



## STUDY GUIDE FOR SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2018

*“Blessed Is the Peacemaker!”* 1 Samuel 25:18-42

**SECOND  
SUNDAY**

[The story takes place **eleven centuries** before Jesus when **Saul** was the first King of Israel. **David**, who had been like a son to the King, is now **on the run** from a jealous Saul with a band of his followers. As David evades Saul’s pursuit, he also makes time to continue to slay enemies of the Israelites, e.g. the Philistines, which **endears him to the people**.

[Before the prophet Samuel died he followed the Lord’s instructions and **anointed David as the new king**, but David has no way claim the throne for the moment. As a rebel band, David and his men could choose to wreak havoc in the countryside, but instead they **are respectful of the farmers and herdsman** sometimes even protecting their property from thieves. David and his followers necessarily live off the land and depend upon the kindness of locals. David sends **messengers** to a certain **Nabal** (which means “fool”), a very rich man with many sheep asking for some charity. They tell Nabal that David’s men had previously protected Nabal’s herds and their caretakers. Nabal, however, haughtily **makes fun of David** and denies his men any help. When David learns of the affront **he prepares** to take his band and slay Nabal and all his men. One of Nabal’s servants, however, gets wind of this plan and immediately goes to Nabal’s lovely “and intelligent” wife, **Abigail**, pleading for her to **intercede**.]

<sup>18-19</sup> Abigail flew into action. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep dressed out and ready for cooking, a bushel of roasted grain, a hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred fig cakes, and she had it all loaded on some donkeys. Then she said to her young servants, “Go ahead and pave the way for me. I’m right behind you.” But she said nothing to her husband Nabal.

<sup>20-22</sup> As she was riding her donkey, descending into a ravine, David and his men were descending from the other end, so they met there on the road. David had just said, “That sure was a waste, guarding everything this man had out in the wild so that nothing he had was lost—and now he rewards me with insults. A real slap in the face! May God do his worst to me if Nabal and every cur in his misbegotten brood aren’t dead meat by morning!”

<sup>23-25</sup> As soon as Abigail saw David, she got off her donkey and fell on her knees at his feet, her face to the ground in homage, saying, “My master, let me take the blame! Let me speak to you. Listen to what I have to say. Don’t dwell on what that brute Nabal did. He acts out the meaning of his name: Nabal, Fool. Foolishness oozes from him.

<sup>25-27</sup> “I wasn’t there when the young men my master sent arrived. I didn’t see them. And now, my master, as GOD lives and as you live, GOD has kept you from this avenging murder—and may your enemies, all who seek my master’s harm, end up like Nabal! Now take this gift that I, your servant girl, have brought to my master, and give it to the young men who follow in the steps of my master.

<sup>28-29</sup> “Forgive my presumption! But GOD is at work in my master, developing a rule solid and dependable. My master fights GOD’s battles! As long as you live no evil will stick to you. If anyone stands in your way, if anyone tries to get you out of the way, Know this: Your God-honored life is tightly bound in the bundle of God-protected life; But the lives of your enemies will be hurled aside as a stone is thrown from a sling.

<sup>30-31</sup> “When GOD completes all the goodness he has promised my master and sets you up as prince over Israel, my master will not have this dead weight in his heart, the guilt of an avenging murder. And when GOD has worked things for good for my master, remember me.”

<sup>32-34</sup> And David said, “Blessed be GOD, the God of Israel. He sent you to meet me! And blessed be your good sense! Bless you for keeping me from murder and taking charge of looking out for me. A close call! As GOD lives, the God of Israel who kept me from hurting you, if you had not come as quickly as you did, stopping me in my tracks, by morning there would have been nothing left of Nabal but dead meat.”

<sup>35</sup> Then David accepted the gift she brought him and said, “Return home in peace. I’ve heard what you’ve said and I’ll do what you’ve asked.”

[*Back home Abigail finds Nabal feasting. The next day she tells him what she’s done. Nabal has a heart attack and passes away a few days later.*] <sup>39-40</sup> When David heard that Nabal was dead he said, “Blessed be GOD who has stood up for me against Nabal’s insults, kept me from an evil act, and let Nabal’s evil boomerang back on him.”

Then David sent for Abigail to tell her that he wanted her for his wife. David’s servants went to Abigail at Carmel with the message, “David sent us to bring you to marry him.” <sup>41</sup> She got up, and then bowed down, face to the ground, saying, “I’m your servant, ready to do anything you want. I’ll even wash the feet of my master’s servants!” (Transl.: *The Message*)

### SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What **surprises** you or is of special interest for you about this passage? What **questions** might you ask about it?
- At this point of time in the Middle East, what is your understanding of **the role of a wife** in a household? What rights did she have, especially in relationship with her husband?
- What role does **hospitality** play in relationships between members of families and friends? Can you think of a time in your relationships where a hospitable gesture has **influenced an outcome**? What role do you think hospitality played in **ancient Palestine**?
- From the reading here, do you think of **David** as a mild and reasoned man or as more impetuous and impulsive? Which characteristic might you **prefer in a leader**? What do you think might have been going on in David’s mind in **the larger picture** of his conflict with Saul and God’s call for him to become King?
- When Abigail learns of her husband’s response and what this might mean for her household, she “flies in action,” marshalling together many items of food to be given as a peace offering without asking her husband’s permission. What **risks** do you think she might have been taking in doing this? What words come to mind **to describe her** here?
- When Abigail makes her plea to David, what does **she offer** that might appease him and cool down his anger? In her speech to David, Abigail uses the metaphor of **two pouches**: one held **tightly by God** where the life of David resides and another containing stones for a sling that are shot away like the lives of **his enemies**. Why might this image be telling **for David**?
- Some feminists have criticized Abigail for being **too obsequious** to David, and yet others believe that she has **risen to the occasion** being canny and intrepid in light of the limitations placed upon women. What’s your view?
- Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath.” To assuage David’s anger, Abigail offers a “**soft answer**” as she seeks to reconcile the damage done by her husband’s insult... and it works! How might a “soft answer” **be offered today** to reconcile relationships... from those within families to those between nations?