Blessed Be Thy Advice

Abigail, Nabal and David in 1 Samuel 25

A fool, a wise woman and the king in waiting: revelation, folly, and the vengeance that belongs to God.

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Anchor Passages

> **1 Samuel 25:32** *And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:33** *And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:28** *I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:29** *Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.*
>
> **Romans 12:19** *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Introduction: The Fool, the Wise Woman and the King in Waiting

The story in brief

First Samuel 25 tells one of the most vivid stories in the Old Testament. David is a hunted man. King Saul wants him dead, and he is living in the wilderness of southern Judah with about six hundred men. For months his men have guarded the flocks of a rich sheep-owner named Nabal. When shearing time comes, a time of feasting and open-handed giving, David sends ten young men to ask politely for whatever Nabal can spare. Nabal insults them and sends them away with nothing.

David's answer is swift and terrible. He straps on his sword, takes four hundred men, and swears that by morning not one male of Nabal's household will be left alive. Then Nabal's wife, Abigail, hears what has happened. Without telling her husband she loads donkeys with food, rides out, meets David on the hillside, and falls at his feet. Her speech, one of the longest speeches by a woman anywhere in the Old Testament, turns David back. Ten days later the LORD strikes Nabal and he dies. David blesses God for keeping him from bloodshed, and Abigail becomes his wife.

In short: a fool insults the coming king, a wise woman stops the king from avenging himself, and God settles the matter Himself.

Why this chapter matters

The story is short, but it is packed with more than first meets the eye.

- **It sits between two scenes where David refuses to kill Saul.** In chapter 24 and again in chapter 26, David has Saul at his mercy and will not lift his hand against him. In chapter 25, in between, he nearly does to a far lesser man what he refused to do to the king. The chapter is placed there for a reason.

- **Abigail says things she had no ordinary way of knowing.** She speaks of God making David "a sure house," using the very words God would later use in His promise to David's line. She speaks of David's enemies being slung out "as out of the middle of a sling." She warns David of what this one act of revenge would cost his conscience once he became king. Was she speaking by revelation from God?
- **Nabal is far more than a rude rich man.** His name means "fool." The Hebrew writer surrounds him with wordplays on that name, on wine-skins, on dogs, and on stone. Point by point he is drawn as a picture of King Saul.
- **One phrase puzzles every modern reader.** David swears to leave alive no "him that pisseth against the wall." What does that mean, and does the wall stand for anything more?
- **It shows David's integrity being tested and kept.** David was not kept from evil by his own strength. He was kept by a woman God sent, and he had the humility to listen.

In short: this one chapter opens up revelation, folly, the coming kingdom, and the question of who has the right to avenge.

How this study is laid out

Chapter 1 gives the background: how David came to be in the wilderness of Maon at all. Chapter 2 describes the place and the season. Chapters 3 and 4 look at David's men and at Nabal. Chapter 5 takes up David's oath and the phrase about the wall. Chapters 6 and 7 follow Abigail and go through her speech verse by verse. Chapter 8 weighs whether she was speaking by revelation. Chapter 9 tells of Nabal's end, Chapter 10 of what the chapter teaches about David's integrity and ours, and Chapter 11 of what became of Abigail. Chapter 12 gathers the verdicts, and Chapter 13 draws the lessons together. The appendices set out the structure of the chapter, the Hebrew words used in this study, a table of every argument with its weight, and a timeline of David's wilderness years.

In short: background first, then the people, then the speech, then what it all means.

How Hebrew words and dates are given

This study quotes the King James Version throughout. Where the Hebrew behind the English matters, the Hebrew word is given in plain English letters, with its meaning, the first time it appears. Strong's numbers are given for the main words so the reader can look them up. Appendix 2 gathers all of them in one place.

Some verse numbers in the Hebrew Bible differ by one from the English in chapters 21 and 24 of 1 Samuel. This study always uses the English (KJV) verse numbers.

Dates follow Archbishop James Ussher's reckoning as printed in the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, which places the events of 1 Samuel 25 in about 1060 B.C., some four years before Saul's death. These dates are approximate and are given only to help the reader see the order of events.

In short: KJV wording, Hebrew explained in plain words, English verse numbers, and approximate dates.

How to read the "Weighing it" notes

Not every point in a study like this is equally firm. A verse that says something in so many words is not the same as a wordplay that may or may not have been intended. So every section ends with a short

"Weighing it" note. Its first line says two things: how strong the point is, and which way it points. Then it says what someone who reads the evidence differently could fairly answer.

The strength of a point is given on this scale:

- **Direct statement** — Scripture says it in so many words; the only question is what the words mean.
- **Strong inference** — follows closely from what Scripture says; the alternative has to strain against the text.
- **Reasonable inference** — the more natural reading, but a careful reader could take it otherwise.
- **Corroboration only** — fits the point being made, but would fit another reading about as well. It may be mentioned; it may not be leaned on.
- **Neutral** — often cited, but settles nothing.

Sections that simply tell what happened are labelled *Narrative*. Sections that explain method are labelled *Method, not argument*. A section that sets out the other side's case in its own terms is labelled *Opposing case, stated*.

This study tests five claims, and each note says which one it bears on:

- **Claim A — The revelation claim.** Abigail's words to David contain knowledge God revealed to her, beyond what she could have learned by ordinary means.
- **Claim B — The design claim.** Chapter 25 is deliberately placed between chapters 24 and 26, and Nabal is deliberately drawn as a picture of Saul, to show David learning that vengeance belongs to God.
- **Claim C — The wall claim.** "Him that pisseth against the wall" is a coarse Hebrew way of saying "every male," and the wall does not stand for the face of God.
- **Claim D — The softening claim.** The words "the enemies of" in David's oath in verse 22 were added by a scribe to keep David from seeming to curse himself.
- **Claim E — The fairness claim.** David's request to Nabal was fair and just, not a threat or a demand for payment.

In short: every section says how much weight it can carry, and which claim it bears on, so the reader can see at once what is firm and what is not.

Weighing it: Method, not argument. This introduction sets out how the study works. The evidence begins in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: The Road to Carmel — How David Came to Be There

From the king's table to the wilderness

To understand why David was in the wilderness of southern Judah, we have to go back several years. Samuel had anointed David in secret at Bethlehem, while Saul was still king, and from that day **"the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel 16:13)**. David came to Saul's court as a harpist, killed Goliath, and rose to command Saul's soldiers. The women of Israel sang, **"Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7)**, and from that day Saul **"eyed David" (1 Samuel 18:9)** with jealousy.

Saul tried to pin David to the wall with a javelin, more than once (1 Samuel 18:11; 19:10). He sent men to David's house to kill him (19:11). David fled, first to Samuel at Ramah, then to Jonathan, then to the priests at Nob, and even to the Philistine king Achish at Gath, where he pretended to be mad to escape (1 Samuel 19–21). From there he went to the cave of Adullam, and there men began to gather to him:

> **1 Samuel 22:2** *And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.*

The Hebrew behind "discontented" is *mar nefesh*, literally "bitter of soul." These were men with grievances, debts and troubles. David became their captain. By the time of Keilah the band had grown to about six hundred (1 Samuel 23:13). This is the same number that appears in chapter 25: four hundred go with David against Nabal and two hundred stay with the baggage (25:13).

In short: David was a fugitive, anointed but not yet crowned, leading six hundred men who had nowhere else to go.

Weighing it: Narrative. These are the events as 1 Samuel records them. Nothing here is disputed.

Ziph, Maon and En-gedi

David's men moved from place to place across the hill country and wilderness of southern Judah. The people of Ziph twice betrayed him to Saul (1 Samuel 23:19; 26:1). The first time, Saul nearly caught him in the wilderness of Maon, the very district where Nabal lived:

> **1 Samuel 23:24** *And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.*
>
> **1 Samuel 23:25** *Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.*
>
> **1 Samuel 23:26** *And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.*

Only a Philistine raid called Saul away, and the place was named Sela-hammahlekoth, "the rock of divisions" or "the rock of escape" (23:28). David then went east to the strongholds of En-gedi, above the Dead Sea. There, in chapter 24, comes the first great test. Saul goes into a cave to relieve himself, not knowing David and his men are hidden in its depths. David's men urge him on: **"Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand" (1 Samuel 24:4)**. David creeps up and cuts off the edge of Saul's robe, but goes no further, and even that troubles him:

> **1 Samuel 24:5** *And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.*
>
> **1 Samuel 24:6** *And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.*

When Saul has left the cave, David calls after him and says the words that set the theme for chapters 24, 25 and 26:

> **1 Samuel 24:12** *The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.*

Saul weeps, and admits the truth openly:

> **1 Samuel 24:17** *And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.*
>
> **1 Samuel 24:20** *And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.*

So by the end of chapter 24, Saul himself has said out loud that David will be king. That matters when we come to Abigail's speech.

In short: in the very wilderness where Nabal kept his flocks, David had just refused to avenge himself on Saul, and Saul had confessed that David would be king.

Weighing it: Narrative — and the ground for Claim B. The events are plainly stated. Their importance for Claim B is that chapter 24 sets out, in David's own words, the principle chapter 25 will test: "the LORD avenge me … but mine hand shall not be upon thee." The other reading can fairly say that a narrative simply following events in order need not have been arranged to teach anything. That question is weighed in Chapter 10.

Samuel is dead

Chapter 25 opens with a single sentence of great weight:

> **1 Samuel 25:1** *And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.*

Samuel had judged Israel all his life. He had anointed both Saul and David. Now he was gone. All Israel gathered to mourn him, as they had once mourned Moses. Bullinger's *Companion Bible* notes the likeness, and the language is similar: Israel **"wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days" (Deuteronomy 34:8)**. Jeremiah later names Moses and Samuel together as Israel's great intercessors (Jeremiah 15:1).

For David this was a heavy loss. The prophet who had anointed him, and to whom he had once fled for safety (19:18), was gone. David was not left entirely without guidance. The prophet Gad was with him (**"the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold" (1 Samuel 22:5)**), and Abiathar the priest had brought the ephod, through which David asked the LORD what to do. At Keilah David asked the LORD again and again before he moved: **"O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down" (1 Samuel 23:11)**; see also 23:2, 4, 12.

That makes chapter 25 all the more striking. When Nabal insulted him, David did not ask Gad, did not call for the ephod, and did not inquire of the LORD at all. He simply said, "Gird ye on every man his sword." The man who asked God before every move at Keilah asked nothing before riding out to kill. The counsel he needed came anyway, from a source he did not expect. God sent a woman.

In short: with Samuel dead, David had Gad and the ephod, yet he asked the LORD nothing before riding against Nabal, and the counsel he needed came from Abigail.

Weighing it: Direct statement on Samuel's death and on David's earlier inquiries; strong inference on the contrast. Samuel's death, Gad's presence and David's inquiries at Keilah are stated. That David made no inquiry before arming against Nabal follows from the silence of a narrative that records his inquiries carefully elsewhere (23:2, 4, 9-12; 30:7-8), which makes the contrast a strong inference rather than a bare argument from silence. The other reading can fairly answer that a narrator need not record every prayer, and that 25:1 may simply mark time, as such notices often do.

Down to the wilderness: Paran or Maon?

The Hebrew text says David **"went down to the wilderness of Paran" (1 Samuel 25:1)**. The wilderness of Paran is far to the south, toward Sinai, where Israel wandered after the Exodus (Numbers 10:12; 12:16). Yet the very next verse places the story at Maon and Carmel, in the hill country of Judah, and David is clearly close enough to guard Nabal's flocks there.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (made by Jewish scholars about two or three centuries before Christ), reads instead "the wilderness of Maan," that is, Maon. Many scholars think this is the original reading. Others answer that "Paran" may have been used loosely for the whole great southern wilderness that stretches down from Judah, of which the wilderness of Maon was the northern edge. The *Companion Bible* notes that the topography is exact: from the hill country the land falls away in "a continuous descent to the Negeb for more than a day's journey." Either way, the story itself is set at Maon and Carmel, and nothing in it depends on which reading is correct.

In short: the Hebrew says Paran and the Greek says Maon; the story itself happens at Maon and Carmel either way.

Weighing it: Neutral — settles nothing for any claim. Both readings have a fair case, and the events of the chapter are located by verse 2 regardless. It is mentioned so the reader is not puzzled by the name.

In Short

David was the anointed king in waiting, hunted by Saul, leading six hundred troubled men through the wilderness of southern Judah. He had just spared Saul's life at En-gedi and said, "the LORD avenge me … but mine hand shall not be upon thee." Saul had admitted David would be king. Then Samuel died, and David went down into the wilderness near Maon, where the test of chapter 25 was waiting.

Chapter 2: Carmel, Maon and the Shearing Feast

Caleb's country

> **1 Samuel 25:2** *And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.*

The Carmel of this chapter is not the famous Mount Carmel in the north, where Elijah later faced the prophets of Baal. It is a small town in the hill country of Judah, listed with its neighbours in Joshua's survey of Judah's towns: **"Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah" (Joshua 15:55)**. It is generally identified with the village of al-Karmil, about seven miles south-southeast of Hebron. It had the only reliable spring in the immediate area, which explains why a great sheep-owner kept his flocks and did his shearing there. Maon, where Nabal lived, lay close by to the south. In the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*'s words, Nabal "might dwell generally in Maon, yet he is styled Nabal the Carmelite, from the place where his estate lay."

This was Caleb's country. When Israel entered the land, Caleb the son of Jephunneh, one of the two faithful spies, received Hebron and the hill country around it as his inheritance:

> **Joshua 15:13** *And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron.*

Caleb was the man who **"wholly followed the LORD God of Israel" (Joshua 14:14)**. Nabal, as we will see in Chapter 4, was **"of the house of Caleb" (1 Samuel 25:3)**. He lived on the land his great ancestor had won by faith, and he had none of his ancestor's faith. Hebron, Caleb's city, is also where David would first be crowned king over Judah (2 Samuel 2:1-4).

In short: Carmel was a small spring-fed town in the hills south of Hebron, in the inheritance of faithful Caleb.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the place; corroboration only on the contrast with Caleb. That Carmel, Maon and Ziph are towns of Judah, and that Hebron was Caleb's inheritance, is stated. The location of Carmel at al-Karmil rests on old and firm identification. That the writer means us to set faithless Nabal beside faithful Caleb is fitting but not stated, and the other reading can fairly say "of the house of Caleb" may be no more than a note of family and clan.

Saul's monument at Carmel

Carmel appears once before in 1 Samuel, and the earlier mention is worth noticing. After Saul's war against Amalek, when he spared King Agag and the best of the flocks against God's command, Samuel went looking for him:

> **1 Samuel 15:12** *And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.*

The words "he set him up a place" are, in Hebrew, *matsiv lo yad*, "setting up for himself a hand," that is, a monument. Saul raised a monument to himself at Carmel on the very campaign in which he disobeyed

God and lost the kingdom. It was there, or on that journey, that Samuel told him, **"The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1 Samuel 15:28)**.

So Carmel already carried a memory: the place of Saul's self-glorifying monument, on the day the kingdom was taken from him. Now at Carmel another self-important man would despise David, the "neighbour … better than thou," and come to a sudden end.

In short: Carmel was where Saul had set up a monument to himself on the campaign that cost him the kingdom.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the monument; corroboration only on any intended link. Saul's monument at Carmel is stated in 15:12. Whether the writer wants the reader to recall it in chapter 25 is not stated, and the other reading can fairly answer that Carmel is named in chapter 25 simply because that is where Nabal's flocks were. It bears lightly on Claim B and is not leaned on.

The shearing feast

> **1 Samuel 25:4** *And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.*

Sheep-shearing in ancient Israel was not just farm work. It was a season of feasting and celebration, when the owner had his year's wealth in hand and was expected to be generous. Judah went up **"unto his sheepshearers to Timnath" (Genesis 38:12)**, and the occasion was well known enough that Tamar could count on him passing by. Absalom chose his sheep-shearing at Baal-hazor as the occasion for a great feast to which he invited all the king's sons (2 Samuel 13:23-28). The *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* notes that shearing "appears to have been always attended with festivity."

That is why David's young men could say, **"we come in a good day" (1 Samuel 25:8)**. The Hebrew is *yom tov*, "a good day," the same phrase later used for a feast day or holiday (compare Esther 8:17; 9:19, 22). On such a day, generosity to neighbours, servants and the poor was expected. Nabal had slaughtered meat for his shearers (25:11) and was holding **"a feast in his house, like the feast of a king" (1 Samuel 25:36)**. The question was not whether there was food to spare. The question was whether Nabal would share it.

In short: David asked at the one time of year when giving was most expected and easiest to do.

Weighing it: Direct statement — bears on Claim E. That David asked on a feast day and that Nabal was feasting are stated in verses 8 and 36. The festive custom of shearing is confirmed by Genesis 38 and 2 Samuel 13. The other reading can fairly answer that a feast day does not create a legal duty to give; that is true, and Chapter 3 weighs the claim on its own merits.

A very great man

Nabal was **"very great" (1 Samuel 25:2)**, with three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. The same words, "very great," are used of Barzillai the Gileadite, who generously fed David and his men when David fled from Absalom (2 Samuel 19:32), and Job was **"the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3)**. Wealth itself is not the fault. Barzillai and Job used theirs to help others. Job could say, **"If I have withheld the poor from their desire … Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof" (Job 31:16-17)**, then let judgment fall on him. Nabal is the very man Job swore he was not.

In short: Nabal was as rich as Barzillai and Job, and as stingy as they were generous.

Weighing it: Corroboration only. The comparison with Barzillai and Job is fitting and drawn from Scripture's own vocabulary of greatness, but the writer of 1 Samuel does not make it. It illustrates; it proves nothing for any claim.

In Short

Carmel was a spring-fed town in Caleb's old inheritance, south of Hebron, where Saul had once raised a monument to himself. Nabal, a man of Caleb's house and very rich, was shearing his flocks there, a feast time when generosity was expected. David's request came on "a good day," when Nabal had plenty and a feast fit for a king.

Chapter 3: "A Wall Unto Us" — What David's Men Were Doing

Guards in the wilderness

The southern wilderness of Judah was dangerous country for shepherds. Flocks grazed far from town for months at a time. Raiders from the desert, Amalekites, Philistines and others, could sweep in and drive off sheep or kill the herdsmen. Only a few chapters later, Amalekites raid the whole south country, burn Ziklag and carry off its women and children (1 Samuel 30:1-2). Earlier, David had been told of Philistines at Keilah: **"they rob the threshingfloors" (1 Samuel 23:1)**.

David's six hundred men lived in that same wilderness, and they did not prey on the flocks around them. They protected them. We have this not from David's side, but from one of Nabal's own servants, speaking privately to Abigail:

> **1 Samuel 25:15** *But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:16** *They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.*

"A wall" is the Hebrew *chomah* (Strong's H2346), the word for a city wall or a wall of protection. It is the word God uses of Himself when He promises Jerusalem, **"I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zechariah 2:5)**. David's men were to Nabal's shepherds what God promises to be to His people: a wall around them "both by night and day."

The servant adds that they were "not hurt," which is the Hebrew *lo hokhlamnu*, literally "we were not shamed" or "not put to disgrace." Nothing was taken, no one was mistreated. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, retells the story and says David had charged his men to keep the flocks "without hurt and without damage … to esteem freedom from injustice above all other motives, and to look upon the touching of what belonged to another man as a horrible crime, and contrary to the will of God."

In short: for months David's hungry men guarded another man's flocks in a lawless wilderness and took nothing for it.

Weighing it: Direct statement — supports Claim E. The servant's testimony in verses 15-16 is stated plainly, and it comes from Nabal's side, not David's, which makes it the strongest kind of witness. Josephus adds colour but is a later retelling and is used only as corroboration. The other reading can fairly ask whether the servant was exaggerating to persuade Abigail; but he had every reason to fear David and none to flatter him, and Nabal never denies the service.

David's message, word by word

> **1 Samuel 25:5** *And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:6** *And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:7** *And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:8** *Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.*

David's message is a model of courtesy. Look at it piece by piece.

- **"Greet him in my name"** — the Hebrew is "ask him in my name of peace," the ordinary greeting *shalom*. David sends his good wishes in his own name.
- **"Him that liveth in prosperity"** — the Hebrew is simply *lechai*, "to the living one," or "to life!" Bullinger, in *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, explains that "to live" in Hebrew can mean "having all that makes life worth living, flourishing and prospering." It is a warm greeting, something like "Long life to you!"
- **Peace three times** — "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast." The threefold *shalom* covers Nabal, his household and his possessions.
- **"Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee"** — David does not ask Nabal to take his word for anything. He appeals to Nabal's own servants as witnesses.
- **"We come in a good day"** — the feast day of Chapter 2.
- **"Whatsoever cometh to thine hand"** — David names no price and makes no demand. Nabal can give whatever he chooses.
- **"Thy servants, and ... thy son David"** — David, the anointed king, calls himself Nabal's son. It is a term of respect and humility toward an older and wealthy man, the same way David addressed Saul as **"my father" (1 Samuel 24:11)**.

Ten young men delivered it **"according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased" (1 Samuel 25:9)**. "Ceased" is the Hebrew *vayyanuchu*, "and they rested," or "and they waited." They said their piece and stood waiting for an answer.

In short: David sent peace three times, appealed to Nabal's own servants, named no price, and called himself Nabal's son.

Weighing it: Direct statement — supports Claim E. Every element of the message is in the text. Bullinger's note on "him that liveth" is a lexical aid, not an argument. The other reading can fairly

answer that courteous words can still carry an unspoken threat when six hundred armed men stand behind them; that case is set out next.

Was it a protection racket?

Some modern commentators have read this chapter very differently. They see David as running what we would call a protection racket: an armed band offers "protection" a herdsman never asked for, then sends men to collect payment, with the clear understanding that refusal will be punished. David's violent reaction when Nabal refuses, on this reading, shows what the courteous words really meant. The *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* notes that desert chiefs of its own day did exactly this, claiming "a right to exact contributions of provisions, etc. wherever they come."

That is the opposing case at its strongest. Here is what Scripture's own account answers.

- **The servants, not David, call the protection good.** Nabal's own man says David's men were "very good unto us" and "a wall unto us" (25:15-16). A victim of extortion does not speak this way of his extortioner.
- **No threat is made.** The message contains peace, a request, an appeal to witnesses, and a free choice of gift. There is no "or else."
- **Nothing was taken in the months before.** The *Treasury* itself goes on to say that David, "though he lived in the wilderness like the Arab emirs, had not adopted their manners," and had taken nothing; "but had protected them against those who would."
- **Abigail and David both treat the service as real.** David says, **"Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good" (1 Samuel 25:21)**. Abigail does not dispute it; she brings the gift Nabal should have given.
- **David's anger is condemned within the story itself.** The fact that David went too far (Chapter 5) does not make his request wrong. The story holds the two apart: the request was just, the oath of vengeance was not. Abigail stops the second without finding fault with the first.

In short: the request was fair; the threatened vengeance was not; the story keeps the two apart.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated; the answer is a strong inference for Claim E. The protection-racket reading is set out at full strength. The answer rests on the testimony of Nabal's own servant and on the plain wording of the message, which makes it a strong inference that the request was fair. The other reading can fairly reply that the text was written by David's supporters; but the same text condemns David's oath without softening it, which is not how a whitewash is written.

In Short

David's men had been a wall of protection around Nabal's shepherds by night and by day, and had taken nothing. On a feast day David sent a courteous request for whatever Nabal chose to give, calling himself Nabal's son. Nabal's own servant witnesses that David's men were good to them. The request was fair. What David did next, when Nabal refused, is another matter.

Chapter 4: “As His Name Is, So Is He” — Nabal

The name

> **1 Samuel 25:3** *Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb.*

נָבָל

Nabal (Strong’s H5036, used as a name H5037) means “fool.” It is not the word for a simple or slow person. In Scripture the *nabal* is a man who is morally senseless, who lives as though God did not matter. Strong’s defines it as “stupid; wicked (especially impious).” The best-known verse with this word is the opening of a psalm of David:

> **Psalm 14:1** *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*

The same verse opens Psalm 53. Bullinger, in *Figures of Speech*, notes that if the psalm has Nabal in view, its first line could even be read “Nabal said,” or “A fool sayeth.” Whether or not David thought of Nabal when he wrote it, the psalm describes the man exactly: one who says in his heart there is no God, so he need answer to no one.

Abigail herself makes the point:

> **1 Samuel 25:25** *Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.*

“Folly” is *nebalah* (H5039), from the same root. In Scripture *nebalah* is not a small foolishness but an outrage, a wicked act that should never be done in Israel. It is used of the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34:7), Achan’s theft of the devoted things (Joshua 7:15), the outrage at Gibeah (Judges 19:23), and Amnon’s violation of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:12). “Folly is with him” means wickedness travels with him wherever he goes.

Some readers wonder whether any parent would really name a child “Fool.” It may have been a name he earned, or the writer may be using a name that had another, ordinary sense in its day and showing how well its plain meaning fitted him. Scripture does not say. What it does say, through Abigail and through Josephus after her (“Nabal, in the Hebrew tongue, signifies folly”), is that the name and the man matched.

In short: Nabal means “fool” in the deepest sense, a man who lives as though there were no God, and his wife says his name fits him.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the meaning; neutral on how he got the name. Abigail states the meaning of the name in verse 25, and the word’s use elsewhere shows its moral weight. How he came to bear it is unknown, and nothing in this study depends on it.

“Of the house of Caleb” — Calebite, dog, or “after his own heart”?

The last words of verse 3, “he was of the house of Caleb,” hide three possible readings, and the Hebrew writer may well have meant the reader to hear more than one.

1. **The reading the scribes marked to be read aloud** is *kalibbi*, “a Calebite,” a man of Caleb’s clan. The Hebrew Bible has a system where the consonants written in the text (called the *Kethiv*, “what is written”) are sometimes accompanied by a note telling the reader to pronounce a different word (the *Qere*, “what is read”). Here the *Qere* is *kalibbi*, and that is what the KJV translates.
2. **Caleb sounds like *keleb*, “dog”** (H3611). The Septuagint translated the phrase “and the man was dog-like” (Greek *kynikos*, from which we get the word “cynic”), and the Syriac and Arabic versions read it the same way, as the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* and the *Companion Bible* both note. Josephus calls Nabal “like a cynic in the course of his behavior.” In Scripture a dog was an unclean scavenger and a term of contempt (1 Samuel 17:43; 24:14).
3. **The consonants as written** (*Kethiv*, כלבו) can be read *kelibbo*, “according to his heart.” On that reading the line says, in effect, “and he was a law to himself,” a man who did whatever his heart wanted.

The third reading opens a striking contrast. When Samuel told Saul the kingdom would be taken from him, he said:

> **1 Samuel 13:14** *But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.*

“After his own heart” is *kilvavo*, “according to His heart,” God’s heart. David is the man after God’s heart. Nabal, on the written consonants, is the man after his own heart. The two Hebrew words are spelled differently (*lev* and *levav* are two forms of “heart”), so this cannot be pressed. But the sound and sense lie close together.

In short: “of the house of Caleb” can be heard as Calebite, as dog-like, and as “a law to his own heart,” and each fits the man.

Weighing it: Direct statement that he was a Calebite; reasonable inference that a play on “dog” is intended; corroboration only for the “own heart” contrast with 13:14 — bears on Claim B. The marked reading “Calebite” is the text. The early translators’ “dog-like” shows that ancient Jewish readers heard the wordplay, which makes it a reasonable inference. The contrast with David as the man after God’s heart is attractive but rests on two different spellings, so it is corroboration only. The other reading can fairly answer that the phrase is a simple clan note and the rest is the reader’s ingenuity.

Churlish, evil, and a son of Belial

Verse 3 sets Abigail and Nabal side by side, and the *Companion Bible* points out that the four lines of the verse are arranged as an introversion (a mirror pattern): Nabal, Abigail, Abigail, Nabal. Abigail is in the middle, framed by her husband on either side.

She was **“a woman of good understanding”**. He was **“churlish and evil in his doings”**. “Churlish” is *qasheh* (H7186), “hard, severe, harsh,” the word used of the “stiffnecked” people in the wilderness. “Evil in his doings” is *ra’ ma’alalim*, wicked in his deeds. His servant says the worst thing of all:

> **1 Samuel 25:17** *Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.*

"Son of Belial" (H1100) means "son of worthlessness," a good-for-nothing. The phrase is used of the corrupt sons of Eli, who **"knew not the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:12)**, of men who lead Israel into idolatry (Deuteronomy 13:13), and, tellingly, of the troublemakers who despised Saul at his first anointing:

> **1 Samuel 10:27** *But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.*

Then the sons of Belial despised the newly anointed king and "brought him no presents." Now a son of Belial despises the newly anointed king-in-waiting and refuses him any gift. Saul held his peace. David did not, at first.

Paul later uses the same name: **"what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Corinthians 6:15)**.

In short: Nabal was hard, wicked, and so worthless that his own servants could not speak to him; he treated David the way the sons of Belial once treated Saul.

Weighing it: Direct statement on Nabal's character; reasonable inference on the echo of 10:27. Verses 3 and 17 state his character. The echo of 1 Samuel 10:27, the only other place in 1 Samuel where sons of Belial refuse a gift to the LORD's anointed, is close in both wording and situation, which makes it a reasonable inference that the reader is meant to notice. The other reading can fairly answer that refusing gifts to a leader is common enough to repeat by chance.

The fool in the rest of Scripture

Scripture draws a portrait of the *nabal* in other places, and it fits Nabal so closely that it reads like a description of him.

> **Isaiah 32:5** *The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.*
>
> **Isaiah 32:6** *For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.*
>
> **Isaiah 32:7** *The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.*
>
> **Isaiah 32:8** *But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.*

"The vile person" in verses 5 and 6 is *nabal*. Isaiah says the *nabal* "will make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail." That is exactly what Nabal did. He refused bread and water to six hundred hungry men in the desert. And he is set against "the liberal," the generous man, who "deviseth liberal things."

Proverbs adds a picture of the fool at his feast: one of the things the earth cannot bear is **"a fool when he is filled with meat" (Proverbs 30:22)**, where "fool" is again *nabal*. And Jeremiah describes the rich man who gets his wealth unjustly:

> **Jeremiah 17:11** *As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.*

"A fool" at the end of that verse is *nabal*. When David mourned Abner, he asked, **"Died Abner as a fool dieth?" (2 Samuel 3:33)**, as if the *nabal*'s death were a known kind of death: sudden, shameful, and deserved.

The Lord Jesus told a parable about such a man, the rich farmer who said, "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," to whom God said, **"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20)**. Nabal held his drinking feast, and within ten days his flocks, his house and his wife passed to another.

In short: Isaiah, Proverbs and Jeremiah all describe the *nabal*, and Nabal of Carmel fits every line.

Weighing it: Corroboration only. These passages use the same Hebrew word and describe the same kind of man, but they do not refer to Nabal of Carmel. They show that the writer of 1 Samuel chose a name loaded with meaning in Israel's language. The other reading can fairly answer that they illustrate the type, not this man, and the study agrees.

Nabal's answer

> **1 Samuel 25:10** *And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:11** *Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?*

Nabal answers in two sentences, and both are insults.

"Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse?" — Nabal knew perfectly well who David was. The women of Israel sang of him (18:7). Even the Philistines called him "the king of the land" (21:11). The question is contempt, the same kind Gaal used of Abimelech ("Who is Abimelech … that we should serve him?" Judges 9:28) and that Sheba the son of Bichri, another "man of Belial," would later use of David himself: **"We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse" (2 Samuel 20:1)**. "The son of Jesse" was Saul's sneering name for David (1 Samuel 20:27, 30-31; 22:7-9, 13). Nabal speaks Saul's language.

"There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master." — The Hebrew *mitparetsim* means "breaking out" or "bursting away." Nabal calls David a runaway slave. That was Saul's accusation too: that his son had **"stirred up my servant against me" (1 Samuel 22:8)**.

"My bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers." — In Hebrew the second sentence refers to Nabal himself eight times: *I* take, *my* bread, *my* water, *my* meat, *I* slaughtered, *my* shearers, *I* give, *I* do not know. Nothing in it is God's. The man of Psalm 14 who says in his heart "there is no God" says in his speech "it is all mine." (The Septuagint reads "my wine" in place of "my water," which fits the drinking feast that follows.)

"Men, whom I know not whence they be." — His own shepherds had lived beside these men for months.

In short: Nabal spoke Saul's contempt, called the anointed king a runaway slave, and claimed everything as his own.

Weighing it: Direct statement on what Nabal said; reasonable inference that his words deliberately echo Saul's — bears on Claim B. Nabal's words are stated. That "son of Jesse" and "break away … from

his master" echo Saul's own words is visible in the text, and it supports reading Nabal as Saul's double. The other reading can fairly answer that any of David's enemies might naturally speak this way, so the echo shows a shared attitude rather than a deliberate literary design.

The wineskin

Hebrew has a word that sounds very like Nabal's name: *nebel* (H5035), "a skin-bag for liquids" (Strong's), "from collapsing when empty," a wine-skin or wine-jar. The writer seems to play on it in two places.

- When Abigail prepares her gift, she takes **"two bottles of wine" (1 Samuel 25:18)**. The Hebrew is *shenei nivlei yayin*, "two *nebels* of wine." She brings to David what Nabal should have given, in containers that carry his name.
- When Nabal wakes from his drinking, the writer says **"when the wine was gone out of Nabal" (1 Samuel 25:37)**. The wine-skin has been emptied. A *nebel*, Strong's notes, is so named because it collapses when empty. And Nabal collapses: **"his heart died within him, and he became as a stone"**.

The man named "Fool" was a skin full of wine, and when the wine was gone there was nothing left in him.

In short: Nabal's name sounds like "wine-skin," and the writer shows him filled with wine and then emptied.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference. The two words share the same consonants, and the writer uses the rarer word for the wine-skins in verse 18 and describes the wine "going out of Nabal" in verse 37. Hebrew writers often use such wordplay, and two uses in one chapter make it a reasonable inference that this one is intended. The other reading can fairly answer that *nebel* is an ordinary word for a wine container and may have been chosen for no other reason.

A mirror of Saul

When the pieces are set side by side, Nabal looks remarkably like Saul.

Nabal in 1 Samuel 25	Saul elsewhere in 1 Samuel
"Who is … the son of Jesse?" (25:10)	"the son of Jesse" (20:27, 30-31; 22:7-9, 13)
David a servant who has broken away (25:10)	"my son hath stirred up my servant against me" (22:8)
Holds "a feast … like the feast of a king" (25:36)	The king's feast where Saul raged at Jonathan over David (20:24-34)
"He hath requited me evil for good" (25:21)	"thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (24:17)
His name means "fool" (25:25)	"Thou hast done foolishly" (13:13); "I have played the fool" (26:21)
"The LORD smote Nabal, that he died" (25:38)	"the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die" (26:10)
Lives near Carmel, where his hard heart is shown	Raised his monument at Carmel on the campaign that cost him the kingdom (15:12)

The words “evil for good” are almost identical in the Hebrew of 24:17 and 25:21: in both, good (*tovah*) is answered by evil (*ra’ah*). And the verb “smote” in 25:38 (*nagaph*) is the very verb David uses of Saul a chapter later in 26:10. The words for “foolishly” in 13:13 and “played the fool” in 26:21 come from a different Hebrew root (*sakal*), not *nabal*, so that point is in sense only.

What is the purpose of the likeness? In chapter 25, David is tempted to do to Saul’s double what he refused to do to Saul. Nabal is Saul in small: another proud, rich, ungrateful man who returns evil for good. He is not the LORD’s anointed, so David may think the restraint of chapter 24 does not apply. Abigail shows him it does. Vengeance belongs to the LORD whether the offender is a king or a sheep-farmer.

In short: Nabal is drawn as Saul in small, so that David’s restraint toward Saul is tested on a man who seems to deserve no restraint at all.

Weighing it: Strong inference for Claim B. Six of the seven links rest on shared or near-shared Hebrew wording, and they cluster in the chapters on either side of chapter 25. That makes it a strong inference that the likeness is intended. The other reading can fairly answer that ungrateful, arrogant rich men will always resemble one another, and that the “fool” link is in sense only. Even granting that, the shared words “evil for good” and “smite” are hard to explain as chance.

In Short

Nabal’s name means “fool,” the man of Psalm 14 who lives as if there were no God. The phrase “of the house of Caleb” can be heard as “dog-like” and as “a law to his own heart.” His servants called him a son of Belial, and he treated David the way the sons of Belial once treated Saul. Isaiah’s portrait of the *nabal*, who empties the hungry and withholds drink from the thirsty, fits him exactly. His answer speaks Saul’s language, and the writer plays on his name as an emptied wine-skin. Line by line he is drawn as a mirror of Saul.

Chapter 5: “Him That Pisseth Against the Wall” — David’s Oath

Swords, three times

> **1 Samuel 25:12** *So David’s young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:13** *And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.*

The verse repeats the word “sword” three times. David orders every man to gird on his sword, every man does, and David girds on his own. The repetition slows the reader down. This is not a quick flash of temper; it is a deliberate arming for slaughter.

Set it beside the day David killed Goliath. Then he told the giant, **“the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’s” (1 Samuel 17:47)**, and the writer added, **“there was no sword in the hand of David” (1 Samuel 17:50)**. The Hebrew for “saveth” in 17:47 is *yehoshia’*, from *yasha’*, “to save,

deliver." Hold onto that word. Abigail will use it three times (Chapter 7). On the day of Goliath David trusted the LORD to save without a sword. Now he straps on a sword to save himself.

The *Companion Bible* notes that the two hundred who stayed "by the stuff" (the baggage) were not left behind as cowards. After the battle at Ziklag David would make it a law in Israel that **"as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff" (1 Samuel 30:24)**.

In short: David armed four hundred men with the deliberate triple girding of the sword, on the road away from the faith that once said "the LORD saveth not with sword."

Weighing it: Direct statement on the arming; reasonable inference on the contrast with chapter 17 — bears on Claim B. The triple "sword" is in the text, and the contrast with 17:47 and 17:50 rests on the same verb and the same word. That the writer intends the contrast is a reasonable inference. The other reading can fairly answer that soldiers going to fight naturally take swords and that the repetition is ordinary Hebrew style.

The oath

On the way, David speaks:

> **1 Samuel 25:21** *Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:22** *So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.*

"So and more also do God unto …" is the form of a solemn oath with a curse attached, used by Ruth (Ruth 1:17), by Eli (1 Samuel 3:17), by Saul (14:44) and by Jonathan (20:13). The speaker calls on God to do something terrible to him, "and more also," if he fails to keep his word. David swears that by morning he will not leave one male of Nabal's household alive.

The *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* says bluntly: "Nothing can justify this conduct of David, which was rash, unjust, and cruel in the extreme. David himself condemns it, and thanks God for being prevented from executing this evil." That is right. Nabal had insulted David; Nabal's shepherds, servants and sons had done nothing. David was about to kill the very shepherds his men had protected.

In short: David swore by God to kill every male in Nabal's household by morning, the guilty and the innocent together.

Weighing it: Direct statement. The oath is recorded in David's own words, and David himself later confirms he meant it (25:34). Its injustice is the plain judgment of the chapter, since David blesses God for being kept from it (25:32-33). Nothing here is in dispute.

What "him that pisseth against the wall" means

מַשְׁתִּין בְּקִיר

The phrase in Hebrew is *mashtin beqir*: *mashtin*, "one who urinates" (from *shathan*, H8366, used only in this phrase), and *beqir*, "against a wall" (*qir*, H7023, the ordinary wall of a house or building). The King James translators rendered it literally, and to modern ears it sounds crude. It was meant to.

It occurs six times in the Old Testament, and every time it appears in the same setting: the wiping out of a whole family line.

- **David's oath against Nabal**, twice (1 Samuel 25:22, 34).
- **God's judgment on Jeroboam's house:**

> **1 Kings 14:10** *Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.*

- **Zimri's slaughter of Baasha's house: "he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends" (1 Kings 16:11)**.
- **God's judgment on Ahab's house**, through Elijah and again through Elisha's messenger (1 Kings 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8).

In every case it means "every male," down to the smallest boy, so that no heir is left to carry on the family name. The *Treasury* says the phrase "may with the utmost propriety be read 'any male,'" and the *Companion Bible*'s note on verse 22 is simply "any male."

Jewish commentators read it the same way, with a sharper edge. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak, about A.D. 1200) explains it "as our Sages explained: even the dog, whose way is to urinate on a wall." On that reading David was saying, "I will not leave so much as a dog." Kimchi also records that the ancient Aramaic paraphrase called Targum Jonathan rendered it "one who knows knowledge," meaning any male old enough to have understanding.

So the phrase is a deliberately coarse, contemptuous way of saying "every male, down to the last." It belongs to the language of curses and blood-feud. Its very crudeness shows how far David's rage had carried him: the man who wrote psalms was talking like the men who wiped out Jeroboam's house.

In short: "him that pisseth against the wall" is a coarse Hebrew curse-formula meaning every male, used only when a whole family line is to be destroyed.

Weighing it: Strong inference for Claim C. All six uses are in curse or extermination settings where "every male" is required by the context, and the older Jewish and Christian commentators agree. The other reading can fairly note Kimchi's alternative ("even the dog"); but that is a sharpening of the same meaning, not a different one, since its point is still that nothing male would be left.

Is the wall the face of God?

A careful reader might ask whether the wall here stands for something more, perhaps even the face of God. It is a fair question to ask of a strange phrase, and there are real passages that might suggest it.

- **Hezekiah turned his face to the wall to pray.** When Isaiah told Hezekiah he would die, **"Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD" (Isaiah 38:2)**; also 2 Kings 20:2. The Hebrew word is *qir*, the same word as in "pisseth against the *qir*." So a man could face a wall in prayer.
- **God calls Himself a wall. "I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zechariah 2:5)**.
- **In later Jewish practice**, the Western Wall in Jerusalem became a place of prayer, and it is still called simply "the Wall."

So the idea is not foolish. But when each point is tested, none of them reaches 1 Samuel 25:22.

1. **Hezekiah faced the wall; he did not treat it as God.** He turned to the wall for privacy, turning his back on the room, and "prayed unto the LORD." The wall was where he looked, not to whom he prayed. Nothing in Isaiah 38 or 2 Kings 20 calls the wall God's face.
2. **When God is called a wall, the word is different.** Zechariah 2:5 uses *chomah*, the protective wall around a city, not *qir*. The same is true of 1 Samuel 25:16, where David's men were "a wall" to the shepherds. The *qir* of the curse-formula is never used of God.
3. **The face of God has its own word.** Scripture speaks of God's face constantly, with the word *panim* ("face, presence"): **"The LORD make his face shine upon thee" (Numbers 6:25)**. It never uses *qir* for God's face.
4. **The setting rules it out.** All six uses are in curses that destroy a family line. If the wall were God's face, the phrase would mean "everyone who defiles God's face," and God Himself uses the phrase of the males of Jeroboam's and Ahab's houses, including infants (1 Kings 14:10; 21:21). The phrase marks out who is to die, not what they have done against God.
5. **The Western Wall is far too late.** It is the retaining wall of Herod's temple platform, built about a thousand years after David. It cannot explain a phrase David used.

What the phrase does show, set against verse 16, is a sharp and painful contrast in the English. David's men had been "a wall" (*chomah*) of protection around Nabal's household by night and day. Now David swears to kill every male who "pisseth against the wall" (*qir*). The two Hebrew words are different, so the writer may not have intended a pun. But the turn is real: the protector was about to become the destroyer of the very people he had protected.

In short: the wall in this phrase is an ordinary house wall, not the face of God; what it does show is the protector of verse 16 turning into a destroyer.

Weighing it: Strong inference for Claim C — against the "face of God" reading. The phrase's six uses, the different words for God's face and for God as a wall, and the curse setting all point the same way. The other reading can fairly answer that Isaiah 38:2 does link the *qir* with prayer, and that is true; but turning to face a wall in prayer does not make the wall God's face, and Isaiah never says it does. The contrast between the two walls of verses 16 and 22 is a reasonable observation, not a wordplay the Hebrew requires.

"Unto the enemies of David"

There is one more puzzle in the oath. David says, **"So and more also do God unto the enemies of David" (1 Samuel 25:22)**. But that is not how an oath works. The speaker calls the curse down on himself if he fails: "God do so to *me*, and more also." Why would David call the curse down on his enemies?

The Septuagint has the expected form: "So may God do to David, and more also." Many scholars think the Septuagint preserves what David actually said, and that a later Hebrew scribe, uncomfortable with David calling a curse on himself over an oath he did not keep, inserted "the enemies of" to soften it. Rabbi David Kimchi saw it the same way centuries ago: "To the enemies of David — it is a euphemism (*kinnui*) for David."

There is a parallel elsewhere. When Jonathan made his covenant with David, the text reads, **"Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies" (1 Samuel 20:16)**, and many scholars see the same softening there. And when Nathan rebuked David after Uriah, he said David had given **"great**

occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" (2 Samuel 12:14); many scholars, Jewish and Christian, think that "the enemies of" there too was added out of reverence, so that the text would not say David despised the LORD Himself.

Notice that when David repeats the oath later, after Abigail has stopped him, he does not curse anyone: **"surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall" (1 Samuel 25:34)**. If the original oath in verse 22 called a curse on David, then David was released from it by God's intervention through Abigail, and a later scribe, reading that David had sworn and not done it, softened the words.

In short: "the enemies of David" is very likely a scribe's softening of "David," so that David would not appear to have called a curse on himself and then broken his oath.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference for Claim D. The Septuagint reading "to David," the normal form of the oath, Kimchi's comment, and parallels where "enemies of" appears to soften a statement all point the same way. But the received Hebrew text says "the enemies of David," and it is the text the KJV faithfully translates. The other reading can fairly answer that David may have used a softened form himself, as a man might say "may it go ill with my enemies" rather than name himself. Either way the meaning is the same: David swore a solemn oath to destroy every male.

About to become Saul

There is a darker comparison still. Only three chapters earlier, Saul had learned that the priests of Nob had given David bread and a sword. Saul's response was to order the slaughter of the whole town:

> **1 Samuel 22:19** *And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.*

Saul killed the innocent people of a whole town over what he took as disloyalty and a gift of bread to David. Now David was about to kill the innocent males of a whole household because bread was refused to him. The man fleeing from Saul was riding out to do what Saul did.

In short: David was riding out to do to Nabal's household exactly what Saul had done to Nob.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference for Claim B. Both events are stated, and both involve a leader's rage over bread given or withheld, ending in the slaughter of the innocent. That the writer intends the reader to recall Nob is a reasonable inference, not a statement. The other reading can fairly answer that blood-feud slaughter was common in that world and needs no literary link to explain it. Even so, the comparison shows how close David came to becoming what he was fleeing.

In Short

David armed four hundred men, swords girded three times over, and swore by God to leave no male of Nabal's household alive. "Him that pisseth against the wall" is a coarse Hebrew curse-formula meaning every male, always used when a whole family line is to be destroyed. The wall is an ordinary house wall, not the face of God. The words "the enemies of David" are very likely a scribe's softening of an oath in which David called the curse on himself. The protector of Nabal's shepherds was about to become their destroyer, and David was about to do what Saul did at Nob.

Chapter 6: A Woman of Good Understanding

Her name and her character

Abigail's name, *Avigayil* (Strong's H26), means "my father is joy," or as Strong's puts it, "father (i.e. source) of joy." She is introduced in one balanced line: **"she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance" (1 Samuel 25:3)**.

"Good understanding" is *tovat sekhel*. *Sekhel* (H7922) is the insight that sees what to do and does it successfully; Strong's gives "intelligence; by implication, success," and the KJV elsewhere renders it "discretion," "prudence," "wisdom." The same phrase *sekhel tov* appears in Proverbs: **"So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man" (Proverbs 3:4)**. Abigail is the wise woman of Proverbs come to life: **"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Proverbs 31:26)**, and **"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands" (Proverbs 14:1)**. Nabal, by his folly, was pulling his house down. Abigail saved it.

"A beautiful countenance" is *yefat to'ar*, "beautiful of form," the same words used of Rachel (**"Rachel was beautiful and well favoured" (Genesis 29:17)**) and of Esther (**"the maid was fair and beautiful" (Esther 2:7)**). But the writer puts her understanding first. Her beauty is mentioned; her wisdom is what the story is about. **"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30)**.

In short: Abigail, "father of joy," was the wise woman of Proverbs, with understanding first and beauty second.

Weighing it: Direct statement. Her name and character are stated in verse 3. The links to Proverbs share the same Hebrew phrase (*sekhel tov*) and illustrate rather than prove. The other reading has nothing to answer here; this is the text's own description of her.

The young man's report

> **1 Samuel 25:14** *But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.*

One of Nabal's young men brings the news to Abigail, not to Nabal. That tells us a good deal about the household. The servants knew that their master could not be reasoned with, **"he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (1 Samuel 25:17)**, and they knew who could.

"He railed on them" is the Hebrew *vayya'at bahem* (from *'it*, H5860, "to swoop down upon"), "he flew at them," as a bird of prey swoops on its quarry. The *Companion Bible* renders it "flew at them, or stormed at them." The same verb is used of Saul and his people when they **"didst fly upon the spoil" (1 Samuel 15:19)**; see also 14:32. Once more, Nabal behaves as Saul did.

The young man then gives Abigail the testimony we looked at in Chapter 3: David's men had been "very good unto us" and "a wall unto us both by night and day." And he ends:

> **1 Samuel 25:17** *Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.*

"Evil is determined" is *kaletah hara'ah*, "the evil is settled, decided, finished." It is exactly the phrase Jonathan used of his father Saul's intention to kill David: **"then be sure that evil is determined by him" (1 Samuel 20:7)**, and again in 20:9. The young man does not know the details of David's oath (that was spoken on the road, 25:21-22), but he knows David well enough, and Nabal well enough, to know that the outcome is settled unless someone acts.

"Know and consider what thou wilt do" is a call for her judgment. He does not tell her what to do. He trusts her to see it.

In short: Nabal's own servant went to Abigail, told her the whole story, and trusted her judgment to save the house.

Weighing it: Direct statement — and the starting point for weighing Claim A. That the servant told Abigail of Nabal's insult and of David's protection is stated. This matters for Claim A: whatever Abigail later says about the insult, the protection and the danger, she could have learned from this report. The other reading, that she knew everything she said by ordinary means, rightly starts here. Chapter 8 weighs what she says beyond it.

The gift

> **1 Samuel 25:18** *Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:19** *And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.*

Abigail "made haste." The verb *mahar*, "to hurry," appears again in verse 23 ("she hasted"), verse 34 ("thou hadst hasted") and verse 42 ("Abigail hasted"). She moves quickly, because there is no time.

The list is joined by "and" again and again. The *Companion Bible* points out the figure called polysyndeton (many "ands"): "and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep … and five measures … and an hundred clusters … and two hundred cakes." Bullinger says it emphasises "Abigail's thought and care, as well as rapidity." Each item is counted out.

It was a generous gift, but not an extravagant one. Two hundred loaves of bread; two wine-skins; five sheep already dressed for cooking; five measures (*se'ah*) of roasted grain; a hundred clusters of raisins; two hundred cakes of pressed figs. This was food for a band of men, easy to carry and ready to eat. The *Treasury* notes it was "a matter of little worth" to so rich a man, and "had it been granted in the first instance, it would have perfectly satisfied David." Compare what Ziba brought David when he fled from Absalom: **"two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine" (2 Samuel 16:1)**, and what Barzillai and his friends brought because **"The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness" (2 Samuel 17:29)**.

The two wine-skins are *nevalim*. As Chapter 4 showed, the word for wine-skin sounds like Nabal's name. She brings what Nabal should have given.

She sends the gift on ahead. "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." Here the writer of 1 Samuel echoes, word for word, a famous scene in Genesis. When Jacob went to meet his brother Esau, who was coming against him **"and four hundred men with him" (Genesis 32:6)**, Jacob sent gifts ahead and told his servants:

> **Genesis 32:16** *And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.*
>
> **Genesis 32:20** *And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.*

The Hebrew "Pass over before me" in Genesis 32:16 and "Go on before me" in 1 Samuel 25:19 are the same two words, *ivru lefanai*. Esau came with four hundred men; David came with four hundred men. Jacob sent a present ahead to "appease" him and followed behind it; so did Abigail. Jacob **"bowed himself to the ground seven times" (Genesis 33:3)**; Abigail **"fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground" (1 Samuel 25:23)**. Jacob called his gift **"my blessing that is brought to thee" (Genesis 33:11)**; Abigail calls hers **"this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought" (1 Samuel 25:27)**. And Jacob hoped, **"peradventure he will accept of me"**, which in Hebrew is "perhaps he will lift up my face"; David's answer to Abigail, "I have accepted thy person" (25:35), is the same idiom, "I have lifted up thy face."

In both stories an angry man with four hundred men is turned from vengeance by humility and a gift sent ahead. The writer of 1 Samuel seems to have shaped his account so that readers who knew Genesis would hear it.

In short: Abigail hurried, counted out a careful gift, and sent it ahead exactly as Jacob did when Esau came with four hundred men.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the gift; strong inference that the Jacob–Esau scene is deliberately echoed. The gift is listed in the text. The echo of Genesis 32–33 rests on six shared points: four hundred men, the same Hebrew command *ivru lefanai*, a gift sent ahead with the giver following, bowing to the ground, the gift called a "blessing," and the "lifting up of the face." That many points together make it a strong inference. The other reading can fairly answer that anyone placating an angry man would send a gift ahead and bow; but the identical two-word command and the four hundred men are hard to put down to chance.

"She told not her husband"

The last words of verse 19 have troubled some readers: **"But she told not her husband Nabal."** Scripture elsewhere tells wives to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1). Was Abigail wrong to act behind Nabal's back?

That is a fair question. Here is how Scripture itself weighs it.

- **Lives were at stake.** Every male in the household would be dead by morning (25:22). When Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the Hebrew boys, **"the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive" (Exodus 1:17)**, and God blessed them for it. The apostles later stated the principle: **"We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)**.
- **Telling Nabal would have been useless.** His own servant said "a man cannot speak to him" (25:17). And when Abigail came home that night, Nabal was **"very drunken" (25:36)**.

- **She acted for her husband, not against him.** She saved Nabal's own life. She did not take his goods for herself; she took what he should have given. **"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:12)**.
- **She told him afterward.** In the morning, when he was sober, **"his wife had told him these things" (25:37)**. She did not deceive him; she waited until he could hear.
- **David and God approve her.** David blesses God for sending her and blesses her advice (25:32-33). The story never criticizes her.

In short: Abigail acted without telling her drunken, unreasonable husband in order to save his life and his household, and she told him plainly the next morning.

Weighing it: Strong inference that she acted rightly. No verse says "Abigail did right not to tell him," but the narrator's approval, David's blessing, the principle of Exodus 1:17 and Acts 5:29, and the fact that she told Nabal the next morning all point the same way. The other reading can fairly stress that a wife's normal course is to honour her husband, and this study agrees; the case here is an emergency where obeying him would have meant the death of many.

Under the cover of the hill

> **1 Samuel 25:20** *And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.*

"The covert of the hill" is *beseter hahar*, "in the hidden part of the mountain," a fold or ravine that hid her from view. The *Treasury* explains: "David was coming down mount Paran; Abigail was coming down from Carmel." Both were descending into the same valley from opposite sides, and neither could see the other until they met. *Seter*, "hidden place, covert," is the word of **"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" (Psalm 91:1)** and **"Thou art my hiding place" (Psalm 32:7)**.

If she had been an hour later, David would have reached Carmel. If she had taken another path, she would have missed him. She met him exactly where she needed to, on his way, before the deed was done. David's first words to her would be, **"Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me" (1 Samuel 25:32)**.

In short: God brought Abigail and David face to face in a hidden fold of the hill, before David reached Carmel.

Weighing it: Narrative — with David's own verdict that God arranged the meeting. The meeting is stated. That God sent her is stated by David in verse 32. The use of *seter* in the Psalms is a word-echo only and is not leaned on. The other reading can fairly say that the timing is ordinary providence, not a miracle, and the study agrees; that is exactly how Scripture usually describes God's guiding hand.

In Short

Abigail, whose name means "my father is joy," was a woman of good understanding. Her husband's servant went to her, not to him, with the news. She hurried, counted out a careful gift, and sent it ahead of her exactly as Jacob did when Esau came against him with four hundred men. She did not tell her drunken, unreasonable husband, but acted to save his life and told him the next morning. God brought her to David in a hidden fold of the hill, before the killing began.

Chapter 7: Abigail's Words, Verse by Verse

Abigail's speech runs from verse 24 to verse 31. In it she calls David "my lord" fourteen times and herself "thine handmaid" six times, and she names the LORD seven times. She never once argues that Nabal deserved better. Every line points David away from Nabal and toward the LORD and David's own future.

"Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be" (verses 23-25)

> **1 Samuel 25:23** *And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:24** *And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:25** *Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.*

She takes the blame on herself. "Upon me, my lord, upon me" is in Hebrew *bi ani adoni he'avon*, "on me, me, my lord, be the iniquity." She did nothing wrong, yet she asks that the guilt fall on her. She does what Judah did when he offered himself as a slave in place of Benjamin, **"let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord" (Genesis 44:33)**. Another wise woman later used almost the same words to King David: **"My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne be guiltless" (2 Samuel 14:9)**. By taking the guilt on herself she gives David a way to stop without losing face. It is no longer a matter of David and Nabal; it is a matter of David and a woman pleading at his feet.

She asks to be heard. "Let thine handmaid … speak in thine audience" is literally "in thine ears." The *Companion Bible* marks the word "iniquity" as *'avon*, the word for perverseness or iniquity.

She dismisses Nabal. "Let not my lord … regard this man of Belial," literally "let not my lord set his heart upon" him. Don't give him the honour of your anger. "As his name is, so is he." He is a fool; what a fool says is not worth a king's revenge. Proverbs gives the same counsel: **"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him" (Proverbs 26:4)**.

She separates herself from the insult. "I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send." If she had been there, she implies, they would have been answered differently.

In short: Abigail took the guilt on herself, asked to be heard, told David a fool's words were beneath his notice, and made clear she had no part in the insult.

Weighing it: Direct statement. These are her words as recorded. The parallels with Genesis 44:33 and 2 Samuel 14:9 share the same idea and, in 2 Samuel 14:9, nearly the same Hebrew ("on me … the iniquity"), and they illustrate a known way of pleading in Israel. Nothing here needs revelation; this is wisdom and humility. It bears on Claim A only to show what she could say by ordinary understanding.

"The LORD hath withholden thee" (verse 26)

> **1 Samuel 25:26** *Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.*

She swears by the LORD's life and by David's. "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth" is a double oath, the same form Jonathan and David used (1 Samuel 20:3).

She speaks as if it were already done. "The LORD hath withholden thee." David had not yet turned back. He was still on the road with four hundred armed men and an oath on his lips. Yet Abigail speaks of his restraint as an accomplished fact, done by the LORD. Either she is speaking with great confidence that her plea will succeed, or she is speaking as a prophet speaks, of what God will certainly do as though it were already done.

"From coming to shed blood." The Hebrew is *mibbo' bedamim*, literally "from coming into bloods," which the *Companion Bible* renders "wading in blood (as we say)." The plural "bloods" in Hebrew often means bloodshed or bloodguilt.

"From avenging thyself with thine own hand." Here is the key phrase of the whole chapter. The Hebrew is *vehoshea' yadkha lakh*, literally "and thy hand saving thee," or "and saving thyself by thine own hand." The *Companion Bible*'s note is simply "avenging = saving." The verb is *yasha'*, "to save, deliver," the root of the name Joshua and, in Greek form, of the name Jesus. It is the verb David used before Goliath, **"the LORD saveth not with sword and spear" (1 Samuel 17:47)**. And it is the verb of the famous warning God gave Gideon:

> **Judges 7:2** *And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.*

"Mine own hand hath saved me" is *yadi hoshi'ah li*. Abigail's phrase in verse 26 and David's in verse 33 (*hoshea' yadi li*, "saving myself with mine own hand") are nearly the same words. God cut Gideon's army down to three hundred so that Israel could never say their own hand had saved them. Abigail tells David the LORD is keeping him from doing exactly that.

Abigail uses the phrase three times in her short speech, in verses 26 and 31, and David repeats it in verse 33. It is the heart of the chapter.

"Now let thine enemies … be as Nabal." She says this before Nabal has died, while he is still feasting at home. At its plainest it means: let your enemies be as foolish and as powerless as Nabal, men whose words cannot touch you. But looked at after verse 38, it means more: let them end as Nabal is about to end. Whether Abigail knew that is weighed in Chapter 8.

In short: Abigail spoke of David's restraint as already done by the LORD, and named the real danger: David saving himself with his own hand, the very thing God would not let Gideon's army claim.

Weighing it: Direct statement on her words; strong inference on the link with Judges 7:2; reasonable inference that she speaks prophetically of what God will do — bears on Claim A. Her words are stated. The link with Judges 7:2 rests on almost identical Hebrew and is a strong inference. That "the LORD hath withholden thee" is prophetic rather than confident is a reasonable inference, not a statement. The other reading can fairly answer that a pleading woman might speak of the outcome she hopes for as though it were certain, without any revelation at all.

"A sure house" (verses 27-28)

> **1 Samuel 25:27** *And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.*

> **1 Samuel 25:28** *I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.*

“This blessing which thine handmaid hath brought.” “Blessing” here means “present,” as when Jacob said to Esau, “Take, I pray thee, my blessing” (Genesis 33:11). Bullinger lists both in *Figures of Speech* as a name for the gift that carries good wishes. The *Companion Bible* adds a detail that is easy to miss: in the Hebrew of verse 27 the verb “hath brought” (*hevi*) is masculine, though Abigail is the subject. Bullinger notes that Hebrew sometimes does this “when women act in masculine way.” She is doing what the head of the household should have done.

“Let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.” Literally “that walk at the feet of my lord.” She does not presume to offer common food to David himself. It is for his men.

“Forgive the trespass of thine handmaid.” Again she takes the fault on herself. “Trespass” is *pesha’*, rebellion or offence.

“For the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house.” This is the most remarkable sentence in the speech.

בַּיִת נֶאֱמָן

“Will certainly make” is *’asoh ya’aseh*, the Hebrew way of doubling a verb for emphasis: “making He will make.” “A sure house” is *bayit ne’eman*, “a faithful house, a house that stands firm,” a lasting dynasty. The phrase is rare. Apart from Abigail’s words it appears only twice in the Old Testament, and both times God is the one promising it. And the closely matching words of God’s covenant with David make a third:

- To the faithful priest who would replace Eli’s line: **“I will build him a sure house” (1 Samuel 2:35)**.
- To David himself, in the great promise of 2 Samuel 7. Nathan tells David, **“the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house” (2 Samuel 7:11)**, using the same verb *’asah*, “make,” with “house.” Then: **“thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee” (2 Samuel 7:16)**, where “shall be established” is *ne’man*, the same word as Abigail’s “sure.”
- To Jeroboam, conditionally: **“I will … build thee a sure house, as I built for David” (1 Kings 11:38)**.

So Abigail, years before God spoke His covenant to David through Nathan, used the very words God would use in it. She did not just say David would be king. Saul and Jonathan had said that. She said the LORD would make him a lasting house, a dynasty that would stand.

“Because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD.” This is the phrase Saul once used when he sent David out hoping the Philistines would kill him: **“be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD’s battles” (1 Samuel 18:17)**. What Saul said in deceit, Abigail says in truth. David’s battles are the LORD’s battles, not private quarrels with men like Nabal.

“And evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.” David’s record was clean. He had refused to touch Saul. Don’t stain that record now.

In short: Abigail promised David, in God’s own covenant words, a “sure house” that the LORD would make, years before God spoke that covenant through Nathan.

Weighing it: Strong inference that Abigail's words anticipate the Davidic covenant — bears on Claim A. That she said "a sure house" is stated. That the phrase is God's own promise language, and reappears in 2 Samuel 7 with the same verb and the same word for "sure," is visible in the Hebrew, so the link is a strong inference. The other reading can fairly answer that "a sure house" was already known as a phrase from 1 Samuel 2:35, and a wise woman who knew David would be king might naturally wish him a lasting dynasty. That answer is weighed in Chapter 8.

"The bundle of life" and the sling (verse 29)

> **1 Samuel 25:29** *Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.*

"A man is risen to pursue thee." She does not name Saul. She calls him simply *'adam*, "a man," a mere human being. It is tactful, and it is also a quiet contrast with "the LORD thy God" a few words later. A man pursues; God keeps.

צְרוֹר הַחַיִּים

"Bound in the bundle of life." "Bundle" is *tseror* (H6872), a bag or pouch tied up to keep something precious from being lost. It is the word for the "bundle of money" each of Joseph's brothers found in his sack (Genesis 42:35), and Job says **"My transgression is sealed up in a bag" (Job 14:17)**, the same word. A shepherd or traveller tied up his valuables in such a bundle and kept them on his person. Abigail says David's life is tied up in God's own bundle, kept safe "with the LORD thy God." This phrase became so beloved in Israel that for many centuries Jewish gravestones have carried the five Hebrew letters that abbreviate "May his soul be bound in the bundle of life," taken from this verse.

Strong's adds that *tseror* can also mean "a small stone," and it is used that way in 2 Samuel 17:13 ("until there be not one small stone found there"). The *Companion Bible* sees the picture of a shepherd's bag of stones: "bundle of life = bag … of the living," and "sling out: i.e. like the stones in David's sling." The shepherd keeps some stones safe in his bag and slings others away.

"The souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling." "Sling" is *qela'* (H7050), and the verb "sling out" is *qala'*, the very words of chapter 17: David took **"his sling … in his hand"**, **"took thence a stone, and slang it"**, and **"prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone" (1 Samuel 17:40, 49-50)**. "The middle of a sling" is literally "the hollow (*kaf*, palm) of the sling," the pouch where the stone sits before it is released. Every Israelite knew that David had killed Goliath with a sling. Abigail tells him God will deal with his enemies the way David dealt with Goliath. He does not need his sword; the LORD is the slinger.

In short: Abigail told David his life was tied up safe in God's own bundle, and that God would sling his enemies away as David once slung the stone at Goliath.

Weighing it: Direct statement on her words; strong inference that the sling recalls Goliath; corroboration only on the "small stone" link. The words are stated, and the sling vocabulary is the same as chapter 17's, so the Goliath allusion is a strong inference (Abigail would have known the famous story). The *Companion Bible*'s reading of the "bundle" as a shepherd's bag of stones is attractive, and *tseror* can mean a small stone, but the shepherd's bag in 17:40 is called by different Hebrew words (*keli* and *yalqut*), so that link is corroboration only. None of this requires revelation; it bears lightly on Claim A.

“Appointed thee ruler over Israel” (verse 30)

> **1 Samuel 25:30** *And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;*

“According to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee.” Abigail speaks of what God has already said about David. That word had been spoken by Samuel: **“I have provided me a king among his sons” (1 Samuel 16:1)**, and before that, when Samuel told Saul that God had found a man after His own heart.

“And shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel.” Here Abigail’s words match those earlier words of Samuel exactly. “Appointed thee ruler” is *tsivvekha lenagid*, literally “commanded thee to be captain.” Now set beside it what Samuel said to Saul at Gilgal:

> **1 Samuel 13:14** *But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.*

“The LORD hath commanded him to be captain” is *vayetsavvehu YHWH lenagid*. Abigail’s “appointed thee ruler” and Samuel’s “commanded him to be captain” use the same verb (*tsavah*, command) and the same noun (*nagid*, captain, leader, prince-designate). *Nagid* (H5057) is the word God used when He first chose Saul (“thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel,” 9:16; 10:1). It names the one God has designated to lead His people. Abigail uses Samuel’s prophetic words to Saul, and applies them to David.

How did Abigail know Samuel’s words? Samuel spoke them to Saul at Gilgal, apparently in the presence of the people (13:4-15). By Abigail’s day they may well have been known in Judah. Later the tribes of Israel would say to David, **“the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel” (2 Samuel 5:2)**, again *nagid*. So the words were not secret. But Abigail is the first person in Scripture to apply them to David by name. Years later, when he had brought the ark to Jerusalem, David himself would describe his calling in almost exactly her words. To Michal he said that the LORD had chosen him **“to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel” (2 Samuel 6:21)**, in Hebrew *letsavvot oti nagid … al yisrael*, set beside Abigail’s *tsivvekha lenagid al yisrael*. The words Abigail spoke to him on the hillside became the words in which he understood his own kingship.

In short: Abigail used Samuel’s own words, “commanded … to be captain,” to tell David that the LORD would appoint him leader over Israel.

Weighing it: Strong inference that her words echo 13:14; reasonable inference that she knew them by report — bears on Claim A both ways. The shared verb and noun make the echo a strong inference. But because Samuel’s words were spoken in the presence of the people and the tribes later knew them (2 Samuel 5:2), it is a reasonable inference that Abigail could have heard them by ordinary means. This verse therefore shows her knowledge of God’s word, but does not by itself prove revelation. The other reading can fairly press that point, and this study grants it.

“No grief unto thee, nor offence of heart” (verse 31)

> **1 Samuel 25:31** *That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.*

“No grief.” The Hebrew is *lefuqah*, “for a staggering,” a stumbling (Strong’s H6330: “a stumbling-block”). This is the only place in the Old Testament the word appears. Its root (*puq*, H6328) means “to waver, stumble, totter.” The *Treasury* gives the margin: “Heb. staggering, or, stumbling.”

“Nor offence of heart.” *Ulemikhshol lev*, “for a stumbling-block of heart” (*mikhshol*, H4383). Something that would trip up David’s conscience for the rest of his life.

“That thou hast shed blood causeless.” “Causeless” is *hinnam*, “for nothing, without cause,” which Bullinger notes means “innocent blood.” Nabal’s household had done David no wrong.

“Or that my lord hath avenged himself.” For the third time: *ulehoshia’ adoni lo*, “that my lord saved himself” (the *Companion Bible* again: “avenged = saved”).

Abigail looks ahead to a day David could not yet see, the day he sits on the throne, and asks him to look at this deed from there. When the LORD has done everything He promised, would David want this slaughter on his conscience? Would he want Israel to remember that the king had wiped out a household over an insult? She appeals to David’s future self.

“Then remember thine handmaid.” She closes by asking only to be remembered. It is a modest request, and in nine verses it would be answered far beyond what she asked.

In short: Abigail asked David to look back on this day from his future throne and see that an act of revenge now would be a stumbling-block to his conscience forever.

Weighing it: Direct statement on her words; reasonable inference that her foresight here goes beyond ordinary wisdom — bears on Claim A. Her words are stated, and their meaning is clear. That she foresaw the moral danger of bloodguilt is wisdom any godly person might have. Whether she foresaw something more specific about David’s later life is weighed in Chapter 8. The other reading can fairly answer that this is simply good moral sense, and that much is certainly true.

In Short

Abigail’s speech is humble, brave and full of God. She took the guilt on herself, told David a fool’s words were beneath his anger, and named the real danger three times: David “saving himself with his own hand,” the very thing God would not let Gideon’s army claim. She promised him “a sure house,” in the words God would later use in His covenant with David. She told him his life was tied up safe in God’s own bundle, and that God would sling his enemies away as David once slung the stone at Goliath. She used Samuel’s own words, “commanded … to be captain,” of David’s coming rule. And she asked him to look back on this day from his future throne, and not carry innocent blood there.

Chapter 8: Was Abigail Walking by Revelation?

The question

Reading Abigail’s speech, it is hard not to ask: how did she know these things? She speaks to a man she has, as far as we know, never met. She tells him what the LORD has already done and will yet do. She speaks of his house, his throne, his enemies and his conscience in the words of God’s own promises. Many readers have concluded that she could not have known all this unless God revealed it to her.

That is Claim A. This chapter tests it honestly, item by item, in two steps: first, what Abigail could have known by ordinary means; then, what goes beyond that.

In short: the question is not whether Abigail was wise, which is plain, but whether some of what she said came to her from God.

Weighing it: Method, not argument. This section frames the test. The evidence follows.

What she could have known by ordinary means

To weigh the claim fairly, we must give the ordinary explanation its full strength. A great deal of what Abigail said could have been known by any well-informed person in Judah.

- **The insult and the protection.** Her servant told her both (25:14-17).
- **The danger.** The servant told her "evil is determined against our master" (25:17).
- **That David would be king.** This was widely known. Jonathan told David, **"thou shalt be king over Israel ... and that also Saul my father knoweth" (1 Samuel 23:17)**. Saul said it openly at En-gedi (24:20), in front of his men. Even the Philistines called David **"the king of the land" (1 Samuel 21:11)**. Later, Abner speaks of what **"the LORD hath sworn to David" (2 Samuel 3:9)**, and the tribes say **"the LORD said to thee ... thou shalt be a captain over Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2)**, showing that God's word about David was common knowledge in Israel.
- **Samuel's word to Saul.** "The LORD hath commanded him to be captain" (13:14) was spoken at Gilgal when the people had gathered there (13:4). It may well have become known. Abigail's echo of it in 25:30 shows that she knew God's word, not necessarily that God gave it to her afresh.
- **That David fought the LORD's battles.** Saul's own phrase (18:17), and David's whole reputation since Goliath.
- **The sling.** Every Israelite knew how Goliath died (18:6-7).
- **That David had a clean record.** His sparing of Saul at En-gedi would have been told everywhere.
- **The danger to his conscience.** Any godly person can see that massacring a household over an insult would stain a man's name.

On this reading, Abigail was a deeply godly and very intelligent woman who knew the Scriptures, knew what God had said about David, and applied it with brilliant timing. That alone would be remarkable.

In short: almost every fact Abigail used was available to a well-informed, godly woman in Judah.

Weighing it: Opposing case, stated — against Claim A on most items. This is the strongest form of the ordinary explanation, and on most items it holds: they could have been learned from the servant or from common knowledge in Israel. The case for Claim A therefore cannot rest on those items. It must rest on what goes beyond them.

What goes beyond ordinary knowledge

Some things in the speech are not so easily explained.

1. "A sure house" (25:28). Everyone knew David would be king. A king is not a dynasty. Saul was king, and his house did not stand: **"now thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Samuel 13:14)**. Abigail did not say merely that David would reign. She said the LORD would "certainly make" him "a sure house," a

dynasty that would endure. That is exactly what God later promised through Nathan, in the same words: "he will make thee an house" (2 Samuel 7:11) and "thine house … shall be established" (*ne'man*, 2 Samuel 7:16). Up to this point in Scripture, no one had promised David a lasting house. The one other use of "sure house" before this (1 Samuel 2:35) was God's promise to a faithful priest, not to a king. Abigail spoke the substance of the Davidic covenant before God gave it.

2. "The LORD hath withholden thee" (25:26). She spoke of David's restraint as already accomplished, by the LORD, while David still had the oath on his lips and four hundred swords behind him. It may be confidence. It may be the prophetic way of speaking of what God will certainly do as though it were done, as God **"calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Romans 4:17)**.

3. "Let thine enemies … be as Nabal" (25:26). Spoken while Nabal was alive and well. About ten days later **"the LORD smote Nabal, that he died" (25:38)**. Abigail does not say "Nabal will die." But her words, read after verse 38, fit what happened exactly.

4. "This shall be no grief unto thee" (25:31). Abigail warns David against "shed[ding] blood causeless." In later years David did exactly that, once: he had Uriah killed to cover his sin with Bathsheba. Scripture's summary of his life is that he **"turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15:5)**. Abigail's warning names the very sin that would one day be the one blot on his record. Ancient Jewish teachers noticed this. The Talmud (Megillah 14b) says that by saying "*this* shall be no stumbling-block," she hinted that another thing would be, namely Bathsheba, and it counts this as proof that she was a prophetess. Scripture does not say she foresaw Bathsheba. But her warning lands exactly where David later fell.

5. The authority with which she spoke. She came as a suppliant, but she spoke to the future king like a prophet: telling him what the LORD had done, would do, and wanted of him. And he received it that way.

In short: the "sure house," the restraint spoken of as done, Nabal's end, and the warning about innocent blood all go beyond what ordinary knowledge would supply.

Weighing it: Strong inference for Claim A on the "sure house"; reasonable inference on items 2 to 5 taken together. The "sure house" is the strongest point, because it states a dynastic promise no one had yet received, in the words God would later use. Items 2 to 4 are each open to an ordinary explanation (confidence, a wish, good moral sense), but together they form a pattern of statements that God then fulfilled. The other reading can fairly answer that a woman who knew David would be king could naturally wish him a lasting house, that "be as Nabal" may only mean "be as contemptible as Nabal," and that the Uriah link is seen only in hindsight. Each answer is fair taken alone; the question is whether so many fair answers, all landing on later fulfilments, are still the best explanation.

What David said

David's own response is the best evidence of how her words struck him.

> **1 Samuel 25:32** *And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:33** *And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.*

“Which sent thee this day to meet me.” David does not thank Abigail for her cleverness. He blesses the LORD, the God of Israel, for sending her. He understood her coming as God’s doing.

“Blessed be thy advice.” “Advice” is *ta’am* (H2940), literally “taste,” hence “perception, discernment, judgment.” The *Companion Bible* renders it “good taste.” It is the discernment that can taste the difference between good and evil, wise and foolish. The same word appears earlier in 1 Samuel in a telling place. When David fled to Achish of Gath, **“he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad” (1 Samuel 21:13)**. “Behaviour” there is *ta’am*: David “changed his *ta’am*,” his sense, his judgment, and acted like a madman to save his life. The title of Psalm 34 recalls the same event: “A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech.” Then David put on madness to save himself. Now he blesses Abigail’s sound judgment for saving him from a madness that was real.

“And blessed be thou.” He blesses her as well as her counsel.

So David treats Abigail’s coming as sent by God and her counsel as God-given discernment. He does not call her a prophetess. But he speaks of her as God’s messenger.

In short: David blessed the LORD for sending Abigail and blessed her discernment, treating her as God’s messenger to him.

Weighing it: Direct statement that David saw her coming as God’s sending — supports Claim A in part. David’s words are explicit that God sent her. That is not the same as saying God revealed to her what to say; God can send a wise person by ordinary providence. The *ta’am* link with 21:13 is a word-echo and is corroboration only. The other reading can fairly answer that David is praising providence and wisdom, not prophecy, and that is a real possibility.

How God spoke in Israel in those days

Was it even possible, in that time, for an ordinary woman to speak by revelation?

In the Old Testament, God revealed His word to particular people at particular times, by His spirit upon them. When God put His spirit on the seventy elders, **“when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied” (Numbers 11:25)**, and Moses said, **“would God that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:29)**. In 1 Samuel itself, the spirit came on Saul and he prophesied (10:10); the spirit came on Saul’s messengers and they prophesied (19:20); and **“the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13)**.

Women spoke from God in Israel too. **“Miriam the prophetess” (Exodus 15:20)**. **“Deborah, a prophetess … she judged Israel at that time” (Judges 4:4)**. Later, **“Huldah the prophetess” (2 Kings 22:14)**, whom the king’s own officers went to consult.

And within 1 Samuel itself there is a woman who, like Abigail, spoke of the coming king before he came. Hannah, at the very start of the book, before Israel had any king, ended her song: **“he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed” (1 Samuel 2:10)**. That is the first time in Scripture God’s king is called “his anointed” (*meshicho*). The book of Samuel opens with a woman foreseeing the anointed king and, in chapter 25, brings in another woman to keep that king from staining himself.

Joel later promised a day when God would pour out His spirit **“upon the servants and upon the handmaids” (Joel 2:29)**. “Handmaids” there is *shefachot*, the word Abigail uses of herself in verses 27 and 41 (*shifchah*). That promise is of a future day, not of Abigail’s time; but it shows that God speaking through “handmaids” was always within His purpose.

Scripture never says the spirit came upon Abigail. It does say that God gave His word to whom He chose, women included, and that the words He gave came true.

In short: in Abigail's day God did reveal His word by His spirit upon chosen people, women among them, and 1 Samuel itself opens with a woman foreseeing God's anointed king.

Weighing it: Direct statement that God gave revelation to women and men in Israel; corroboration only for Abigail herself. The passages are plain. They show that revelation to a woman like Abigail was entirely possible. They do not show that it happened to her, and Scripture never says the spirit came upon her. The other reading can fairly stress that silence, and it is a real gap in the case.

What Jewish tradition said

Jewish tradition took Abigail to be a prophetess. The Talmud (Megillah 14a) lists seven women it counts as prophetesses: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther. On 14b it gives its reason for Abigail: the hint, in "this shall be no stumbling-block," that another stumbling-block, Bathsheba, would come. It also explains her request "remember thine handmaid" as her quietly preparing for the day David would marry her.

Josephus, retelling the story for Greek and Roman readers in the first century, has Abigail plead with David to show mildness "especially as thou art to be our king," and has David answer that "it was no other than God's mercy which brought thee to us today."

The Talmud's discussion also adds details that Scripture does not contain and that have no support in the text. Those are set aside here. The point worth keeping is simply that ancient Jewish readers, who knew the Hebrew well, heard prophecy in Abigail's words.

In short: the Talmud counts Abigail among Israel's seven prophetesses, and Josephus has David credit God's mercy for her coming.

Weighing it: Corroboration only. These are later traditions, valuable as witnesses to how careful Jewish readers understood the passage, but not Scripture. The Talmud's added details are set aside as unsupported. The other reading can fairly answer that tradition has also called many people prophets whom Scripture does not, and that is true.

The verdict

What Abigail said	Could she have known it by ordinary means?	Weight for Claim A
Nabal's insult and David's protection	Yes, from her servant	None
David will be king and "ruler over Israel"	Yes, widely known; echoes Samuel's public words	Corroboration only
David "fighteth the battles of the LORD"	Yes, his reputation	None
God will sling his enemies "as out of … a sling"	Yes, Goliath was famous; but she makes it God's act	Corroboration only
"The LORD hath withholden thee"	Possibly, as confidence	Reasonable inference
"Let thine enemies … be as Nabal"	Possibly, as a wish	Reasonable inference
"This shall be no grief … that thou hast shed blood causeless"	Possibly, as moral sense	Reasonable inference
"The LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house"	Hard to explain: a dynastic promise in God's later covenant words, not yet given to anyone	Strong inference

Taken together: Abigail was a woman of outstanding wisdom who knew God's word well. Most of what she said could have come from that alone. But at its centre her speech contains a promise, the "sure house," that goes beyond anything yet revealed and matches what God would later say in His covenant with David. Around it are several statements that God then fulfilled. And David received her as sent by God.

The best reading is that Abigail spoke from a heart full of God's word, and that, in the critical moment, God gave her insight into His purpose for David beyond what she could have known. That is what Scripture means by revelation: God making known what man could not otherwise know.

In short: Abigail was walking by wisdom and, at the heart of her speech, very probably by revelation; the "sure house" is the clearest sign of it.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference overall, strong inference on the "sure house" — for Claim A. The case is cumulative: one strong point, several reasonable ones, David's own recognition of God's sending, and the later fulfilments. It stops short of direct statement because Scripture never says the spirit came on her or calls her a prophetess. The other reading can fairly maintain that everything she said could be the fruit of deep wisdom and knowledge of God's promises; this study grants that this is possible and judges it the less natural explanation of the "sure house."

What would change my mind

To keep this verdict honest, here is what would overturn it.

1. **If "sure house" were shown to be a common wish for a ruler's family in that period**, used of kings generally and not only in God's promises, the strongest point would fall to "corroboration only." Within Scripture it is not: its only other uses are God's own promises (1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Kings 11:38).
2. **If God's promise of a lasting house to David were shown to have been given before 1 Samuel 25**, Abigail could simply have repeated it. Scripture records no such promise before 2 Samuel 7.

Jonathan (20:14-16) and Saul (24:21) both assume that David's family will hold power after him, and ask him to spare their own descendants; that is the nearest thing, and it is a human expectation, not a word from God that his house would be made sure.

3. **If Scripture elsewhere described Abigail as speaking only her own opinion**, or criticized her words as presumptuous, the case would weaken. It never does.

None of these exists in the text.

In short: the verdict would fall if "sure house" were shown to be a common phrase, or if the promise to David's house came earlier, or if Scripture criticized her words; none of these is the case.

Weighing it: Method, not argument. This section names what a reader could go and check.

In Short

Most of what Abigail said, a wise and godly woman in Judah could have known: David would be king, he fought the LORD's battles, he killed Goliath with a sling, and revenge would stain his name. But at the heart of her speech is a promise no one had yet received, that the LORD would "certainly make" David "a sure house," in the very words God later used in His covenant with David. Around it are statements God then fulfilled: David's restraint, Nabal's end, and a warning about innocent blood that named the one sin that would later mar David's record. David received her as sent by God. Scripture never calls her a prophetess, but the best reading is that Abigail spoke by wisdom and, at the decisive point, by revelation.

Chapter 9: "The LORD Smote Nabal"

David turns back

> **1 Samuel 25:34** *For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:35** *So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.*

David confirms that he meant every word of his oath. Without Abigail, "there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall." But now he says it of the past: "which hath kept me back." The LORD held him back, by her.

He accepts her gift and sends her home "in peace," *leshalom*, the word his young men had carried to Nabal three times and received nothing for. "I have hearkened to thy voice" is the language of obedience; David heeded her the way one heeds a messenger. And "I have accepted thy person" is, as the *Companion Bible* notes, "I have uplifted thy face." She had come with her face to the ground; he lifts it up. It is the same idiom as Jacob's hope that Esau would "accept" him (Genesis 32:20).

In short: David accepted the gift, sent Abigail home in peace, and acknowledged that the LORD had kept him back.

Weighing it: Direct statement. David's own words are recorded. Nothing is disputed.

A feast like the feast of a king

> **1 Samuel 25:36** *And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.*

While Abigail was saving his life, Nabal was throwing a party. "A feast" is *mishteh*, literally "a drinking," a banquet built around wine, as the *Companion Bible* notes (compare Absalom's sheep-shearing feast, 2 Samuel 13:28, where Amnon was killed "when Amnon's heart is merry with wine"). It was "like the feast of a king." Nabal, who would not give David bread, ate and drank like a king, while the real king-in-waiting and his men went hungry in the wilderness. The phrase quietly casts Nabal as a would-be king, Saul's double once more.

"Nabal's heart was merry within him," literally "Nabal's heart was good upon him," and "he was very drunken." Proverbs knew the picture: **"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1)**. And Isaiah's *nabal*, who withholds food from the hungry (Isaiah 32:6), is here at his own full table.

Abigail **"told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light."** She waited. There was no point speaking to a drunk man, and there was danger in it. "The morning light" is exactly the deadline David had set in his oath (25:22, 34): "by the morning light." The night that would have been Nabal's last passed with him unaware it had been spared.

In short: while Abigail saved his house, Nabal held a drunken feast like a king's, and she waited until morning to tell him.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the feast; reasonable inference that "like the feast of a king" casts him as Saul's double — bears on Claim B. The feast and his drunkenness are stated. The phrase "like the feast of a king" is the writer's own choice of words, which makes the royal allusion a reasonable inference. The other reading can fairly answer that it may simply mean "a lavish feast," and that is its plain sense.

When the wine was gone out of him

> **1 Samuel 25:37** *But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.*

"When the wine was gone out of Nabal." As Chapter 4 showed, the name Nabal sounds like *nebel*, a wine-skin. The writer says the wine "went out of Nabal," as wine goes out of a skin. The skin is emptied.

"His wife had told him these things." She told him everything: David's oath, the four hundred men, how close he had come to losing his life and household, and what she had done.

"His heart died within him, and he became as a stone." Bullinger lists this in *Figures of Speech* as a hyperbole: "he was terribly frightened and collapsed or fainted away." He also sets it as the opposite of the greeting David had sent, "him that liveth in prosperity" (25:6): the man David hailed as "living" now has a heart that "died within him." Some modern readers think of a stroke or heart attack brought on by shock, with Nabal lying paralysed for ten days. That may be so; Scripture does not give a medical description.

There is also a word-echo here. “As a stone” is *le’aven*, “into stone.” David had killed Goliath with a stone (*’even*, 17:49-50). Abigail had just said God would sling David’s enemies away “as out of the middle of a sling” (25:29). Now the enemy himself becomes a stone. The fool’s hard heart, *qasheh* (25:3), “hard,” becomes as hard as stone.

In short: when the wine went out of him and he heard what had happened, Nabal’s heart failed him and he lay like a stone.

Weighing it: Direct statement on what happened; reasonable inference on the wine-skin wordplay; corroboration only on the stone echo of chapter 17. The collapse is stated, and Bullinger rightly reads “heart died” as a figure for collapse rather than immediate death, since he lived ten more days. The wine-skin play is a reasonable inference (Chapter 4). The link between “stone” here and the stone of chapter 17 is fitting but rests on a common word and is not leaned on.

Ten days, and the LORD smote him

> **1 Samuel 25:38** *And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.*

For about ten days Nabal lay stricken. Then “the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.” The writer is careful to say who did it. Not David, not Abigail, not grief alone: the LORD.

“Smote” is *nagaph* (H5062), “to strike, to plague.” It is the verb of the plague on Egypt: **“the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:23)**. It is used of King Jeroboam of Israel in almost the same words as Nabal: **“the LORD struck him, and he died” (2 Chronicles 13:20)**, where the Hebrew *vayyiggefehu YHWH vayyamot* matches 1 Samuel 25:38’s *vayyiggof YHWH et Naval vayyamot*. And it is the verb David himself would use a chapter later, when Abishai begged to kill the sleeping Saul:

> **1 Samuel 26:10** *David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.*

“The LORD shall smite him” is *YHWH yiggafennu*, the same verb. In chapter 26 David says of Saul exactly what God had just done to Nabal. He had seen it with his own eyes. He had learned the lesson.

The New Testament gives a similar case. When King Herod accepted worship as a god, **“immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:23)**.

In short: after ten days the LORD Himself struck Nabal dead, with the same verb David would use of Saul in the very next chapter.

Weighing it: Direct statement that the LORD smote Nabal; strong inference that 26:10 deliberately repeats the verb — for Claim B. The writer states plainly that the LORD did it. The repetition of *nagaph* in David’s words about Saul in 26:10, one chapter later, is too close to be chance and is a strong inference for the design of chapters 24-26. The other reading can fairly answer that *nagaph* is a common verb for God’s striking; but here it appears in consecutive chapters, first as what God did to Nabal and then as what David trusts God to do to Saul.

David's response

> **1 Samuel 25:39** *And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.*

David does not rejoice that Nabal is dead. He blesses the LORD for three things:

- **"That hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal."** "Pleaded the cause" is *rav et riv*, "contended the contention," the language of a court case. It is exactly what David had asked of God concerning Saul at En-gedi: **"The LORD therefore be judge … and see, and plead my cause" (1 Samuel 24:15)**, where the Hebrew is *veyarev et rivi*. God had been judge in David's case against Nabal. David had not had to take it into his own hands.
- **"And hath kept his servant from evil."** The evil was David's own intended evil. God kept him from it.
- **"For the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head."** The psalmist's principle: **"His mischief shall return upon his own head" (Psalm 7:16)**. Psalm 7, by its title, is a psalm David sang about **"the words of Cush the Benjamite,"** a man of Saul's tribe, so it comes from this same period of David's life.

In short: David blessed the LORD for judging his case, for keeping him from evil, and for returning Nabal's wickedness on his own head.

Weighing it: Direct statement; strong inference that "plead my cause" deliberately echoes 24:15 — for Claim B. David's words are recorded. The same Hebrew phrase in 24:15 and 25:39, one chapter apart, describing God taking up David's case against first Saul and then Nabal, makes the link a strong inference. The other reading can fairly answer that "plead my cause" is a common prayer in the Psalms; but here it is a prayer made in chapter 24 and answered in chapter 25.

In Short

David sent Abigail home in peace. That night Nabal held a drunken feast like a king's, and Abigail waited until morning to tell him. When the wine went out of him and he heard how close he had come to death, his heart failed and he lay like a stone. About ten days later the LORD struck him dead, with the verb David would use of Saul a chapter later. David blessed the LORD for taking up his case, for keeping him from evil, and for returning Nabal's wickedness on his own head, the very thing he had asked of God concerning Saul at En-gedi.

Chapter 10: David's Integrity — Vengeance Belongs to God

Three chapters side by side

Chapters 24, 25 and 26 of 1 Samuel belong together. Read one after another, they share the same situation, the same temptation and, again and again, the same words.

	Chapter 24: Saul at En-gedi	Chapter 25: Nabal at Carmel	Chapter 26: Saul at Hachilah
The enemy	Saul, the LORD's anointed	Nabal, a fool and son of Belial	Saul, the LORD's anointed
Who urges revenge	David's men (24:4)	David himself (25:13, 22)	Abishai (26:8)
David's hand	"mine hand shall not be upon thee" (24:12)	nearly "avenging thyself with thine own hand" (25:26, 33)	"who can stretch forth his hand … and be guiltless?" (26:9)
Evil for good	"thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (24:17)	"he hath requited me evil for good" (25:21)	
God as judge	"the LORD … be judge … and plead my cause" (24:15)	"the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach" (25:39)	"The LORD render to every man his righteousness" (26:23)
God strikes		"the LORD smote Nabal, that he died" (25:38)	"the LORD shall smite him" (26:10)
Outcome	David spares Saul	Abigail stops David; God strikes Nabal	David spares Saul again

The pattern is clear. Chapter 24 states the principle: the LORD will judge and avenge; David's hand will not. Chapter 25 tests it in a harder case, where the offender is not the LORD's anointed and seems to deserve no mercy at all, and David fails the test until Abigail stops him, and then God Himself acts. Chapter 26 shows the lesson learned. When Abishai asks permission to kill Saul with a single spear-thrust, David answers with a conviction he did not have at En-gedi:

> **1 Samuel 26:10** *David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.*
>
> **1 Samuel 26:11** *The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.*

At En-gedi David said the LORD would judge. After Nabal, he could say how: "the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish." He had just watched the first of those happen to Nabal.

In short: chapter 24 states the principle, chapter 25 tests it and shows God acting, and chapter 26 shows David holding it with new certainty.

Weighing it: Strong inference for Claim B. The parallels rest on shared Hebrew phrases across consecutive chapters: "evil for good," "plead my cause," "smite," and the repeated concern with David's "hand." Together they make it a strong inference that chapter 25 is placed and shaped to stand between the two scenes with Saul. The other reading can fairly answer that the three stories may simply come from the same period and naturally share vocabulary; but the movement from principle (24) to test and demonstration (25) to settled conviction (26) is hard to explain as accident.

What David learned

David's restraint at En-gedi rested on one reason: Saul was **"the LORD's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:6)**. That is a true reason, but it is a limited one. It might seem to leave David free to avenge himself on anyone who was not the LORD's anointed. Nabal was not. Nabal was a fool and a son of Belial. By the standard of chapter 24 alone, David might have thought he could do as he liked.

Abigail moved David to a deeper reason. She did not say, "Do not touch Nabal, for he is anointed." She said, in effect: do not save yourself with your own hand at all, because the LORD fights your battles, keeps your life in His bundle, and will sling your enemies away Himself. The principle is not only about whom David may not touch. It is about who does the avenging. The answer is the LORD.

David came back to this truth again and again in his psalms:

> **Psalm 37:7** *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*
> **Psalm 37:8** *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*
> **Psalm 37:9** *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*

And at the end of his life, in the song he sang **"in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul" (2 Samuel 22:1)**, he said:

> **2 Samuel 22:48** *It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me,*

In short: at En-gedi David spared the LORD's anointed; after Nabal he understood that vengeance on anyone belongs to the LORD.

Weighing it: Reasonable inference. That Abigail's argument rests on God's action rather than on Nabal's status is plain from her words. That this moved David from a narrower to a deeper principle is a reasonable reading of the change between chapters 24 and 26, not something the text spells out. The other reading can fairly answer that David held the deeper principle all along and simply lost his temper; the psalms show he certainly held it later.

A heart that could be taught

What saved David at Carmel was not his own strength. In the moment, his strength was carrying him toward murder. What saved him was that he could still be taught.

Think who it was that stopped him: a woman, the wife of the very man he had sworn to destroy, coming alone with donkeys and food to an armed band of four hundred angry men. A proud man would have brushed her aside. Saul, in the same position, never listened to anyone. Nabal could not even be spoken to (25:17). David stopped, listened to the end, and then blessed God, blessed her counsel, and blessed her (25:32-33).

Scripture praises exactly this:

- **"Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Proverbs 9:8)**.
- **"As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear" (Proverbs 25:12)**.

- **“Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil” (Psalm 141:5)**, a psalm of David.
- And James’s description of godly wisdom: **“first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated” (James 3:17)**.

David was “easy to be intreated.” That is part of what made him a man after God’s own heart. It was not that he never went wrong. It was that when God sent correction, he received it.

In short: David was saved not by his own self-control but by his willingness to stop and listen to the counsel God sent.

Weighing it: Strong inference. David’s response in verses 32-35 is stated, and the contrast with Nabal (“a man cannot speak to him”) is the writer’s own. That this teachability is the key virtue of the episode follows closely from how the story is told. The other reading has little to answer here.

Did David keep the lesson?

An honest study must ask whether David held to this for the rest of his life. Scripture records both his faithfulness and his failures, and does not hide either.

He kept it with Saul. In chapter 26 he spared Saul again. When Saul died, David mourned him and executed the man who claimed to have killed him (2 Samuel 1).

He kept it with Shimei. Years later, when David fled from Absalom, a Benjamite named Shimei cursed him and threw stones. Abishai, the same man who had wanted to kill Saul in chapter 26, wanted to cut off Shimei’s head. David said:

> **2 Samuel 16:11** *And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.*
>
> **2 Samuel 16:12** *It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.*

That is the lesson of Carmel exactly: “the LORD will requite.” And when David returned, he swore to Shimei, “Thou shalt not die” (2 Samuel 19:23).

But he broke it once, terribly. David did, in the end, shed innocent blood with his own decision. He had Uriah the Hittite killed in battle to cover his adultery with Bathsheba, and Nathan the prophet said, **“thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword” (2 Samuel 12:9)**. The verdict on his whole life is that he did right **“all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5)**. Abigail had warned him not to carry “blood causeless” to his throne. He did not carry Nabal’s. He carried Uriah’s.

The psalm David wrote after Nathan’s rebuke uses the very word Abigail used. She kept him **“from coming to shed blood”** (25:26, *bedamim*, “into bloods”). After Uriah he prayed:

> **Psalm 51:14** *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

“Bloodguiltiness” is *damim*, “bloods,” the same word. What Abigail kept him from at Carmel, he fell into at Jerusalem, and could only be delivered from by God’s mercy.

And on his deathbed he was not at peace with Shimei. David told Solomon to "hold him not guiltless" and to bring his "hoar head … down to the grave with blood" (1 Kings 2:8-9), though he himself had sworn not to kill him. Many readers have found this hard. Scripture records it without comment.

In short: David held the lesson of Carmel with Saul and with Shimei, but broke it once with Uriah, and later prayed to be delivered from the very "bloods" Abigail had kept him from.

Weighing it: Direct statement on each event; reasonable inference on the link between Abigail's warning and Psalm 51 — bears on Claim A. The events are recorded. The shared word *damim* in 25:26, 25:33 and Psalm 51:14 is visible, and the link is a reasonable inference. This is where the Talmud saw Abigail's prophecy of Bathsheba (Chapter 8); this study sees the warning fulfilled, without claiming she named the event. The other reading can fairly answer that warning a man against shedding innocent blood is wise advice for anyone, and its later fulfilment is what we would expect of any good warning.

For us today

David lived under the Law, in a different administration from ours. But the principle Abigail taught him does not change between administrations, because it rests on who God is. Paul writes to the church:

> **Romans 12:17** *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*
>
> **Romans 12:18** *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*
>
> **Romans 12:19** *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*
>
> **Romans 12:20** *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*
>
> **Romans 12:21** *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Paul quotes two Old Testament passages. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay" is from the song of Moses (**"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence" (Deuteronomy 32:35)**). And "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink" is from Proverbs:

> **Proverbs 25:21** *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:*
>
> **Proverbs 25:22** *For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.*

Notice what Proverbs names: bread and water for the hungry and thirsty. That is exactly what Nabal refused to David, who was not even his enemy but his protector. And it is exactly what Abigail brought to David, who at that moment was her enemy, riding to kill her household. Nabal is the man who would not feed even a friend. Abigail is the woman who fed her enemy, and heaped coals of fire on his head, and overcame evil with good.

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26). David's anger at Nabal's ingratitude was not itself the sin. The sin was what he swore to do with it. The sun did not go down on that wrath, because Abigail met him first.

The final example is the Lord Jesus Christ. **"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23)**. The Son of David did perfectly what David learned at Carmel. And God vindicated Him: He **"raised him**

from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:20). The one who did not avenge himself was raised and seated at God's right hand, **"from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Hebrews 10:13)**. Even there, He waits for God to deal with His enemies.

In short: the believer today, like David, leaves vengeance to God, feeds the hungry enemy, and follows Christ, who committed Himself to the righteous Judge and was raised and exalted to God's right hand.

Weighing it: Direct statement for the believer's conduct today. Romans 12:17-21, Ephesians 4:26 and 1 Peter 2:23 are written to the church and say this in so many words. The application of David's story to us rests on Paul's own use of Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 25:21-22, so it is not a stretch of the Old Testament narrative. The other reading has nothing to answer on the principle; it is the plain teaching of the epistles.

In Short

Chapters 24, 25 and 26 stand together, sharing the same temptation and the same words. Chapter 24 states the principle, chapter 25 tests it with a man who seemed to deserve no mercy and shows God acting Himself, and chapter 26 shows David holding it with new certainty: "the LORD shall smite him." David was saved at Carmel because he could still be taught. He kept the lesson with Saul and with Shimei, and broke it once with Uriah. For believers today the principle is the same: leave vengeance to God, feed the hungry enemy, and follow Christ, who committed Himself to Him that judges righteously and was raised and exalted to God's right hand.

Chapter 11: Abigail Afterward

"Let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet"

> **1 Samuel 25:39** *And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:40** *And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:41** *And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:42** *And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.*

David did not wait long. When he heard that Nabal was dead, he sent servants to Carmel to ask Abigail to be his wife. In that culture a widow of a rich man was vulnerable; Nabal's estate, his flocks and his household now had no master. David's offer gave her protection, and it honoured her as the woman God had sent.

Her answer is the same humility she showed on the hillside. She bowed to the ground before David's servants, not even before David himself, and said, **"Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord."** The *Companion Bible* notes that washing feet "was and is the most menial service." She offers to be not David's servant, but the servant of his servants. Bullinger, in *Figures*

of Speech, takes washing the feet as standing for every kind of humble service, and sets this verse beside the Lord's words, **"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14)**, and beside 1 Timothy 5:10.

"Abigail hasted" once more (verse 42). She rode out on a donkey, as she had ridden out to meet David before, but this time with five of her young women "that went after her," and she "became his wife." The woman who had asked only to be remembered (25:31) was remembered within days.

In short: when David asked her to be his wife, Abigail answered with the humility of a servant to his servants, and went to him at once.

Weighing it: Direct statement. The events and her words are recorded. The link to John 13:14 is Bullinger's, and it illustrates the kind of service she offered; it is not an argument for any claim.

Ahinoam and Michal

> **1 Samuel 25:43** *David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.*
>
> **1 Samuel 25:44** *But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.*

The chapter closes with two notes about David's other wives.

Ahinoam of Jezreel. This Jezreel is a town in the hill country of Judah (Joshua 15:56, in the same district as Maon, Carmel and Ziph), not the better-known Jezreel in the north. Ahinoam bore David's firstborn, Amnon (2 Samuel 3:2).

Michal. David's first wife was Saul's daughter Michal, won at the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins (1 Samuel 18:27; David brought two hundred). She had loved David and saved his life by letting him down through a window (19:11-17). But when David became a fugitive, Saul gave her to another man, Phalti the son of Laish. It was one more way of cutting David off from the royal house. Later, as king, David would demand her back (2 Samuel 3:14-16), and her second husband followed her, weeping, until he was sent home. Michal's story ends sadly: she despised David for dancing before the LORD, and David answered her, in the very words Abigail had once spoken over him, that the LORD had chosen him **"to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel" (2 Samuel 6:21)**. Saul's daughter, who mocked the king, had no child (6:23). Nabal's widow, who honoured the king-in-waiting, bore him a son.

Scripture records David's many wives without approving them. The Law had already warned that Israel's king **"Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away" (Deuteronomy 17:17)**, and God's pattern from the beginning was one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). David's later family troubles, Amnon's sin and Absalom's revolt among them, grew out of a crowded household. As this library's method says, an accurate record is not the same as an endorsement.

In short: the chapter ends with David's marriage to Ahinoam and with Saul giving Michal away; Scripture records David's many wives without approving them.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the events; strong inference that Scripture records rather than approves the polygamy. The marriages are stated. The Law's warning in Deuteronomy 17:17 and the pattern of Genesis 2:24 are direct statements, and the later troubles of David's house are recorded at length, which makes it a strong inference that the record is not an endorsement. The other reading can fairly note that 1 Samuel 25 itself makes no comment on the marriages, and that is true.

Gath, Ziklag and Hebron

Abigail's later life is told in a few lines, but they show that she went with David through everything.

To Gath. When David despaired of escaping Saul and fled to the Philistines, she went too: **"even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife" (1 Samuel 27:3)**.

Captured at Ziklag. While David was away, the Amalekites raided Ziklag and carried off the women and children:

> **1 Samuel 30:5** *And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.*
>
> **1 Samuel 30:6** *And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.*

David's own wives were among the captives, and his men spoke of stoning him. "But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." He inquired of the LORD through the ephod (30:7-8), pursued the raiders, and **"David rescued his two wives" (1 Samuel 30:18)**. This time David did ask the LORD before he went.

To Hebron. When Saul died and David was anointed king over Judah, she went up with him to Hebron, Caleb's city, a few miles from her old home in Carmel: **"So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite" (2 Samuel 2:2)**.

Notice that Scripture keeps calling her "Nabal's wife," even after she has long been David's. Bullinger explains this in *Figures of Speech* as the figure called *ampliatio*, in which an old name is kept after the reason for it has passed. In his words, she is still called "the wife of Nabal the Carmelite, though Nabal was dead, and she was the wife of David." The name keeps the story of Carmel attached to her. Every time she is mentioned, the reader remembers the day she turned David back.

In short: Abigail went with David to Gath, was captured and rescued at Ziklag, and went up with him to Hebron when he was crowned, still remembered as "Nabal's wife the Carmelite."

Weighing it: Direct statement. Each event is recorded. Bullinger's *ampliatio* explains the form of the name. Nothing here is disputed.

Chileab, also called Daniel

> **2 Samuel 3:2** *And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;*
>
> **2 Samuel 3:3** *And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;*

Abigail bore David a son at Hebron. In 2 Samuel he is called Chileab; in the parallel list in 1 Chronicles he is called Daniel:

> **1 Chronicles 3:1** *Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess:*

Two names for one son were not unusual; Solomon was also called Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:25). “Chileab” has been explained in various ways, and “Daniel” means “God is my judge.” That second name would be a fitting name for the son of the woman who kept David from judging his own cause: *God* is my judge.

After this one mention, Scripture says nothing more about him. Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah, the sons born just before and after him, all reached for power and all came to violent ends. Chileab never appears in those struggles. Whether he died young or simply lived quietly, Scripture does not say.

In short: Abigail’s son was called Chileab and Daniel, “God is my judge,” and unlike his brothers he never appears in the bloody struggles for the throne.

Weighing it: Direct statement on the son and his two names; corroboration only on the meaning of “Daniel” as fitting. The two lists are stated, and the meaning of “Daniel” is plain Hebrew. That the name fits the story of his mother is a reflection, not something the text says. The other reading can fairly answer that “Daniel” was a common name, and that is true.

In Short

When Nabal was dead, David asked Abigail to be his wife, and she answered as a servant to his servants. The chapter ends with Ahinoam, and with Michal given to another man by Saul; Scripture records David’s many wives without approving them. Abigail went with David to Gath, was captured and rescued at Ziklag, and went up with him to Hebron when he became king, always remembered as “Nabal’s wife the Carmelite.” She bore him a son, Chileab, also called Daniel, “God is my judge.”

Chapter 12: Weighing It All

This chapter gathers the verdicts of the whole study, claim by claim, and states what evidence would change them.

Claim A — The revelation claim

Abigail’s words to David contain knowledge God revealed to her, beyond what she could have learned by ordinary means.

- **For:** She promised David “a sure house” (25:28), a lasting dynasty, using the rare phrase that elsewhere only God uses in His promises (1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Kings 11:38), and that God’s covenant with David later matches in both verb and word (2 Samuel 7:11, 16). No one had yet received such a promise for David (strong inference). She spoke of David’s restraint as already done by the LORD while he was still armed and sworn (reasonable inference). She said “let thine enemies … be as Nabal” ten days before the LORD struck Nabal dead (reasonable inference). She warned David against innocent blood, the one sin that would later mar his record (reasonable inference). David blessed the LORD “which sent thee” (direct statement that God sent her). Jewish tradition counted her among Israel’s prophetesses (corroboration only).
- **Against or limiting:** Most of what she said could be known by ordinary means: her servant’s report, David’s public anointing to be king, Samuel’s words at Gilgal, the fame of Goliath’s death. Scripture never says the spirit came upon her and never calls her a prophetess. A woman who knew David would be king might naturally wish him a lasting house.

Verdict: Reasonable inference overall, strong inference on the "sure house" — the evidence supports Claim A. Abigail spoke from deep wisdom and knowledge of God's word, and at the heart of her speech, very probably, by revelation of God's purpose for David's house.

Claim B — The design claim

Chapter 25 is deliberately placed between chapters 24 and 26, and Nabal deliberately drawn as a picture of Saul, to show David learning that vengeance belongs to God.

- **For:** Chapters 24-26 share key Hebrew phrases: "evil for good" (24:17; 25:21), "plead my cause" (24:15; 25:39), "smite" (25:38; 26:10), and the concern with David's "hand" (24:12; 25:26, 33; 26:9-11). Nabal speaks Saul's language ("the son of Jesse"; the runaway "servant"), holds "a feast … like the feast of a king," and dies as David says Saul will die (strong inference). The movement from principle (24) to test and demonstration (25) to settled conviction (26) fits a deliberate arrangement (strong inference). Smaller links, Carmel and Saul's monument, the sons of Belial refusing a gift (10:27), the slaughter at Nob (22:19), the absence of any inquiry of the LORD before David armed (25:13), add support (reasonable inference or corroboration only).
- **Against or limiting:** The three stories come from the same period and may naturally share words. Arrogant, ungrateful rich men resemble one another.

Verdict: Strong inference — the evidence supports Claim B. The shared vocabulary is too precise and too concentrated in consecutive chapters to be chance.

Claim C — The wall claim

"Him that pisseth against the wall" is a coarse Hebrew way of saying "every male," and the wall does not stand for the face of God.

- **For:** All six uses (1 Samuel 25:22, 34; 1 Kings 14:10; 16:11; 21:21; 2 Kings 9:8) are in curses that wipe out a family's male line, where "every male" is required by the setting. Older Jewish and Christian commentators agree (Kimchi, the *Treasury*, the *Companion Bible*). The wall is *qir*, an ordinary house wall. When God is called a wall the word is *chomah* (Zechariah 2:5); God's face is *panim*, never *qir* (strong inference).
- **Against or limiting:** Hezekiah turned his face to the *qir* to pray (Isaiah 38:2), so the wall can be linked with prayer. Kimchi records an alternative, "even the dog," but it sharpens the same meaning rather than changing it.

Verdict: Strong inference — the evidence supports Claim C. The phrase means every male. Facing a wall in prayer does not make the wall God's face, and the curse-formula never uses it that way.

Claim D — The softening claim

"The enemies of" in David's oath (25:22) was added by a scribe to keep David from seeming to curse himself.

- **For:** The normal oath calls the curse on the speaker. The Septuagint reads "to David." Rabbi David Kimchi calls "the enemies of David" a euphemism for David. Similar softenings appear to occur in 1 Samuel 20:16 and 2 Samuel 12:14 (reasonable inference).

- **Against or limiting:** The received Hebrew text reads "the enemies of David," and David may have used a softened form himself.

Verdict: Reasonable inference — the evidence supports Claim D, but it changes nothing in the meaning. Either way, David swore a solemn oath to destroy every male in Nabal's household.

Claim E — The fairness claim

David's request to Nabal was fair and just, not a threat or a demand for payment.

- **For:** Nabal's own servant testifies that David's men were "very good unto us" and "a wall unto us both by night and day," and that nothing was taken (25:15-16; direct statement). David's message contains peace three times, an appeal to Nabal's own servants as witnesses, a free choice of gift, and no threat (direct statement). It came on a feast day when generosity was expected (strong inference). Abigail treats the request as just and brings what Nabal should have given (strong inference).
- **Against or limiting:** Six hundred armed men stand behind any courteous request. David's violent reaction shows what refusal could cost.

Verdict: Strong inference — the evidence supports Claim E. The request was fair. The oath of vengeance was not. The story holds the two apart.

What would change my mind

To keep these verdicts honest, here is what would overturn them.

1. **For Claim A:** evidence that "sure house" was a common wish for any ruler's family in that period; or a promise of a lasting house to David recorded before 1 Samuel 25; or a passage criticizing Abigail's words as presumptuous. None exists in Scripture.
2. **For Claim B:** a showing that the shared phrases of chapters 24-26 ("evil for good," "plead my cause," "smite") are scattered evenly through 1 and 2 Samuel, so that their clustering here means nothing. They are not; they cluster here.
3. **For Claim C:** a single use of "him that pisseth against the wall" outside a curse on a family line, or any passage where *qir* is used of God or His face. There is none.
4. **For Claim E:** any statement in the text that David's men took from Nabal's flocks or threatened his shepherds. There is none; the only testimony is the opposite.

In short: each verdict names the evidence that would overturn it, and in each case that evidence is absent from the text.

Weighing it: Method, not argument. This section names what a reader could go and check.

In Short

Abigail spoke from deep wisdom and, at the heart of her speech, very probably by revelation: her promise of "a sure house" matches God's later covenant with David and had not yet been given to anyone. Chapter 25 is deliberately set between the two scenes in which David spares Saul, with Nabal drawn as Saul in small, to show David learning that vengeance belongs to God. "Him that pisseth against the wall" means every male, and the wall is not the face of God. "The enemies of David" in the oath is

very likely a scribe's softening. And David's request to Nabal was fair; it was his oath of vengeance that was wrong.

Chapter 13: "Blessed Be Thy Advice"

Three people on one hillside

On a hillside below Carmel, three ways of life met.

Nabal lived as if there were no God. Everything was his: my bread, my water, my meat, my shearers. He owed nothing to anyone, not even to the men who had guarded his flocks. He would not be spoken to. He drank like a king while the king-in-waiting went hungry. And when the wine went out of him, there was nothing left. **"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1)**, and the fool's end came quickly.

David was God's anointed, a man after God's own heart, and on that day he nearly threw it all away. Insulted and angry, he did not stop to ask the LORD. He girded on his sword and swore to save himself with his own hand. He was within hours of doing to Nabal's household what Saul had done to Nob.

Abigail stood between them. She saw what her husband could not see and what David, in his anger, would not see. She came humbly, took the blame on herself, fed her enemy, and spoke God's word into a man's rage. She reminded the future king who fought his battles, who kept his life, who would sling away his enemies, and who would build his house. And David listened.

In short: the fool who trusted himself, the anointed who nearly avenged himself, and the wise woman who pointed him back to God.

Weighing it: Narrative. This section draws together what the study has shown.

What the chapter teaches

- **Vengeance belongs to God.** David did not need to avenge himself on Nabal. Within ten days, God did it. The believer still does not need to: **"avenge not yourselves … for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19)**.
- **God guides His people, sometimes through the people we least expect.** David's counsel that day came not from a prophet or a priest, but from the wife of his enemy. **"Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me" (1 Samuel 25:32)**.
- **Wisdom speaks God's word into the moment.** Abigail's power was not in her gift of food but in her words, and her words were full of God's promises. **"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1)**.
- **A teachable heart is a safe heart.** David's greatness that day was not that he never went wrong, but that he stopped when God sent correction.
- **The fool's way ends in emptiness.** Nabal had everything and gave nothing, and in ten days he had nothing at all.
- **The peacemaker is blessed. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9)**.

In short: leave vengeance to God, listen when He sends counsel, speak His word into anger, and be a peacemaker.

Weighing it: Direct statement for each lesson. Each lesson is taken from the chapter itself and stated outright in the verses cited.

In Short

1 Samuel 25 sets a fool, an anointed king and a wise woman on one hillside. The fool trusted his own riches and died empty. The anointed king nearly saved himself with his own hand, and was kept from it by the counsel God sent. The wise woman spoke God's purposes, the "sure house," the bundle of life, the sling, into David's anger, and turned him back. David's own words are the right ending: "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice."

Appendix 1: The Structure of 1 Samuel 25

E. W. Bullinger's *Companion Bible* sets out the chapter as an introversion, a mirror pattern in which the first part matches the last, the second matches the second-to-last, and so on, with the centre carrying the weight. His outline, given here in slightly plainer words, is:

- **A** — Verse 1. David: his own affairs; his dwelling elsewhere.
  - **B** — Verses 2-12. Nabal: his wealth (2-4), and David's message to him (5-12).
    - **C** — Verse 13. David's anger.
      - **D** — Verses 14-20. The report to Abigail (14-17), and her present prepared (18-20).
    - **C** — Verses 21-22. David's anger (his oath).
      - **D** — Verses 23-35. Abigail's present presented and her plea (23-31), and David's answer to her (32-35).
  - **B** — Verses 36-42. Nabal's death (36-38), and David's message to Abigail (39-42).
- **A** — Verses 43-44. David: his own affairs; his other wives.

The pattern shows what the chapter is about. It opens and closes with David. Inside that, Nabal's wealth and David's message to him (B) are answered by Nabal's death and David's message to Abigail (B). David's anger appears twice (C), and each time it is met by Abigail (D). The message to Nabal brought insult; the message to Abigail brought a wife. The man who would not give lost everything; the woman who gave was given everything.

Bullinger also notes that verse 3 is itself arranged in a small introversion: Nabal, Abigail, Abigail, Nabal, with Abigail at the centre framed by her husband on either side.

Appendix 2: The Hebrew Words in This Study

Hebrew	In English letters	Strong's	Meaning	Where in 1 Samuel 25
נָבָל	*Nabal*	H5036, H5037	fool; a morally senseless, impious man	the name, throughout; 25:25
נְבָלָה	*nebalah*	H5039	folly, outrage, wickedness	25:25
נֵבֶל	*nebel*	H5035	skin-bag for wine; wine-skin	25:18 ("bottles")
אֲבִיגַיִל	*Avigayil*	H26	"my father is joy"	the name, throughout
שֶׂכֶל	*sekhel*	H7922	understanding, insight, success	25:3 ("good understanding")
קָשֶׁה	*qasheh*	H7186	hard, harsh, severe	25:3 ("churlish")
כָּלְבִּי / כלבו	*kalibbi / kelibbo*	H3612, H3611	Calebite; sounds like "dog"; written form can read "according to his heart"	25:3
בְּלִיַּעַל	*beliyya'al*	H1100	worthlessness; "son of Belial" = good-for-nothing	25:17, 25

Hebrew	In English letters	Strong's	Meaning	Where in 1 Samuel 25
חוֹמָה	*chomah*	H2346	wall of protection, city wall	25:16 ("a wall unto us")
עִיט	*'it*	H5860	to swoop down on, fly at	25:14 ("railed")
מַשְׁתִּין בְּקִיר	*mashtin beqir*	H8366, H7023	one who urinates against a wall; every male	25:22, 34
קִיר	*qir*	H7023	ordinary wall of a house or building	25:22, 34
יָשַׁע	*yasha'*	H3467	to save, deliver	25:26, 31, 33 ("avenging thyself")
דָּמִים	*damim*	H1818	bloods; bloodshed, bloodguilt	25:26, 33 ("shed blood")
בַּיִת נֶאֱמָן	*bayit ne'eman*	H1004, H539	a sure, lasting house; a dynasty	25:28
צְרוֹר	*tseror*	H6872	bundle, bag, pouch; also a small stone	25:29 ("bundle of life")
קֶלַע	*qela'*	H7050	sling	25:29
נָגִיד	*nagid*	H5057	captain, leader, prince-designate	25:30 ("ruler")
פּוּקָה	*puqah*	H6330	staggering, stumbling-block (only here)	25:31 ("grief")
מִכְשׁוֹל	*mikhshol*	H4383	stumbling-block, offence	25:31 ("offence of heart")
טַעַם	*ta'am*	H2940	taste; discernment, judgment	25:33 ("advice")
מִשְׁתֶּה	*mishteh*	H4960	drinking-feast, banquet	25:36 ("feast")
נָגַף	*nagaph*	H5062	to strike, smite, plague	25:38 ("smote")
רִיב	*riv*	H7378, H7379	to plead a cause; a legal case	25:39 ("pleaded the cause")

Appendix 3: Every Argument Weighed

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
1	David asked nothing of the LORD before arming, unlike at Keilah	Ch. 1	Strong inference	A narrator need not record every prayer
2	Samuel's death sets the scene for counsel from an unexpected source	Ch. 1	Reasonable inference	25:1 may simply mark time
3	"Paran" (Hebrew) or "Maon" (Greek)	Ch. 1	Neutral	Both readings have a fair case
4	Nabal, of Caleb's house, contrasts with faithful Caleb	Ch. 2	Corroboration only	"Of the house of Caleb" may be a clan note only
5	Carmel recalls Saul's monument	Ch. 2	Corroboration only	Carmel is named because Nabal's flocks were there

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
6	The request came on a feast day when generosity was expected	Ch. 2	Direct statement	A feast day creates no legal duty to give
7	David's men protected Nabal's shepherds and took nothing	Ch. 3	Direct statement	The servant may have exaggerated
8	David's message was courteous, with no threat	Ch. 3	Direct statement	Courteous words can carry an unspoken threat
9	The request was not a protection racket (Claim E)	Ch. 3	Strong inference	The text was written by David's supporters
10	Nabal's name means "fool" in the moral sense	Ch. 4	Direct statement	—
11	"Of the house of Caleb" plays on "dog"	Ch. 4	Reasonable inference	It may be a simple clan note
12	Nabal "after his own heart" vs. David "after His heart" (13:14)	Ch. 4	Corroboration only	Different spellings of "heart"; may be chance
13	Sons of Belial refuse a gift to the anointed (10:27 and 25)	Ch. 4	Reasonable inference	Refusing gifts to a leader can repeat by chance
14	Isaiah 32 and Jeremiah 17 portray the *nabal*	Ch. 4	Corroboration only	They describe the type, not this man
15	Nabal's words echo Saul's ("son of Jesse," runaway servant)	Ch. 4	Reasonable inference	Any enemy of David might speak so
16	Nabal and *nebel* (wine-skin) wordplay	Chs. 4, 9	Reasonable inference	*Nebel* is an ordinary word for a wine container
17	Nabal is drawn as a mirror of Saul (Claim B)	Ch. 4	Strong inference	Ungrateful rich men resemble one another
18	Triple "sword" contrasts with "the LORD saveth not with sword"	Ch. 5	Reasonable inference	Soldiers naturally take swords
19	"Him that pisseth against the wall" means every male (Claim C)	Ch. 5	Strong inference	Kimchi's "even the dog" (same meaning, sharpened)
20	The wall is the face of God	Ch. 5	**Not adopted**	Isaiah 38:2 links the *qir* with prayer, but never calls it God's face
21	The protecting wall (25:16) and the cursing wall (25:22)	Ch. 5	Reasonable inference	Different Hebrew words; may not be a pun
22	"Enemies of David" is a scribal softening (Claim D)	Ch. 5	Reasonable inference	David may have softened it himself
23	David was about to do what Saul did at Nob	Ch. 5	Reasonable inference	Blood-feud slaughter needs no literary link
24	Abigail's gift echoes Jacob's gift to Esau (four hundred men, *ivru lefanai*)	Ch. 6	Strong inference	Anyone placating an angry man sends gifts and bows
25	Abigail rightly acted without telling Nabal	Ch. 6	Strong inference	A wife's normal course is to honour her husband

#	Argument	Where	Weight	What the other reading fairly answers
26	God brought them together in the covert of the hill	Ch. 6	Narrative, with David's verdict (25:32)	Ordinary providence, not miracle
27	"Avenging thyself" = "saving thyself," echoing Judges 7:2	Ch. 7	Strong inference	—
28	"The LORD hath withholden thee" is prophetic	Ch. 7	Reasonable inference	It may be confident hope
29	"Sure house" anticipates the Davidic covenant (Claim A)	Chs. 7, 8	Strong inference	A wise woman might wish a king a lasting house
30	The sling recalls Goliath	Ch. 7	Strong inference	—
31	"Bundle of life" = a shepherd's bag of stones (Bullinger)	Ch. 7	**Demoted to corroboration only**	The bag in 17:40 is called by different Hebrew words
32	"Appointed thee ruler" echoes Samuel's words in 13:14	Ch. 7	Strong inference	Samuel's words were public, so she could have heard them
33	Abigail foresaw the moral danger of bloodguilt	Ch. 7	Reasonable inference	This is good moral sense
34	Most of Abigail's knowledge was available by ordinary means	Ch. 8	Opposing case, stated	—
35	David saw her coming as God's sending	Ch. 8	Direct statement	Providence, not necessarily revelation
36	God gave revelation to women in Israel	Ch. 8	Direct statement (corroboration only for Abigail)	Scripture never says the spirit came on her
37	Abigail foresaw Bathsheba by name (Talmud)	Ch. 8	**Not adopted**	The text does not say so
38	Talmud's added details about Abigail	Ch. 8	**Set aside**	No basis in the text
39	Abigail spoke by revelation (Claim A, overall)	Ch. 8	Reasonable inference; strong on "sure house"	All could be deep wisdom
40	"Smote" (25:38) is repeated of Saul in 26:10	Ch. 9	Strong inference	*Nagaph* is a common verb
41	"Plead my cause" (24:15) answered in 25:39	Ch. 9	Strong inference	A common prayer in the Psalms
42	Chapters 24-26 are arranged principle, test, conviction (Claim B)	Ch. 10	Strong inference	Same period, same vocabulary, by nature
43	Abigail's warning and Psalm 51's "bloodguiltiness" (*damim*)	Ch. 10	Reasonable inference	Any good warning is later fulfilled somewhere
44	Scripture records David's polygamy without approving it	Ch. 11	Strong inference	1 Samuel 25 makes no comment
45	"Daniel" ("God is my judge") fits his mother's story	Ch. 11	Corroboration only	"Daniel" was a common name

Appendix 4: A Timeline of David's Wilderness Years

Dates follow Ussher as printed in the *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. They are approximate.

Event	Reference	About
David anointed by Samuel at Bethlehem	1 Samuel 16	before 1062 B.C.
David kills Goliath; Saul's jealousy begins	1 Samuel 17-18	—
David flees; Michal lets him down through a window	1 Samuel 19	about 1062 B.C.
Jonathan's covenant; David at Nob and Gath	1 Samuel 20-21	about 1062 B.C.
Cave of Adullam; four hundred men gather; Saul slaughters Nob	1 Samuel 22	about 1062-1061 B.C.
Keilah; six hundred men; Ziph; escape in the wilderness of Maon	1 Samuel 23	about 1061 B.C.
David spares Saul at En-gedi	1 Samuel 24	about 1061-1060 B.C.
Samuel dies; Nabal and Abigail	1 Samuel 25	about 1060 B.C.
David spares Saul again at Hachilah	1 Samuel 26	about 1060 B.C.
David with Achish at Gath; then Ziklag (a year and four months)	1 Samuel 27	about 1058-1056 B.C.
Ziklag raided; Abigail captured and rescued	1 Samuel 30	about 1056 B.C.
Saul dies on Mount Gilboa	1 Samuel 31	about 1056 B.C.
David anointed king over Judah at Hebron; Chileab born there	2 Samuel 2-3	about 1056 B.C. and after

David was thirty when he began to reign (2 Samuel 5:4), so at the time of 1 Samuel 25 he was in his middle twenties.

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