    Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

<sup>14</sup> John Gill; *Exposition of the Entire Bible*; courtesy of e-sword; 1Sam. 21:6. John Gill didn't believe either of these explanations; he simply mentions them probably for the same reason that I have: for their humorous value.

Young's Updated LT

And there is a man of the servants of Saul on that day detained before Jehovah, and his name is Doeg the Edomite, chief of the shepherds whom Saul has.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The chief of Saul's shepherds, Doeg the Edomite, is also there, kept there by Jehovah.

What we now have is a parenthetical statement of what was happening while David was speaking to Ahimelech. Doeg, an Edomite, and one of Saul's suck-up officials (probably because he was an Edomite), is standing off watching this. He knows who David is and he knows of the situation between Saul and David (these are reasonable assumptions; Doeg will at least find out about this situation when he returns to the ranks of Saul).

### 1Samuel 21:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâm (שׁוּם) [pronounced <i>shawm</i> ]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>a man; a husband; one of virile age; an inhabitant of, a citizen of [when followed by a genitive of a place]; companion of, soldier of, follower of [when followed by a genitive of king, leader, etc.]; anyone, someone, a certain one, each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced <i>ĒB-ved</i> ]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
Shâʿûwl (שׂוּאָל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]	<i>day, today (with a definite article)</i>	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
hûwʾ (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>that</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun (with a definite article)	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

**Translation:** Also in that day [there was] there one of Saul's servants,... We are in the city of the priest, Nob. David has just conned Ahimelech out of several loaves of bread. At the same time, one of Saul's servants is also there.



That he is called *a man of Saul's servants* indicates more than just being on Saul's staff. What follows will be an indication of this man's faithfulness to Saul. Recall that David was a soldier and that he was popular with his own men, as well as with the people. However, there are some men who are going to be *yes men* (in this case, to Saul), no matter what.

A staff which I worked on was like that. Whoever was department head, there would be those who would attach themselves to him or her and act as their friend in order to get the better assignments. There are also those who agree with their superiors, no matter what (this is different than obeying those who are in charge). I believe that the proper term is *brown-noser*. This is Doeg (Saul's servant). We will find out that he is a brown-noser.

1Samuel 21:7b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâtsar (עָצַר) [pronounced <i>gaw-TSAHR</i> ]	<i>to shut up; to be confined, to be detained, to be restrained, to be surrounded, to be enclosed; to be gathered together</i>	Niphal participle	Strong's #6113 BDB #783
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean <i>upon the face of, before, before the face of, in the presence of, in the sight of, in front of</i> . When used with God, it can take on the more figurative meaning <i>in the judgment of</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

**Translation:** ...detained before Y<sup>e</sup>howah. Now this is odd. What many exegetes suggest is that Doeg was unclean and that he had to remain there before Jehovah. However, in most situations, those who were unclean were not allowed any sort of contact with God or with the Tabernacle of God. For some reason, Doeg was detained before God. Apparently, whoever he was with had already left (shepherds under his authority? Other high ranking officials?), and it was just him in the city of the priests. Another possibility is that there was some sort of religious feast going on, and being *detained by Jehovah* simply meant that he had to continue being there at the feast, even though his mind was elsewhere. Gill suggests that it is the Sabbath, and that Doeg cannot travel more than 2000 cubits on the Sabbath.<sup>15</sup>

At first, I thought that Doeg alone was detained. Perhaps he was there with his shepherd underlings; and perhaps he was there with other members of Saul's cabinet; and, for whatever reason, he was detained. However, it is not absolutely necessary that Doeg is the only man there of the shepherds or even of Saul's cabinet. Others could have been with him; however, he will be the man to tell Saul that David went through Nob as well (1Sam. 22:9).

My thinking, because of the actions which will follow in the next chapter, are that Doeg was an opportunist. He wasn't born a Jew so he didn't exactly fit in, but he made an attempt to fit in. Here, he was at the city of priests, possibly practicing the religion of the Jews.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps he was paying a vow or seeking cleansing of some sort from

<sup>15</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 21:7.

<sup>16</sup> Although some exegetes tells us the Doeg *embraced the Jewish religion* (e.g., Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible; 1Sam. 20:7, courtesy of e-sword), I think that is taking this

the priest. There are some people who expand their business contacts by attending a large church. Very likely, this is the sort of man that Doeg is. He is there not so much out of religious conviction, but as a man trying to fit in. In any case, we know that God has a plan, and that this plan is always functioning. So, no matter what the human viewpoint reason was, it was God Who kept Doeg there. This was part of God's plan. Now, this is going to strike you as a little odd, as the result of Doeg's being there will be the mass execution of all of the priests of God (save one). In one way, this will be a lesson to David. As for their deaths, what the priests had done wrong, if anything, is not revealed to us. Why God removed them, from their standpoint or from the standpoint of the priesthood, is not revealed to us. They may have simply been innocent bystanders. However, I do not believe that to be the case (and this will be discussed in greater detail below).

Another slightly related fact is, it appears as though the Tabernacle of God is up and running again. As we have discussed previously, the original Tabernacle still exists; however, the Ark of God is still in storage. Given that we have God detaining Doeg, given that we have the Showbread available, and given that there are a group of priests gathered here, would tell us that there is at least a limited function of the Tabernacle. Because the Ark is not there, this would tell us that these priests do not really grasp their true function.

This would lead us to the following topic:

### Where is the Ark and Why is it not in the Tabernacle of God?

1. First of all, the Ark of God is being kept by Eleazar ben Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim, an event which occurred prior to Saul becoming king (1Sam. 7:1–2; compare 1Sam. 8).
2. The Ark will apparently remain there until David becomes king and calls for it (2Sam. 6:1–17—note v. 4 in particular).
3. The Ark of God was not some religious relic to be messed with.
  - a. Mere possession of the Ark resulted in many deaths in Philistia (1Sam. 5).
  - b. Men in Beth-shemesh will be killed by God because they touched the Ark and looked into the Ark (1Sam. 6:19).
  - c. Uzzah will reach out to balance the Ark when helping to bring it from Kiriath-jearim and he will die right then and there for his irreverence (no one was to touch the Ark). 2Sam. 6:6–7
4. Given these first two incidents, it is no wonder that the priests and people of Israel had no real desire to move the Ark from point A to point B. It seemed to be doing fine in Kiriath-jearim—no one was dying and there seemed to be nothing directly from God which indicated that He was displeased and wanted the Ark moved.
5. We have already discussed the destruction of one of the early Tabernacle cities—Shiloh. Our knowledge concerning this fact is mostly speculative: we are able to deduce that the city was destroyed, but that the Ark was saved and the Tabernacle was saved. It appears as though there may have been other cities where there were Tabernacle functions; however, Nob seems to be the most reasonable city for the Tabernacle at this time, given the gathering of priests and the baking of the Showbread.
6. Saul is on the outs with God. He is certainly not going to push for any spiritual reform—i.e., the reuniting of the Ark with the Tabernacle.
7. No one else is apparently willing to take the chance and move the Ark.
8. There may have been the reasoning that, because the Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies, no one other than the High Priest actually saw the Ark, and this was only once a year; and therefore, there was no pressing need to bring the Ark to Nob.
9. We do not find the title *High Priest* in the book of Samuel. This could be because Samuel was not actually in the line of Aaron; however, these priests of Nob are all in the line of Aaron (presumably). Eliminate the office of High Priest and there is no reason to have the Ark of God at the Tabernacle (I am speculating as to their reasoning). They may have even further decided that having a group of priests as leaders was as viable an organization as one priest as the head.
10. Do you now grasp *why* God allowed these priests to be killed? Even though some of the previous points

reference here a little far. His actions in the following chapter will be clearly self-serving, indicating that perhaps not a lot sunk in.

## Where is the Ark and Why is it not in the Tabernacle of God?

are speculative; the most telling fact is that the Ark was not kept in the Holy of Holies. They had a religion which was devoid of Christ. The Ark is Jesus Christ, and they had no Ark and there seemed to be no priest calling for the return of the Ark. Their religion was empty. At the heart of their religion, in the Holy of Holies, there was nothing there.

11. God may tolerate heathen religions and their priests; however, God is not likely to tolerate such a horrid distortion of Tabernacle worship within the Land of Promise. For this reason, we may reasonably assume that the priests who will die in Nob (1Sam. 22) are not completely innocent.

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### 1Samuel 21:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shêm (שׁוּם) [pronounced <i>shame</i> ]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027
Dô`êg (דוֹעֵג) [pronounced <i>doh-AYG</i> ]; also spelled דוֹעֵג	<i>anxious, concerned, fear</i> and is transliterated <i>Doeg</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1673 BDB #178
ʿêdôwmîy (עֵדוּמִי) [pronounced <i>eh-doh-MEE</i> ]	<i>reddish; and is transliterated Edomite; also Syrian</i>	gentilic adjective with the definite article	Strong's #123 BDB #10

**Translation:** *And his name [is] Doeg the Edomite,...* The pertinent verb here is dâ`ag (דוֹעֵג) [pronounced *daw-AHG*], which means *to be anxious, to be concerned, to fear*. You will note that the consonants are exactly the same, which is the root of the word. This means that they likely mean the same thing. My guess is that Doeg was a difficult birth which caused his mother to be concerned; even to be afraid. And so she named her son accordingly. Strong's #1672 BDB #178.

Doeg is called an Edomite. This should not cause us any problem. We have, particularly in the United States, men who have come from all over the world to live and work here. Doeg just happens to be an Edomite who moved to Israel for work. Certainly, Israel's enemies often include the Edomites and certainly, just like today, a significant portion of those who live around Israel were hostile towards her. However, this does not mean that each and every person in Israel's periphery was anti-Semitic. There are Persians in Iraq who absolutely hate us; there are also Persians in our country who love living here and the opportunities offered to them from living here.

The Edomites are first cousins to the Jews. Esau was Jacob's (also known as Israel) twin brother. Jacob, who was a chiseler, still chose the birthright of Abraham. However, it was Jacob who was originally sent away. However, when they later met again, Jacob remained in the Land of Promise and Esau moves his family south of the Dead Sea, to the hill country of Seir, also known as Edom. There, his family develops separately from Israel (although there were many times when the paths of their families crossed).

When the Jews were going into the land (in a rather circuitous route), the Edomites temporarily slowed them down, being contrary to the Jews. Despite this, the Jews were forbidden to hate the Edomites, who are called their *brothers* (Deut. 23:7–8). We covered the **Doctrine of the Edom** in Gen. 21:21.

As we will see in the next chapter, Saul will go on somewhat of a tirade, demanding information about David from his men (information which most of them did not have). Doeg will have information. He will notice that no one offers Saul any help with finding David, so he will step forward and tell Saul everything that he knows.

1Samuel 21:7d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿabbîyr (אֲבִיר) [pronounced <i>ahb-BEER</i> ]	<i>mighty, valiant, mighty one; bull; powerful; noble; chief</i>	masculine singular adjective construct	Strong's #47 BDB #7
râʿâh (רֹעֵה) [pronounced <i>raw-GAWH</i> ]	<i>shepherding, tending [a flock]; a shepherd, one who tends sheep</i>	masculine plural Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #7462 BDB #944
ʿâsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Shâʿûwl (שׂוֹאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** ...a powerful [man] of the shepherds who belong to Saul. The adjective found here is only used with the idea that Doeg is the chief of Saul's shepherds. For that reason, this should be understood more that Doeg was one of Saul's more important shepherds; and not necessarily the *chief* shepherd (although that is probably his designation). In any case, we have a similar designation in 1Chron. 27:29–30.

Please realize that the king became involved in many aspects of Israel. Since he needs a staff and an army, he then needs to feed these people. So Saul probably took a great many animals as a tax to the state and drafted other men into service to care for these animals.

Interestingly enough, David will know this man. In fact, since he was one of Saul's officers in charge of the sheep, David probably made an effort to get to know this man, or to at least speak with him. Being a shepherd from way back, these two would have something in common. So David and Doeg knew one another. It is even possible that they knew one another simply because they were both officers under Saul; however, my guess is that David went out of his way to speak to him, simply because of their shared background.

Now, if David has spoken to this man, then David probably knows him fairly well and probably realized that he was an opportunist. I mention this because David's actions will result in the death of all of these priests and their loved ones. This was not simply a slip up on David's part. He didn't simply see Doeg out of the corner of his eye and think, "I might know that guy." David saw him and realized that this would get back to Saul. But David will not consider the repercussions to the priests; he will only consider the repercussions to himself. My point is, David is not ready to lead Israel. A good leader focuses on those under him; David's focus is upon himself and his own safety.

And so says David to Ahimelech, “And not [is] there here under your hand a spear or a sword for both my sword and my manufactured goods [or, *weapons*] I have not brought in my hand for was a word of the king hasty.”

1Samuel  
21:8

Then David said to Ahimelech, “Is there not a spear or a sword on hand here, for I have not brought either my sword or my weapons with me [lit., *in my hand*], for the king’s directive [lit., *word*] required haste [lit., *was urgent*].”

Then David said to Ahimelech, “Is there not a sword or a spear here? You see, I did not bring my own sword or weapons as the king’s orders were urgent.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                      And so says David to Ahimelech, “And not [is] there here under your hand a spear or a sword for both my sword and my manufactured goods [or, *weapons*] I have not brought in my hand for was a word of the king hasty.”

Septuagint                              And David said to Ahimelech, “See if there is here under your hand spear or sword, for I have not brought in my hand my sword or my weapons, for the word of the king was urgent.”

Significant differences              .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV                                        David asked Ahimelech, “Do you have a spear or a sword? I had to leave so quickly on this mission for the king that I didn’t bring along my sword or any other weapons.”

NLT                                        David asked Ahimelech, “Do you have a spear or sword? The king’s business was so urgent that I didn’t even have time to grab a weapon!”

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God’s Word*<sup>™</sup>                              David asked Ahimelech, “Don’t you have a spear or a sword here? I didn’t take either my spear or any other weapon because the king’s business was urgent.”

JPS (Tanakh)                            David said to Ahimelech, “Haven’t you got a spear or sword on hand? I didn’t take my sword or any of my weapons with me, because the king’s mission was urgent.”

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB                                        And David said to Ahimelech, “Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand [lit., *under your hand*]? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me [lit., *in my hand*] because the king’s matter was urgent.”

*Young’s Updated LT*                    And David says to Ahimelech, “And is there not here under your hand spear or sword? For neither my sword nor my vessels have I taken in my hand, for the matter of the king was urgent.”

**What is the gist of this verse?** David asks Ahimelech the priest for weapons, as he had forgotten his (his story to Ahimelech was that he had left these weapons because Saul’s order required haste).

## 1Samuel 21:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾāmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvīyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾāchîmelek° (אָחִימֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>uh-khee-MEH-lek</i> ]	<i>brother of Melek or brother of a king and is transliterated Ahimelech</i>	Masculine proper noun	Strong's #288 BDB #27
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾēyn (אֵין) [pronounced <i>ān</i> ]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; there is no</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
yēsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaysh</i> ]	<i>being, substance, existence; used as a substitute for to be (without reference to number or tense); to be present, to be ready, to exist; the verb to be may be implied</i>	substantive	Strong's #3426 BDB #441
pôh (פֹּה) [pronounced <i>poe</i> ]	<i>here</i>	adverb	Strong's #6311 BDB #805
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i> ]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath, in the place [in which one stands] [when found in accusative position]</i>	preposition	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i> ]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
Again, <i>on hand</i> appears to be a very reasonable interpretation for this prepositional phrase.			
chānīyth (חַנִּיִּת) [pronounced <i>khuh-NEETH</i> ]	<i>spear</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2595 BDB #333
ʾô (אוּ) [pronounced <i>oh</i> ]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and</i>	conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14

## 1Samuel 21:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chereb (כֶּרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE<sup>BV</sup></i> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2719 BDB #352

**Translation:** Then David said to Ahimelech, “Is there not a spear or a sword on hand here,... David left Ramah in haste, forgetting to bring his weapons. Even when he returned and spoke with Jonathan, he was too emotionally involved to think about weapons. However, now he has spent some time on the road, David is hungry and he realizes that he does not have any weapons. He asks Ahimelech here whether or not there are any weapons at the Tabernacle (which we are assuming has been set up, given that the Table of Showbread alluded to and the fact that Nob is called the city of priests).

David knows that there is at least one weapon in Nob. After killing Goliath, David took his sword and transported it to Jerusalem. From there, the sword was apparently taken to Nob. David’s coming to Nob to ask for food and for weapons indicates that he knew that he could find both items here.

## 1Samuel 21:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Together, they can mean <i>for even; though, even, although [concealing a fact]</i> .			
chereb (כֶּרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE<sup>BV</sup></i> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2719 BDB #352
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>both...and, furthermore...as well as, also...also, that...so; either...or (but not used disjunctively)</i>	when gam is repeated	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֵּלִי) [pronounced <i>k<sup>e</sup>lee</i> ]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479
lô' (לֹא or לֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518

## 1Samuel 21:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	<i>to take, to take from, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize, to take possession of; to send after, to fetch, to bring; to receive</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388

**Translation:** ...for I have not brought either my sword or my weapons with me [lit., in my hand],... David now has to form some sort of an explanation as to why he lacked any weapons. So he tells Ahimelech that he did not bring any weapons, and explains why in the next phrase.

## 1Samuel 21:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
dâ <sup>b</sup> vâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAWR]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
nâchats (נָחַץ) [pronounced naw-KHAHTZ]	<i>urgent, pressing, hasty</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #5169 BDB #637

**Translation:** ...for the king's directive [lit., word] required haste [lit., was urgent].” The king's directive was urgent. It required David to leave with haste. Of course, all of this is a fabrication. David did leave in haste, and was unable to procure a weapon for that reason; but he is certainly not there because of some matter of the king.

Again, God has placed David in a marvelous position here: he is in the city of priests, Nob, and in this city is the ephod, which could have provided David guidance and direction. David is not thinking about God or the spiritual ramifications of his plight. He has given no thought to the possible negative consequences of his visit. David is hungry and he needs a weapon.



**Application:** David has an incredibly narrow focus in this incident, and he shows absolutely no spiritual application at this point. When you are under pressure, the first thing that you should reach for are your spiritual assets. Do not become so focused on the things of this world that you neglect all that God has provided.

McGee points out with regards to this passage.<sup>17</sup> Apparently, many have quoted the tail-end of this verse (“[The king’s business requires haste](#)”), and they therefore assert that there are things which must be done quickly for the Lord; presumably because the rapture is nigh. Since we have spent so much time with this passage, it should be apparent that this is a misapplication and a wrenching of Scripture from its context. David is lying to the priest here. The Bible accurately records his lie; the Bible does not assert that this statement is a maxim by which we should live. In fact, quite the opposite is true. God often requires a great deal of preparation on our parts. A perfect example of this is David at this point in his life: God has promised to make him king, but God is not going to make David king tomorrow. Why? He’s not ready. He’s lying to this priest and he is putting the lives of all these priests in jeopardy, and he is giving little or no thought to this. That is not how a leader should think! God must prepare David, and that preparation will take time—5–20 years, I would guess. So, are you called to teach God’s Word? This does not mean that you need to get out on a street corner or commandeer some platform right after you have been called. There is no theological support for that. If you are called to the formal ministry, then take your time and get prepared. As McGee writes, *The thing that marks the work of God is not haste but the fact that He works slowly and patiently.*<sup>18</sup>

**And so says the priest, “A sword of Goliath the Philistine who you killed in a valley of the Elah—behold, she is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If her you will take to you, take, for none other besides her in here.”**

1Samuel  
21:9

**The priest then said, “[There is] the sword of Goliath, the Philistine whom you killed in the Valley of Elah. Listen, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you [want to] take it, [then] take it, for [there is] no other [weapon] besides that in here.”**

**And so says David, “None like her; giver her to me.”**

**And David said, “[There is] no other like it; give it to me.”**

**The priest then said, “We have in here the sword of Goliath—that Philistine that you killed in the Valley of Elah. It is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, then take it, for we have no other weapons here.”**

**And David said, “There is no other weapon like it; give it to me.”**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text  
Septuagint

And so says David, “None like her; giver her to me.”

And the priest said, “Behold, the sword fo Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the valley of Ela; and it is wrapped in a cloth [the Alexandrian and Hebrew both add: *behind the Ephod*]. If you will take it, take if for yourself, for there is no other except it here.” And David said, “Behold, there is none like it. Give it [to] me.”

Significant differences .

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

<sup>17</sup> J. Vernon McGee; *I & I1 Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

**CEV** The priest answered, "The only sword here is the one that belonged to Goliath the Philistine. You were the one who killed him in Elah Valley, and so you can take his sword if you want to. It's wrapped in a cloth behind the statue."  
 "It's the best sword there is," David said. "I'll take it!"

**NAB** The priest replied: "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Vale of the Terebinth, is here [wrapped in a mantle] behind the ephod. If you wish to take that, take it; there is no sword here except that one." David said: "There is none to match it. Give it to me!"

**TEV** Ahimelech answered, "I have the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in Elah Valley; it is behind the ephod, wrapped in a cloth. If you want it, take it—it's the only weapon here."  
 "Give it to me," David said. "There is not a better sword anywhere!"

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word™* The chief priest answered, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Elah Valley, is here. It is wrapped in a cloth behind the priestly ephod. If you want to take it, take it. There's no other weapon here." David said, "There's none like it. Let me have the sword."

**JPS (Tanakh)** The priest said, "There is the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you slew in the valley of Elah; it is over there, wrapped in a cloth, behind the ephod. If you want to take that one, take it, for there is none here but that one." David replied, "There is none like it; give it to me."

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

**NASB** Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take *it*. For there is no other except it here." And David said, "There is one like it; give it to me."

*Young's Literal Translation* And the priest says, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you did strike in the valley of Elah, lo, it is wrapped in a garment behind the ephod, if it you do take to yourself, take; for there is none other save it in this place." And David says, "There is none like it—give it to me."

**What is the gist of this verse?** The priest offers David Goliath's sword and tells David that there are no other weapons in Nob. David says that there is no weapon like Goliath's sword, and then asks for the sword.

1Samuel 21:9a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i> ]	<i>priest</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE<sup>BV</sup></i> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #2719 BDB #352

## 1Samuel 21:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Gâl'yath (גִּלְיָת) [pronounced <i>gohl-YAHTH</i> ]	<i>conspicuous</i> and is transliterated <i>Goliath</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1555 BDB #163
Pîlish'tîy (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced <i>p<sup>e</sup>-lish-TEE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun) with the definite article	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
nākāh (נָכַח) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i> ]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike, to strike [something or someone] down, to defeat</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong #5221 BDB #645
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿemeq (עֵמֶק) [pronounced <i>ĒEH-mek</i> ]	<i>valley, vale, lowland, deepening, depth</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6010 BDB #770
ʾēlāh (אֵלָה) [pronounced <i>ā-LAW</i> ]	<i>terebinth</i> and is transliterated <i>Elah</i>	proper noun/location with the definite article	Strong's #424 BDB #18

**Translation:** The priest then said, “[There is] the sword of Goliath, the Philistine whom you killed in the Valley of Elah. You will recall that David originally carried Goliath’s head around with him and eventually took it to Jerusalem (1Sam. 17:54, 57). At the same time, he placed Goliath’s weapons in his tent, meaning that he kept them as souvenirs. However, a lot has taken place since that time. David formed a close friendship with Saul’s son Jonathan. Saul first promoted David, and then got particularly angry when the people of Israel praised David more than they did Saul. He tried to kill David in the palace, but David evaded him. He promised one of his daughters in marriage to David, as long as David showed himself to be successful in battle against the Philistines. David was successful, but the daughter was given in marriage to another. Saul’s other daughter was promised to David if he brought to Saul 100 Philistine foreskins; David brought 200. So David did marry Saul’s other daughter. Around the same time, Saul made it known that he wanted to kill David. His son talked him out of it. Saul made several attempts on David’s life afterwards, without Jonathan knowing about them. David escaped and left town; but when Saul pursued him, he returned. We had the scene at the New Moon Festival, and now David has left Ramah once again and is in Nob. So, sometime after 1Sam. 17, Goliath’s sword got moved to Nob (or was given to the priests). We are not told when or by whom.

It is likely that David knew the sword was there. He first went to the City of the Prophets and now he was at the City of the Priests. He went to the former to get advice or guidance from Samuel; he came here to the latter apparently for food and weaponry. One does not generally associate the priesthood with the carrying of weapons; however, if David knew the sword was there, and that if anyone could put a claim on it, he could; that was his most logical move. The bread was probably an afterthought, a result of being so hungry after his trip.

You may ask, *why was Goliath’s sword in Nob?* David’s victory over Goliath was a testimony to God’s faithfulness. Recall, that as David went on the offensive against Goliath, he called out so that all could hear, “[You come to me](#)

with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Jehovah of the Armies, the God of the army of Israel, whom you have insulted. Today the Jehovah will hand you over to me. I will strike you down and cut off your head. And this day I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals. The whole world will know that Israel has a God. Then everyone gathered here will know that the Jehovah can save without sword or spear, because the Jehovah determines every battle's outcome. He will hand all of you over to us." (1Sam. 17:45b–47). This was a spiritual battle, not a battle between two men. Therefore, the fact that David defeated Goliath and took his weapons was a spiritual victory—not simply for David, but for all of Israel. Therefore, the evidence of this spiritual victory was best stored with the Tabernacle of God.

One would hope that even the thought of Goliath's sword would spark David's memory; one would hope that handling the sword would bring this memory back to David, making him realize what God has done for him in the past. However, there is no indication throughout any of this chapter that David ever looked at things from a spiritual perspective.

You may also ask, *why didn't Jonathan give him his own weapons or some other set of weapons?* First of all, Jonathan could not return to the palace without his weapons. Saul was already on to the fact that Jonathan was covering something concerning David, as he accused Jonathan outright of supporting David even to the detriment of his own dynasty. So, if Jonathan went out with his weapons, and then returned without them, the only reasonable explanation would be that he gave them away (1Sam. 14 tells us that Jonathan was no pansy). Furthermore, it would have looked suspicious if Jonathan carted an extra set of weapons out to the field to target practice. So, Jonathan could not help David in this way.

### 1Samuel 21:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i> ]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
hîy' (הִיא) [pronounced <i>hee</i> ]	<i>she, it</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
lûwṭ (לוּט) [pronounced <i>loof</i> ]	<i>to be wrapped, to be enveloped, to be covered over, to be hidden</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #3874 BDB #532
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
sîm <sup>l</sup> lâh (שִׁמְלָה) [pronounced <i>sim<sup>l</sup>-LAW</i> ]	<i>garment, clothing, cloth</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8071 BDB #971
ʾachar (אַחַר) [pronounced <i>ah-KHAHR</i> ]	<i>after, following, behind</i>	preposition	Strong's #310 BDB #29
ʾêphôwd (אֶפֹּד) [pronounced <i>ay-FOHD</i> ]	is transliterated <i>ephod</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #646 BDB #65

**Translation:** Listen, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. As was mentioned, the sword of Goliath ended up at the Tabernacle (we are assuming that it is up and running). The priests, not certain what to do with it, wrapped

it in a cloth and placed it behind the ephod.<sup>19</sup> We don't know if there was a container for these sacred objects or whether they were simply placed inside the Tabernacle.

Freeman tells us that it was common in the ancient world to wrap valuables like swords with cloth. He even mentions that money was wrapped either in a napkin or in a cloth.<sup>20</sup> I suspect that the intention was to keep the sword from rusting.

Again and again, it is though God is hitting David over the head with a club, asking for him to look back at what He has done for him; and asking David to look to Him for guidance. The priest tells David, "Sure, we have Goliath's sword; it is wrapped in a cloth **behind the ephod**." The ephod is what was used in order to ask God for guidance. Here David stood, with a priest, desirous of Goliath's sword. However, what God was offering David was guidance.

Now, why didn't David snap and realize that he could ask for divine direction from this priest? Simple: David has lied to this priest. David has lied to him about why he's there and this precludes him asking the priest for any real direction. David should have stopped, looked at the priest, and said, "I'm sorry, Ahimelech, I haven't been straight with you. I'm not on some secret mission from Saul; I am running for my life from Saul. He is out to kill me and he might kill anyone associated with me. What can I do?" But David thinks that he knows what to do.

**Application:** No matter what situation you find yourself; no matter how deep the hole is that you have dug for yourself; what is important is God's direction. We do not have priests today, as in the time of Israel; nor can we go to the Tabernacle (or Temple) and ask some holy man to put on an ephod and give us guidance. However, we do have the Word of God, available to us as has not been available for centuries of human history. It is doctrine in the soul combined with the filling of the Holy Spirit which gives us guidance today.

### 1Samuel 21:9c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated mark of a direct object	affixed to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #853 BDB #84
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	<i>to take, to take from, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize, to take possession of; to send after, to fetch, to bring; to receive</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with a 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	<i>take, seize, take away, take in marriage; send for, fetch, bring, receive</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative; pausal form	Strong's #3947 BDB #542

<sup>19</sup> Barnes suggests that the sword is wrapped in Goliath's cloak, but this is simply conjecture, as we are not specifically told anything about the disposition of Goliath's cloak. Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*; 1Sam. 21:9, courtesy of e-Sword.

<sup>20</sup> *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 140.

**Translation:** If you [want to] take it, [then] take it,... Ahimelech, the priest, tells David that if he wants that sword, then take it. We don't know how much Ahimelech suspects, or whether David's general haste has simply caught him off-guard.

### 1Samuel 21:9d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʿêyn (אֵין) [pronounced <i>ān</i> ]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; there is no</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
ʿachêr (אַחֵר) [pronounced <i>ah-KHEHR</i> ]	<i>another, following, other as well as foreign, alien, strange</i>	adjective/substantive	Strong's #312 BDB #29
zûlâh (זֹלָה) [pronounced <i>zoo-LAH</i> ]	<i>except, besides, only, save that</i>	preposition, conjunction with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #2108 BDB #265
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, thus</i>	demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260

**Translation:** ...for [there is] no other [weapon] besides that in here.” David and Ahimelech will say two very different things using very similar phrases. David has asked for weapons, and Ahimelech tells him there is the sword of Goliath; and adds, “We have no other weapons here besides that.”

### 1Samuel 21:9e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

## 1Samuel 21:9e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾēyn (אֵין) [pronounced ān]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; there is no</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation	Strong's #369 BDB #34
kaph or kē (כּ) [pronounced kē]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #453
nāthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lāmed (ל) (pronounced lē)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

**Translation:** And David said, “[There is] no other like it; give it to me.” David speaks, almost as though he is expressing agreement with Ahimelech, but his response is more of a play on words. He turns the phrase of the priest slightly to remark, “There is no sword like Goliath’s sword.” Then he demands the sword.

Wesley makes a point here: Goliath’s sword will remind David of God’s faithfulness. However, it is important to recognize that this did not occur right away. David didn’t hold the sword in his hands and realize that he had no reason to be afraid of Saul. David killed Goliath, a man Saul was afraid of. In fact, everyone in Saul’s army (except, perhaps, Jonathan was afraid of Goliath. But David does not consider this. His behavior will continue to be self-serving and lacking in faith until the next chapter. However, at some point, David will become more confident, less afraid, and more willing to be led by God.

**Application:** There is a readiness factor in the plan of God. We often want things to happen right here and now when we are not ready for the results. God has perfect timing. God has crowned David king over all Israel, but it is not time for David to function as king over all Israel. The first step toward this responsibility will be for David to be truthful with Ahimelech and to ask for God’s guidance. Secondly, he needs to give some thought to what he might cause to take place in Nob. So, you may think that it is about time that you were rich or that you had a reasonable amount of authority or that you ought to be married or that it is about damn time that God promoted you. However, God functions in His own time, which is the right time. I was more qualified than anyone else on staff to teach Calculus and Pre-Calculus (or, at least, second-most qualified); however, I taught the easier subjects; God had a reason for that and He chose for me to work with the younger high school students; that was His timing and that was His plan. There was no need for me to question either at any time.

**Application:** What if you don’t get married? What if you don’t get that promotion? What if God does not rain down gold coins onto your property? God has a perfect plan and we are in that plan. Our daily preparation is Bible class. We need to focus on God’s Word and then on what God places before us. What we want is really not that important. David will become king of Israel; but it will be according to God’s timetable and when David is ready for that responsibility. God has plans for you; if you lack the spiritual preparation, then God has little reason to execute those plans. Any promotion, blessing, or detail of life that God gives to us prior to our ability to appreciate these things only results in the lesson that *it is just too damn bad you don’t have the capacity to appreciate it*. If you give a three-year-old a copy of *Fantastic Four #1*, he will destroy it in about 3 minutes. Give the same person this destroyed comic book 30 years later, and he will recognize that it had great value at one time—until he destroyed it because he lacked the capacity to appreciate it. Now apply this same principle to marriage. Do you want to be

married to your right man or right woman prior to your capacity to enjoy that marriage? Would you rather have it when you lack capacity and you end up forever ruining a good thing due to your lack of capacity? Our society is littered with destroyed marriages because one or both participants lacked the capacity to be married.

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### David Goes to Gath and Goes Before King Achish

And so David rises and so he flees in the day the that from faces of Saul. And so he goes unto Achish, king of Gath.

1Samuel  
21:10

So David arose and fled from Saul that day. He then went to Achish, the king of Gath.

So David arose that day and fled from Saul. He then went to Achish, the king of Gath.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text                      And so David rises and so he flees in the day the that from faces of Saul. And so he goes unto Achish, king of Gath.

Septuagint                              And he gave it [to] him, and David arose and fled in that day from the presence of Saul. And David came to Anchus king of Geth.

Significant differences              .

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV    David kept on running from Saul that day until he came to Gath, where he met with King Achish.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™                              That day David left. He was [still] fleeing from Saul when he came to King Achish of Gath.

JPS (Tanakh)                              That day David continued on his flight from Saul and he came to King Achish of Gath.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

NASB    Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath.  
Young's Updated LT                      And David rises and flees on that day from the face of Saul, and comes in unto Achish king of Gath.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Next, David goes Achish, king of Gath.

1Samuel 21:10a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (l) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253



## 1Samuel 21:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced <i>koom</i> ]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bârach (בָּרַח) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHKH</i> ]	<i>to go through, to flee</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1272 BDB #137
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]	<i>day, today (with a definite article)</i>	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>that</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun (with a definite article)	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pânîym (פְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, mipânîym mean <i>from before your face, out from before your face, from one's presence</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that</i> .			
Shâ'ûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** [So David arose and fled from Saul that day](#). Saul was nowhere around; however, David fleeing was from Saul, of course, and not from Ahimelech. He got the bread and the sword and took off. David gave no thought to the danger that he might have exposed the priests to.

## 1Samuel 21:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw' (בּוֹ) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
el (לְ) [pronounced el]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
âkîysh (אֲכִישׁ) [pronounced aw-KEESH]	transliterated <i>Achish</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #397 BDB #37
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
Gath (גַּת) [pronounced gath]	<i>wine-press and is transliterated Gath</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1661 BDB #387

**Translation:** He then went to Achish, the king of Gath. David had been a great warrior against the Philistines. We are told this several times in what was probably a 5–10 year military career. It is inexplicable why he chose to go to the Philistines at this point. My guess is that David was not thinking clearly (which goes back, perhaps, to having Jonathan lie to his father). However, where better to go than to Saul's enemies for protection from Saul? As the old saying goes, *the enemy of my enemy is my friend*.

Interestingly enough, Achish is called Abimelech in [Psalm 34](#):inscription (which Psalm we will cover at the end of this chapter). What is likely the case is that Achish is the official Philistine name of the king of any Philistine city whereas, Abimelech would be his actual name.

What is also interesting is that David has just gotten Goliath's sword, which sword is unique, and he comes into Gath, a city filled with Philistines, with this sword. He might as well have strapped Goliath's head to his steed as he galloped into town.<sup>21</sup> David will be recognized, but not because someone posted his picture on Gath's homepage on the Internet; nor because the local newspaper carried a cover story with pictures, *David Beheads Goliath!* However, the soldiers of Achish knew Goliath's sword and when this young man carrying Goliath's sword comes into Gath asking for an audience with Achish, they put 2 and 2 together. Some of them could have been present when David and Goliath faced off.

From what follows, this appears to be a face-to-face meeting. That is, David didn't simply stroll into the Gath area and hang out. He went to the state building and made an appointment to speak with the king of Gath directly. It is possible that David's intention was to offer his services to Achish as a mercenary.

According to Canne, Browne, Blayney and Scott,<sup>22</sup> Gath was located about 32 miles west of Jerusalem, and was one of the cities on the border of Judah and Philistia. Since David's life was in danger within Judah, he thought that perhaps he might be safer in another country.

<sup>21</sup> I'm making a point here. David was not riding on a horse.

<sup>22</sup> Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey, 1Sam. 21:10, courtesy of e-Sword.

And so say servants of Achish unto him, “[Is] not this David, king of the land? [Did] not this: they say in the dances to say, “Has killed Saul in his thousands, and David in his ten thousands’?”

1Samuel  
21:11

But the servants of Achish said to him, “Isn’t this David, the king of the land? Did they not sing this in their [lit., *the*] dances, saying, ‘Saul has slain his thousands; and David his tens of thousands’?”

But the servants of Achish said to him, “Isn’t this David, the king of the land? Isn’t this the man about whom they sing, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands’?”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                           And so say servants of Achish unto him, “[Is] not this David, king of the land? [Did] not this: they say in the dances to say, “Has killed Saul in his thousands, and David in his ten thousands’?”

Septuagint                                   And the servants of Anchus said to him, “[Is] this not David, the king of the land? Did not the dancing women begin the song to him, saying, ‘Saul has struck his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?”

Significant differences                 .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV    The officers of King Achish were also there, and they asked Achish, “Isn’t David a king back in his own country? Don’t the Israelites dance and sing, ‘Saul has killed a thousand enemies; David has killed ten thousand enemies’?”

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™                               Achish’s officers asked, “Isn’t this David, the king of [his] country? He’s the one they used to sing about in the dances:  
  ‘Saul has defeated thousands  
  but David tens of thousands.’ ”

JPS (Tanakh)                               The courtiers of Achish said to him, “Why, that’s David, king of the land! That’s the one of whom they sing as they dance:  
  Saul has slain his thousands;  
  David, his tens of thousands.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB   But the servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying,  
  ‘Saul has slain his thousands,  
  And David his ten thousands’?”

Young’s Updated LT                       And the servants of Achish say unto him, “Is not this David king of the land? is it not of this one they sing in dances, saying, ‘Saul killed among his thousands, and David among his myriads’ ?”

**What is the gist of this verse?** The cabinet of Achish realized that this was the David who was known far and wide for killing Philistines. They even knew the song which celebrated his victories.

## 1Samuel 21:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾāmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʿebed (עָבַד) [pronounced GE <sup>B</sup> -ved]	<i>slave, servant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
ʾākîysh (אָכִישׁ) [pronounced aw-KEESH]	transliterated <i>Achish</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #397 BDB #37
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced el]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
hă (הֲ) [pronounced heh]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong's #none BDB #209
lôʾ (לֹא or אֵין) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, thus</i>	demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land</i>	feminine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75

**Translation:** *But the servants of Achish said to him, “Isn’t this David, the king of the land? So David is probably standing right there before Achish, the king of Gath; and his staff speak up, saying, “Isn’t this David, the king of the land?” This is telling in several ways. First of all, David was recognizable. These men knew him well enough by reputation and description to look at him and say, “Isn’t this David?” Although it is possible that some of them were at the battle where David defeated Goliath (some Philistines *did* escape), the giveaway was probably Goliath’s sword that he wore, which was probably disproportionate to his considerably smaller body. Who else, the Gathites would reason, would dare wear such a sword? Furthermore, no doubt, a physical description of David had been circulated.*

Secondly, notice that the cabinet of Achish recognizes David’s authority in Israel, even though he had left Israel in a panic (they don’t know this). Saul may have been the official ruler over Israel but everyone saw David as the man who was rightfully the ruler of Israel. To clarify, in the ancient world, a leader was a military leader; not some

lawyer. He had proven himself to be courageous, a man able to make the difficult decisions, a man of discipline, and one who is willing to give his all for very little recompense. There are a lot of great attributes which can be associated with a military hero. So, it was reasonable for the greatest military hero to also be seen as the ruler over the land. Furthermore, a military hero also has the support and power of his army behind him. So, because of David's military exploits, he was the leader of Israel in the eyes of his enemies. It is telling that they recognized what Saul and his staff refused to recognize.

### 1Samuel 21:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hă (הַ) [pronounced <i>heh</i> ]	interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.		Strong's #none BDB #209
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, thus</i>	demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
ʿânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAWH</i> ]	<i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6030 BDB #772
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
m <sup>e</sup> chôwlâh (מְחֹלָה) [pronounced <i>m<sup>e</sup>khoh-LAW</i> ]	<i>dances, dancing</i> (which usually accompanies and celebrates a victory of some sort)	feminine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #4246 BDB #298
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MARH</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55
nâkâh (נָכָה) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i> ]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike, to strike [something or someone] down, to defeat</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong #5221 BDB #645
Shâ'ûwl (שָׂאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

## 1Samuel 21:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿălâphîym (אַלְפִּיִּם) pronounced uh-law- FEEM]	<i>thousands, families, [military] units</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #505 (and #504) BDB #48
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw- VEED]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
r <sup>e</sup> bâbâh (רַבְבָּה) [pronounced r <sup>eb</sup> vaw- VAW]	<i>multitude, myriad, ten thousand</i>	feminine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7233 BDB #914

**Translation:** *Did they not sing this in their [lit., the] dances, saying, ‘Saul has slain his thousands; and David his tens of thousands?’* The main verb means *to sing* (it is also used to mean *to speak*). The Philistines were aware of the Israelite women gathering and dancing and celebrating, and singing this song (the song that really hacked off Saul—see 1Sam. 18:7). This would imply to us that the Philistines did have spies; whether they had become a part of Israel and were within Israel’s population or whether they were observers from afar, we don’t know. However, they were obviously able to at least hear the singing of the women.

**And so puts David the words the these in his mind and so he is afraid, very, from faces of Achish king of Gath.**

1Samuel  
21:12

**David put these words in his heart and consequently was very much afraid because of Achish, king of Gath.**

**David pondered these words and became very afraid of Achish king of Gath.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so puts David the words the these in his mind and so he is afraid, very, from faces of Achish king of Gath.

##### Septuagint

And David put the words in his heart, and was greatly afraid of Anchus king of Geth.

Significant differences .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV David thought about what they were saying, and it made him afraid of Achish.  
 NAB David took note of these remarks and became very much afraid of Achish, king of Gath.  
 NJB David pondered these words and became very frightened of Achish king of Gath.  
 NLT David heard these comments and was afraid of what King Achish might do to him.  
 TEV Their words made a deep impression David, and he became very much afraid of King Achish.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™ When David realized what they had said, he was terrified of King Achish of Gath.  
 JPS (Tanakh) These words worried David and he became very much afraid of King Achish of Gath.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

NASB And David took these words to heart, and greatly feared Achish king of Gath.  
 Young's Updated LT And David lays these words in his heart, and is exceedingly afraid of the face of Achish king of Gath,...

**What is the gist of this verse?** David thought about his situation and what these men just said, and he became afraid on the King of Gath.

1Samuel 21:12a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
sûwm (סוּם) [pronounced <i>soom</i> ]; also spelled sîym (סִיַם) [pronounced <i>seem</i> ]	<i>to put, to place, to set, to make</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7760 BDB #962
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved</i> and is transliterated <i>David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dâ <sup>b</sup> vâr (דְּבָרִים) [pronounced <i>daw<sup>b</sup>-VAWR</i> ]	<i>words, sayings, doctrines, commands; things, matters, reports</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
ʿêlleh (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced <i>EEHL-leh</i> ]	<i>these, these things</i>	demonstrative plural adjective with the definite article	Strong's #428 BDB #41
lê <sup>b</sup> va <sup>b</sup> v (לֵבָב) [pronounced <i>lay<sup>b</sup>-V<sup>b</sup>AHV</i> ]	<i>mind, inner man, inner being, heart</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3824 BDB #523

**Translation:** [David put these words in his heart...](#) The word for *heart* is *lê<sup>b</sup>va<sup>b</sup>v* and it means *mind, heart, inner man, thinking*. Putting these words into his thinking meant that David thought about what these men said and suddenly realized what a very precarious position that he was in. No doubt, David went through that momentary thought, “Holy crap, what did I just do!”

### 1Samuel 21:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yârê' (יָרַע) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAY</i> ]	<i>to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3372 BDB #431
m <sup>e</sup> ôd (מְּוֹד) [pronounced <i>m<sup>e</sup>-ODE</i> ]	<i>exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very</i>	adverb	Strong's #3966 BDB #547
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pânîym (פְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i> ]	<i>face, faces; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, mipânîym mean <i>from before your face, out from before your face</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that</i> .			
ʾâkîysh (אַכִּישׁ) [pronounced <i>aw-KEESH</i> ]	transliterated <i>Achish</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #397 BDB #37
melek <sup>e</sup> (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i> ]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
Gath (גַּת) [pronounced <i>gath</i> ]	<i>wine-press and is transliterated Gath</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1661 BDB #387

**Translation:** [...and consequently was very much afraid because of Achish, king of Gath.](#) It is obvious that David was not thinking clearly. You may wonder, just what the hell was David thinking? To explain: Saul was his enemy and Saul was out to kill him, so where better to go than to Saul's enemy, to a people that Saul could not stand up to—the Philistines. Saul would not follow David into the midst of the Philistines. You see, except for Jonathan's incredible attack, Saul had seemed to lose his nerve when it came to the Philistines. So David figured that this would be the place to go, as an ex-patriot. However, the men of Gath didn't see things that way. Who they had standing before them was the most renown Philistine killer, David. So their take was very different than David's. David suddenly saw things from their perspective rather than from his, and this caused him to become afraid of Achish. Achish, like Saul, could order David's execution on a whim; he could order David's torture for sport. Suddenly, David found himself in the same situation that he was in when he was in Israel.

**Application:** I have told you how important this time was in David's life. It was not simply because he wrote some psalms during this time period, although that was certainly important. What is the key in this situation is that David suddenly sees reality from the other man's perspective. He understands that there is a different way to view things. As children, we grow up very egocentric, to reaching almost a crisis point in our teens. Part of growing up is



realizing that other people have needs, thoughts and desires and that everyone was not put on this earth in order to cater to us, regardless of what our parents and schools have done up to this point. I have harped on principles of authority because (1) I have never had an interest in being the *man in charge* but (2) I have been subject to some horrible authority figures (and I realize that there are much worse out there). If you are going to have authority over a group of one or more people, you need to be able to see things from their perspective. You should not wait for them to explain to you what their point of view is, as most of the time, they won't. As a leader, you need to recognize what their needs, desires and aspirations are. You need to see things from their vantage point. You need to see yourself from their vantage point. Up until 10 seconds ago, David was completely egocentric. He understood how things were from his personal perspective; and now, he realizes there is a whole different point of view that he was not hip to. In this situation, his non-alertness to the viewpoint of the other man put his life in danger. For you, that is rarely the case. However, if you are going to command any position of authority, and if you want to be a great leader, then you need to see things from the other guy's point of view.

**And so changes his behavior in their [two] eyes and so he is mad in their hand and so he marks upon doors of the gate and so he causes to go down saliva into his beard.**

1Samuel  
21:13

**Then David changed his behavior before them [lit., in their eyes] and he feigned madness in their presence [lit., in their hand]. Then he made marks upon the doors of the [city] gate and caused drool to run down into his beard.**

**Then David radically changed his behavior before them: he reigned insanity while under their control and made marks upon the city gates when not under their control. He also allowed saliva to run down his chin.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

##### Masoretic Text

And so changes his behavior in their [two] eyes and so he is mad in their hand and so he marks upon doors of the gate and so he causes to go down saliva into his beard.

##### Septuagint

And he changed his appearance before him, and feigned himself a false character in that day; and drummed upon the doors of the city, and used extravagant gestures with his hands, and fell against the doors of the gate, and his spittle ran down upon his beard.

Significant differences .

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV So right there in front of everyone, he pretended to be insane. He acted confused and scratched up the doors of the town gate, while drooling in his beard.

NAB So, as they watched, he feigned insanity and acted like a madman in their hands, drumming on the doors of the gate and drooling onto his beard.

NJB When their eyes were on him, he played the madman and, when they held him, he feigned lunacy. He drummed his feet on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.

NLT So he pretended to be insane, scratching on doors and drooling down his beard.

TEV So whenever David was around them, he pretended to be insane and acted like a madman when they tried to restrain him; he would scribble on the city gates and let spit drool down his beard.

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™

So he changed his behavior [when he was ] in their presence and acted insane [as long as he was ] under their authority. He scribbled on the doors of the city gate and let his spit run down his beard.

JPS (Tanakh)

So he concealed his good sense from them; he feigned madness for their benefit [lit., *in their hand*; meaning of Hebrew uncertain]. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate and let his saliva run down his beard.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Updated Emphasized Bible

So he feigned himself mad in their sight, and raged in their hand, —and struck against [MT: *made marks upon*] the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down upon his beard.

NASB

So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard.

NKJV

So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness [or, *insanity*] in their hands, scratched [or, *scribbled*] on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard.

Young's Updated LT

...and changes his behaviour before their eyes, and feigns himself mad in their hand, and scribbles on the doors of the gate, and lets down his spittle unto his beard.

**What is the gist of this verse?** David feigned insanity before Achish.

Obviously, the LXX has a lot more going on than the Hebrew. It sounds *fuller* than the Masoretic text version. David is also drumming on the city gates, making extravagant gestures with his hands, and falling against the city walls.<sup>23</sup>

1Samuel 21:13a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-NAW</i> ]	<i>to change, to vary; to transfer to another place; to deform</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #8138 BDB #1039
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ṭaʿam (טָעַם) [pronounced <i>TAH-gahm</i> ]	<i>taste, flavor of food; taste [in the sense of personal judgment], discretion; sentence of a king, a royal decree, behavior</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2940 BDB #381
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88

<sup>23</sup> At least two commentaries suggest that David had a real fit in the LXX and in the Vulgate; and feigned insanity in the MT. Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; and Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; both from e-Sword, 1Sam. 21:13. However, Gill points out that Psalms 34 and 56 came out of this incident, indicating that David was clearly in a healthy state of mind. Given Brenton's rendering of the Septuagint, it appears as though David feigned insanity in that text as well.

## 1Samuel 21:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿayin (עַיִן) [pronounced ĠAH-yin]	<i>spring, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes, spring</i>	feminine dual noun with the masculine plural suffix	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744

**Translation:** *Then David changed his behavior before them* [lit., *in their eyes*]... When David arrived in Gath, he demanded an audience with the king. He of course appeared rational. However, realizing that his coming to Gath could have been a mistake, David then changed his behavior before them. The Masoretic text gives us three ways in which he changed his behavior. The Septuagint gives us four ways. Furthermore, in the Greek, we are told that David changed his appearance. The idea is that he began to act, using his facial features. In the next phrase, I will explain why he took that approach.

## 1Samuel 21:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlal (לָלַל) [pronounced haw-L AHL]	<i>to be mad, to be foolish; to feign madness</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hithpael imperfect	Strong's #1984 BDB #237

This word appears to be properly a homonym, with several meanings: it can mean *to sing, to praise; to be bright, to be clear; to boast, to glory about oneself; to be foolish, to be mad*. Even though there are a wide variety of uses, the variant meanings tend to remain within their respective stems. That is, the meanings of the Poel don't appear to bleed over into the Qal usage.

The **Hithpael** is the reflexive of the Piel, and appears to be equivalent to the **Hithpolel** and the **Hithpalal** (which are both found in Owen, but not elsewhere). The Hithpael conveys the idea that one puts himself into the state or the action of the verb, which is an achieved state. Seow gives several uses: (1) Its primary use is reflexive—the verb describes action on or for oneself. That is, the subject of the verb is also the object of the verb. However, this does not completely convey the reflexive use, as there are examples where the verb takes on another object. These verbs are known as tolerative—the subject allows an action to affect himself or herself. (2) Reciprocal use: Occasionally, the Hithpael denotes reciprocity; that is, *they worked with one another, they looked at one another*. (3) The third use is known as iterative, which means that the Hithpael suggests repeated activity (*he walked about, he walked to and fro, and turned back and forth*). (4) The fourth use is known as estimative: the verb indicates how one shows himself or regards himself, whether in truth or by pretense (*he pretended to be sick, they professed to be Jews*).<sup>24</sup> The Hithpael is intensive (and sometimes seen as an accomplished state) and it is something that one does to oneself.

Now, you may think that there is a lot of information here which is not really that important; however, I give you this because at least on exegete, Clarke, says that God caused David to have this epileptic fit.<sup>25</sup> Given the active voice of *shânâh* (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW], and given that this verb can be seen as a reflexive just as much as a passive; and given that this act will result in an attack on Israel by the Philistines; we may conclude that David is doing all of this himself to himself. God did not cause David to have a fit here.

<sup>24</sup> Choon-Leong Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew (Revised Edition)*; Abingdon Press, Nashville; ©1995, pp. 298–299.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 34:4.

## 1Samuel 21:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388

**Translation:** ...and he feigned madness in their presence [lit., in their hand]. The first thing that David did is he acted crazy. If you examined the Hebrew exegesis, you see that the word for *feigning madness* actually has a plethora of meanings, few of which seem to be related. However, the word does seem to maintain some stability within the various stems.

When it says that David feigned madness *in their hand*, it means that, while under their control or power, he acted crazy. It is possible that the men by his side have seized him before Achish or that he was somehow restrained or constrained by them. It was not necessarily because he was acting crazy, but because he was David, the killer of thousands of Philistines.

Probably the exact scenario is this: the servants of Achish proclaim that David is an enemy of the Philistines and then they seize him. While he is under their control, he distorts his face (as per the Greek), he drools and acts like he's a few sandwiches short of a picnic. He does whatever he can while restrained. This is going to limit David's acting out considerably.

As mentioned within the exegesis, at least one exegete said that David did not *feign* madness, but that God caused him to have an epileptic fit. I have explained within the context of this exegesis that this was unlikely (see above). By the way, the consensus of exegetes (which is not always the deciding factor) is that David caused himself to appear mad. A sample from one exegete (Spurgeon): *he [David]...resorted to methods of such dubious morality as pretending to be mad and behaving as a lunatic.*<sup>26</sup>

## 1Samuel 21:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
tâwâh (תָּוַח) [pronounced tau-WAWH]	<i>to mark a boundary line, to set a limit, to limit; to make a mark, to set a mark</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #8427 & #8428 BDB #1063

This is not a homonym, as presented by Strong, but actually two aspects of the same word. It's primary meaning is *to make a mark*, which is substantiated by its substantive cognates. However, often a *mark* is made in order to set or mark a boundary, so it also can mean *to place a boundary around*; from this, we can derive the less concrete meaning *to limit*.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 34:4.

## 1Samuel 21:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Rotherham tells us that David <i>struck against</i> the doors of the city, pointing to the LXX. According to Edersheim, a slight alteration of the Hebrew letters turns <i>scribbling</i> to <i>drumming</i> or <i>beating</i> . <sup>27</sup>			
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
deleth (דַּלַּת) [pronounced <i>DEH-leth</i> ]	<i>doors, gates of a city</i>	feminine dual construct	Strong's #1817 BDB #195
The difference between the plural construct and the plural noun is simply the vowel points, which were added long after the original text was written.			
shaʿar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced <i>SHAH-gahr</i> ]	<i>gate [control of city can be implied]; area inside front gate; entrance</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8179 BDB #1044

**Translation:** [Then he made marks upon the doors of the \[city\] gate...](#) This is not within the palace of Achish, but out by the city gates. The idea is that, as we will see, Achish is going to allow David to leave, and David will continue this act. He doesn't simply say, "I'm outta here" and makes a run for it. He stays in character, even when released, and even makes marks upon the city gate, almost as though he is setting a boundary that he is not supposed to cross over. This would have actually occurred after the next few verses.

This could be a reference to the gates of the entrance into the palace of Achish. Through these gates would be a courtyard (compare Esther 2:19, 21). David would have exhibited the same behavior, for the sake of Achish's servants. In any case, they no doubt escorted David to the gates of the city.

The Septuagint gives us a greater set of similar behaviors. Instead of making marks on the city gates, he drums on them. I worked with a young man who had Turret's Syndrom, and drumming was a major part of his behavior. When he was able to concentrate on something, he would not drum as often. However, when his attention span wandered, he could be drumming with his hands constantly. The second thing that David did, according to the Septuagint, is he made wild, extravagant gestures with his hands. Again, this is typical behavior for a person who is not altogether tied to reality, but realizes that he has an audience. David could have done this at the point of being let go. Finally, the third thing that David did (according to the LXX) is fell against the doors of the gate. Most people, when given their walking papers, would simply walk slowly, but directly, toward the exterior of the city. David took a few detours, walking into the doors of the gate rather than simply exiting through the gates. David's intent was to appear completely disoriented, which would be in character for suddenly showing up at the doorstep of Achish king of Gath. No doubt, David was a 3 Stooges fan.

## 1Samuel 21:13d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAHD</i> ]	<i>to cause to go down, to cause to come down, to bring down</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #3381 BDB #432

<sup>27</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 486.

## 1Samuel 21:13d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
rîyr (רִיר) [pronounced reer]	saliva, drool, spit	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7388 BDB #938
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced e/]	in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
zâqân (זָקָן) [pronounced zaw-KAWN]	chin, beard	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2206 BDB #278

**Translation:** ...and caused drool to run down into his beard. The final thing that David did (and probably while still in the custody of Achish's soldiers) is that he let drool run down his chin and into his beard (assuming that he had a beard—the Hebrew allows for either *chin* or *beard*). This would give the appearance of David having a fit of epilepsy. According to Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, the spit on the beard was a tremendous personal insult, indicating that David, in their eyes, was clearly over the edge.<sup>28</sup>

Although the MT makes David's behavior appear almost like an epileptic fit, the LXX makes it appear more as though he had Turret's syndrom. Interestingly enough, in v. 14 of the Septuagint, we have the word epilêptôn (ἐπιληπτῶν), which is obviously from whence we get our word *epileptic*. Whichever, his behavior probably convinced the soldiers who held him, to some degree.

**And so says Achish unto his servants, "Lo, you see a man is mad; for why do you bring him to me?"**

1Samuel  
21:14

**Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is mad; why did you bring him to me?"**

**Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you can see that this man is insane; why did you bring him to me?"**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

**Masoretic Text** And so says Achish unto his servants, "Lo, you see a man is mad; for why do you bring him to me?"

**Septuagint** And Anchus said to his servants, "Lo! You see this man [is] mad [or, an epileptic]; why have you brought him in to me?"

Significant differences .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

**CEV** "Look at him!" Achish said to his officers. "You can see he's crazy. Why did you bring him to me?"

**NJB** And Achish said to his courtiers, "You see the man is raving; why bring him to me?"

**NLT** Finally, King Achish said to his men, "Must you bring me a madman?"

<sup>28</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-Sword, 1Sam. 21:13.

TEV So Achish said to his officials, "Look! The man is crazy Why did you bring him to me?"

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™ Achish said to his officers, "Look at him! Don't you see [that he's] insane? Why bring him to me?"

JPS (Tanakh) And Achish said to his courtiers, "You see the man is raving; why bring him to me?"

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

NASB Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me?"

Young's Updated LT And Achish says unto his servants, "Lo, you see a man acting as a madman; why do you bring him in unto me?"

**What is the gist of this verse?** Achish points out the obvious—that David is mad. He then asks, "Why did you bring him to me?"

### 1Samuel 21:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, then	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾākīysh (אָכִישׁ) [pronounced aw-KEESH]	transliterated Achish	masculine proper noun	Strong's #397 BDB #37
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced el]	in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʿebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced ʿE <sup>B</sup> -ved]	slave, servant	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5650 BDB #713
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced hin-NAY]	lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out	interjection, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
râʾâh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
ʾīysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone	masculine singular noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
shâgâʿ (שָׂגָע) [pronounced shaw-GAH]	to be mad, to be a madman	Hithpael participle	Strong's #7696 BDB #993

**Translation:** Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see the man is mad;... Achish points out what is apparent and obvious. David was drooling and acting crazy; and he did not appear to be a threat to anyone. Achish tells them to look; David is obviously out of his mind. This does not mean that is what Achish actually thinks. Although we don’t really know what is going on in his mind, several exegetes<sup>29</sup> suggest that Achish allows David this *out* due to a respect that he has for David (which respect will be later confirmed in subsequent chapters). My guess is that Achish considers the situation, thinks to himself, *maybe he’s mad and maybe he’s not*; and simply chooses to let David go.

### 1Samuel 21:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʿ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong’s # BDB #510
mâh (ה מ) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong’s #4100 BDB #552
Lâmed + mâh can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence.			
bôwʿ (ו ב) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to take in, to bring, to come in with, to carry</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong’s #935 BDB #97
ʿêth (ת א) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	untranslated mark of a direct object	affixed to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #853 BDB #84
ʿel (ל א) [pronounced <i>el</i> ]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied with a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix)	Strong’s #413 BDB #39

**Translation:** ...*why did you bring him to me?* This question was rhetorical, as we will see in the next verse. It is unfortunate that his question and answer were separated. Even of itself, it is pretty clear that this is a rhetorical question—if Philistia’s greatest enemy traverses her borders, then certainly the ruler of Philistia would require knowledge of this.

**A lack of madmen I that you have brought this one to be mad upon me? For why does this one come unto my house?”**

1Samuel  
21:15

**Do I lack madmen that you have brought this one to act crazy on account of me? Why does this one come into my house?”**

**Am I so lacking in madmen that you brought this man into my house?”**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

<sup>29</sup> Henry writes: *I am apt to think Achish was aware that the delirium was but counterfeit, but, being desirous to protect David (as we find afterwards he was very kind to him, even when the lord of the Philistines favoured him not, 1Sam 28:1, 1Sam 28:2; 1Sam 29:6), he pretended to his servants that he really thought he was mad, and therefore had reason to question whether it was David or no; or, if it were, they need not fear him, what harm could he do them now that his reason had departed from him?* Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; 1Sam. 21:14, courtesy of e-Sword.



Masoretic Text	A lack of madmen I that you have brought this one to be mad upon me? For why does this one come unto my house?"
Septuagint	Am I in want of madmen that you have brought him in to me to play the madman? He will not come into the house."

Significant differences .

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	I have enough crazy people without your bringing another one here. Keep him away from my palace!"
NJB	Have I not enough madmen, without your bringing me this one to weary me with his antics Is he to join my household?"
NLT	We already have enough of them around here! Why should I let someone like this be my guest?"
REB	Am I short of madmen that you bring this one to plague me? Must I have this fellow in my house?"
TEV	Don't I have enough madmen already Why bring another one to bother me with his crazy actions right here in my own house?"

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	Do I have such a shortage of lunatics that you bring this man so that he can show me he is insane? Does this man have to come into my house?"
JPS (Tanakh)	Do I lack madmen that you have brought this fellow to rave for me? Should this fellow enter my house?" [This is actually v. 16 in the JPS].

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

NASB	"Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"
Young's Updated LT	A lack of madmen have I, that you have brought in this one to act as a madman by me! Does this one come in unto my house?"

**What is the gist of this verse?** Achish makes light of the situation, asking whether he really needs one more madman in his palace. "Do I lack madmen that I really need one more?"

### 1Samuel 21:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
châçêr (חָצֵר) [pronounced <i>khaw-SAYR</i> ]	<i>wanting, lacking, needing; void of</i>	adjective construct	Strong's #2638 BDB #341
shâga' (שָׂגָא) [pronounced <i>shaw-GAH</i> ]	<i>to be done with divine fury; to be mad, to be a madman; as a participle, it can mean madman, fanatic</i>	masculine plural, Pual participle	Strong's #7696 BDB #993

1Samuel 21:15a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾānîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
bôw' (בָּאוּ) [pronounced boh]	<i>to take in, to bring, to come in with, to carry</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, thus</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâga' (שָׂגָה) [pronounced shaw-GAH]	<i>to be mad, to be a madman</i>	Hithpael infinitive construct	Strong's #7696 BDB #993
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, concerning, besides, in addition to, together with, beyond, above, over, by on to, towards, to, against, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of proximity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

**Translation:** [Do I lack madmen that you have brought this one to act crazy on account of me?](#) What Achish says is actually very funny. “Don’t I already have enough madmen in the palace? You bring me one more?” Achish apparently is not concerned for his own safety because of David. In fact, seeing the greatest warrior of Israel acting crazy will give Achish a matter to ponder—is Israel now vulnerable, because David is mentally incapacitated?

Does Achish really think that David is crazy? It is possible that this was just a clever line, and Achish could not help but use it. In later times, we will see that Achish actually respected and liked David (compare 1Sam. 27:2–3), whereas his soldiers and the people of Philistia were apprehensive about him, if not outright antagonistic toward David. On the other hand, the people of Israel in general liked and respected David, although the ruler of Israel, Saul, was very antagonistic toward him, a dichotomy noted by Matthew Henry.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible; 1Sam. 21:10-15, courtesy of e-Sword.

## 1Samuel 21:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hă (הַ) [pronounced <i>heh</i> ]		interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.	Strong's #none BDB #209
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]	<i>here, this, thus</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
bōw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to take in, to bring, to come in with, to carry</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
'el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>el</i> ]	<i>in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied with a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #1004 BDB #108

**Translation:** [Why does this one come into my house?](#) Achish already has enough madmen in the palace. Why let this man come into his house?<sup>31</sup>

Thieme on numerous occasions spoke ill of commentaries. When it comes to a passage like this, such an attitude is justified. Achish gives David a pass here. I have read through several commentaries on this particular situation, and none of them get it right. One commentator tells us that the Jews thought the wife and daughter of Achish were mad. Another said that because David was mad, Achish wanted nothing to do with him. One said that the ancients kept madmen around as an entertainment source, but that Achish really didn't need another crazy man right then. Only Wesley seemed to have a clue, as he recognized that Achish probably knew that David was faking his insanity. Given this, let me explain...

### Why Did Achish Allow David to Leave?

1. Achish and David have more in common than Achish and his underlings.
2. Later on, we will find that Achish clearly likes David, whereas his soldiers and the people of Philistia were apprehensive and/or outright antagonistic toward David (1Sam. 27:2–3).
3. Achish is the ruler of a city and David is seen as the ruler (or, at least, the potential ruler) of Israel (v. 11).
4. Achish does not view David as a threat. My guess is that his reconnaissance\* shows David to really be alone and not backed by an army waiting outside the city.
5. David is afraid of Achish (v. 12), but Achish is not afraid of him. He simply does not view David as any sort of threat to him. He has not shown up in Gath with a cadre of soldiers; he has only Goliath's sword, which is going to be much too large for David. And David is acting crazy. So, as far as Achish is concerned, there is not threat here—not to him anyway.
6. We have observed a mutual respect (or, at least mercy) between rulers before when Saul chose not to

<sup>31</sup> Edersheim, for whatever reason, suggests, "[That ye have brought this one to rave against me.](#)" is the correct rendering of this verse. This translation indicates more that Achish would be afraid to have David around, which does not fit with the context. Furthermore, the translation is completely wrong. Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 487.

## Why Did Achish Allow David to Leave?

execute Agag in 1Sam. 15:8.

7. Despite the fact that David had led attacks against the Philistines on several occasions, it is very likely that David had not provoked these attacks. Therefore, even though the Philistines had been at war against David, David responded as any brave man would. Achish could not fault him for protecting his own homeland; he rather respected him.
8. It is unclear as to how much information Achish had about the rift between Saul and David. David was a likable man who was easy to respect; and Saul was self-serving, not a man to command respect. Therefore, if Saul was before Achish, he might have had him executed.
9. If Achish knows about Saul and David, then a civil war between the two of them would be something that is favorable to Achish and to Philistia. This could have been the deciding factor in Achish's choice.
10. Achish apparently sent David away after this (Psalm 34:inscription), which is what we would expect him to do if he wants to see a civil war led by David.
11. Achish is a pretty funny guy; given his position, he probably lacked opportunity to exhibit this side of his personality. He chose here to show this personality trait. Sometimes, a funny guy is willing to take a chance in order to drop a funny line.

\*There is no mention of a reconnaissance, but certainly, if David was found entering the city, some perimeter examination would have undoubtedly been launched. The fact that the Philistines knew the lyrics of Israel's latest song (v. 11b) indicates that the Philistines had a good spy network up and running.

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It was at this time that David was inspired to write Psalms 34–56. He didn't sit down in the palace of Achish and begin writing the first few lines of these psalms, but after leaving Gath, he probably sat down and thought things through. It was in Gath where David began to see things from the standpoint of another person, and therefore began to develop the characteristics that a leader should have.

I should mention one other thing. One of the bones of contention in the first half of this chapter was whether David was leading a band of men or not. Let me offer several reasons why he probably was not:

### Arguments in Favor of David Traveling Alone at this Time

1. Nowhere in this chapter is such a band of men ever mentioned (except in David's lie to Ahimelech).
2. Ahimelech asks David specifically why he is alone (1Sam. 21:1).
3. Achish is not threatened by David, which would not have been the case if David showed up with a band of men.
4. David is just now becoming a man of leadership; and remember, God often does not give you blessing and responsibility until you are ready for it. This is illustrated by David's life.

### Arguments in Favor of David Traveling With Others at this Time

1. In Psalm 34:2, when David rejoices, other grace-oriented believers rejoice as well with him. This cannot occur if David is traveling alone.
2. David asks others to celebrate Jehovah with him in Psalm 34:3, suggesting that he is not alone (this could also be poetic license).
3. As discussed, Jesus seemed to indicate that David had companions with him at this time (Matt. 12:3–4). We have already discussed this, as [Jesus often said things which indicated that his hearers did not know Scripture](#).
4. Even though no one is mentioned as being with David in 1Sam. 21, this does not mean that he was traveling alone.

I need to do some summing up, and this chapter is easy to sum up: it is David looking out for #1. David's life is in danger, he recognizes that, and he is willing to do anything to save his own life. He will lie, he will mislead, he will do whatever it takes to save his own skin. As has been discussed, there will be two results to his actions in this chapter: (1) Saul will kill all of the priests and their families in anger and (2) the Philistines will strike Israel, thinking that Israel's greatest general is now incapacitated.

**Application:** There are many sayings out there designed to turn us away from doing that which is right: "If you don't look out for #1, no one else will." "You must be able to love yourself in order to love others." "You must first be happy with yourself." The most unhealthy focus that you can have is on yourself. Life is more than being able to innumerate your wants and needs and then implementing that which is necessary in order to fulfill those wants and needs. In fact, the Bible tells us that God looks out for us; God takes care of us. "So I tell you to stop worrying about what you will eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothes. Look at the birds. They don't plant, harvest, or gather the harvest into barns. Yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single hour to your life by worrying? And why worry about clothes? Notice how the flowers grow in the field. They never work or spin yarn for clothes. But I say that not even Solomon in all his majesty was dressed like one of these flowers. That's the way God clothes the grass in the field. Today it's alive, and tomorrow it's thrown into an incinerator. So how much more will he clothe you people who have so little faith? Don't ever worry and say, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' Everyone is concerned about these things, and your heavenly Father certainly knows you need all of them. But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you. So don't ever worry about tomorrow. After all, tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matt. 6:26–34 God's Word™).

**Application:** One of the most common reasons for the dissolution of a marriage is that one or both partners begin to be concerned about #1. They become overly concerned about their own wants, needs and desires; their focus is on themselves, rather than on their partner or on their children. Let's even approach this from a relatively selfish angle: let's say that you want your circumstances to be the best possible: then focus on the needs and desires of your mate and your children. It won't not happen overnight, but your unselfish approach will be rewarded.

At this time, let's go and examine **Psalms 34** and **56**, the two psalms which mark a turning point in David's life, from complete self-centeredness to that of being a true leader. No one whose focus is on himself can be a good leader.