

David's Heir: Saul Orders Jonathan & His Officers to Kill David, 1 Sam 19:1; Jonathan Informs David & Counsels His Father to Rescind the Kill Order, vv. 4–5; David Is Completely Innocent thus Saul Has Ordered an Assassination; Saul Vows before God that He will not Kill David, v. 6; He Later Tries Again Violating the 3d Commandment, Ex 20:7; Jonathan Tells David He May Return to Duty, 1 Sam 19:7

1 Samuel 19:1 - Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants [עֲבָדָיו ('eveth): servants, staff, commissioned officers] to (14) put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David.

1. This is the fifth effort by Saul to have David killed. He now involves his son Jonathan who is best friends with David. Jonathan informs David and then counsels his father against such action.

1 Samuel 19:4 - Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you.

v. 5 - "For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the Lord brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without cause?" (NASB)

2. It is interesting to note Jonathan's rationales for Saul sparing David: (1) "he has not sinned against you," (2) "his deeds have been very beneficial to you," (3) "he took his life in his hand" and killed Goliath, and (4) he delivered Israel from the Philistines.
3. In verse 5, Jonathan poses a question that appeals to Saul's conscience: "Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without cause?"
4. Jonathan boldly states that his father's request to him and his commissioned officers is a sin, the Qal imperfect of the verb חֵטְאָה (chet'ah): "to miss the mark or fail."
5. Chet'ah is the word most often used in the Tanakh for sin and its application here is a sin against another human being.
6. That sin is expressed by Jonathan as first degree murder. It is expressed in the NASB by the phrase "putting David to death." But this is a euphemistic phrase.
7. Saul has in fact instructed his son and officers to kill David, the Qal imperfect of the verb מוֹת (muth). The imperfect tense indicates that this idea is habitually on Saul's mind.
7. Jonathan tells his father that he has an obsession about killing a man that has done him no harm, has honored his position as the "Lord's anointed," done great service to the nation, and to do so would be without cause.
8. First degree murder is defined as follows by *Black's Law Dictionary*:

The crime committed where a person kills any human being without any warrant, justification, or excuse in law, with malice aforethought, express or implied, that is, with a deliberate purpose or a design or determination distinctly formed in the mind before the commission of the act.¹

¹ Henry Campbell Black, "Murder," in *Black's Law Dictionary*, 4th ed. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1968), 1170–71.

9. This is Saul's fifth effort to either murder David himself, conspire to put him in Harm's way so enemy troops would do it, and here, to instruct his son and officers to carry out the deed.
10. However, Jonathan's critique managed to penetrate through the scar tissue on Saul's soul into what was left of his conscience.
11. Yet in the darkness of reversionism, Saul cannot access doctrine, but is rather influenced by guilt:

1 Samuel 19:6 - Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the Lord lives, (15) he shall not be put to death."
12. We have already noted that Saul was afraid of David in 1 Samuel 18:12, 29. Now we discover that Saul is afraid of the Lord and well he should be.
13. When people are caught red-handed they will often put on a show during which they express regret, insist they made a mistake, weren't thinking, and swear they will never do it again, all of which is a lie.
14. This is called removing one's tail from a crack. Such is exactly what Saul is doing, but how he does it makes a bad situation for him even worse.
15. People in reversionism are unstable people in thought, speech, and deed. Jonathan has been successful in explaining to Saul that his desire to kill David has no basis in fact.
16. This adds guilt to the ongoing accumulation of sins committed by Saul and this guilt leads to him rescinding the kill order.
17. But guilt only adds to the darkness in Saul's soul; it does nothing toward leading him back into the light. Instead of soliciting rebound, what the guilt does is remind Saul of the fact that David's impeccable reputation is the very reason he must be eliminated.
18. But for the moment, Saul backs off his threat. In an effort to sound convincing to himself and others, he vows as the Lord is his witness that he no longer intends to have David killed.
19. If Saul had rebounded, let David alone, and gotten back to the business of governing Israel, then all would have been well. But he did not.
20. He verbalized an oath using the phrase "As the Lord lives" to preface his statement "he shall not be put to death" (1 Samuel 19:6).
21. Yet before chapter 19 is finished he will have made three more attempts on David's life. It is a solemn thing to make an oath before God, but it is a foolish thing to do so and then not follow through.
22. Principle: The more Saul tries to keep David off the throne of Israel the closer he gets to moving off of it himself.
23. To understand the seriousness of making an oath before God and then not keeping it requires some background on the subject:

Oath, שְׁבוּעָה (shevu'ah): The oath is the invoking of a curse upon one's self if one has not spoken the truth, or if one fails to keep a promise (1 Samuel 19:6).

The Mosaic laws concerning oaths were not meant to limit the widespread custom of making oaths, so much as to impress upon the people the sacredness of an oath, forbidding on the one hand swearing falsely (Exodus 20:7),² and on the other swearing by false gods, which latter were considered to be a very dark sin.³ The Jewish interpretation of the 3d commandment is that it is not concerned with oaths, but rather forbids the use of the name of Jehovah in ordinary cases.

Swearing in the name of the Lord was a sign of loyalty to Him. In ordinary intercourse it was customary to swear by the life of the person addressed. (p. 2172)

The usual formula of an oath was more commonly: "As Jehovah [or God] liveth."⁴ (p. 2173)

24. Saul has violated the Third Commandment which states that "the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."
25. The word "vain" is the noun שָׁוְיָ (*shaw'*) and defined as follows:
The primary meaning of the word is deceit, lie, or falsehood. In the Ten Commandments, the word is used to describe what is prohibited.⁵
26. What is prohibited is citing the Lord's name in the context of an oath that results in deceiving those to whom it is directed. The one deceived is Saul's son Jonathan:

1 Samuel 19:7 - Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly.

² "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." This is the third of the Ten Commandments.

³ See 1 Samuel 17:43, "And the Philistine cursed David by his gods," compared with vv. 49–51.

⁴ Paul Levertoff, "Oath," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 3:2172–73.

⁵ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, "שָׁוְיָ," in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 1107.