

## 17.10 David Flees to Nob, Then to Gath (1 Samuel 21:1–15; Psa. 34; 56)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows  
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- A plastic sword wrapped in cloth or a pillow case

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *shewbread*: [pronounced “show” bread] the bread placed weekly on the table of shewbread in the tabernacle

### Scripture: (ESV)

1 Samuel 21:1 Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David trembling and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?” 2 And David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. 3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.”

4 And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women.” 5 And David answered the priest, “Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?” 6 So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord. His name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul’s herdsmen.

8 Then David said to Ahimelech, “Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.” 9 And the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

10 And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11 And the servants of Achish said to him, “Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, ‘Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?” 12 And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13 So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. 14 Then Achish said to his servants, “Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? 15 Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?”

Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech,<sup>1</sup> so that he drove him out, and he went away.

Psalm 34:1 I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!

4 I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. 5 Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! 10 The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

11 Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. 12 What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. 16 The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. 20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. 21 Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. 22 The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

To the choirmaster: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. A Miktam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 56:1 Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; 2 my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. 3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

5 All day long they injure my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6 They stir up strife, they lurk; they watch my steps, as they have waited for my life. 7 For their crime will they escape? In wrath cast down the peoples, O God!

8 You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? 9 Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me. 10 In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, 11 in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?

12 I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. 13 For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

### **Introduction/Review:**

[Review the tabernacle and its furniture, especially the table of shewbread and the fact that the bread was changed out once a week. Usually, the priests ate the bread that was replaced by fresh bread.]

Michal couldn't keep David with her. Samuel couldn't keep David with him. Jonathan couldn't keep David with him. Where could David go for help?

### **Story:**

#### ***David goes to Nob***

Ah! He would go to where the tabernacle was, where the priests were, even though the ark of the covenant was not there (1 Samuel 7:1, 2). He would go to the city named Nob [locate southeast of Gibeah about 2 miles] near Jerusalem.

✓Perhaps David thought the priest would pray for him, give him advice about where to stay, and feed him. If so, David must have been disappointed when the priest, a son of Phinehas and grandson of Eli, was greatly afraid when David came to see him without the king's soldiers. This priest, named Ahimelech, nervously

asked, “Why are you here alone?” (A few men, ✓perhaps servants, were with David but no king’s men.)

What David answered disappoints me, for he lied. “Oh, the king sent me on secret business and told me not to tell anyone about it. Now, Ahimelech, do you have about five loaves of bread for us to eat?”

### ***David gets bread and a sword***

Ahimelech answered, “I have no bread in my house except the bread that was on the table of shewbread in the tabernacle last week. We replaced it with new hot bread today. If you fellows are not ceremonially unclean, you may eat it, since you’re so hungry, even though it’s usually just for the priest’s family.”

Then David asked, “May I get a spear from someone in Nob? The king was in a great hurry for me to leave on his business, and I didn’t have time to get a sword or my weapons.” (David, not the king, was in a hurry.)

Ahimelech answered, “We, being a city of priests, have no swords, ✓for we don’t use them. However, Goliath’s sword was given to us to keep after you slew him in the Valley of Elah. We have it wrapped in a cloth back here. If you want it, take it, for it’s the only sword we have.” [Teacher, unwrap the plastic sword at this point in the story.]

“Ah!” said David, “There’s no sword like that one. Give it to me.”

David took the sword and bread and ran. Would he get away without being noticed by any of Saul’s servants? No, for Doeg, the man in charge of Saul’s herdsmen, saw David get the bread and the sword. Would he go tell Saul where David was? We’ll find out in another lesson.

### ***David goes to Gath***

But now David was running for his life. Where would he go? Oh, no! Not there, David! [Show on a map David’s running toward Philistia.] David, are you going to the country of your enemies, the Philistines? Is that safe? What! David, are you going to Gath, where Goliath had lived? Surely, that can’t be safe!

Safe or not, David traveled at least thirty miles from Nob to get to Gath. ✓Maybe it was because there was no safe place in Israel or in countries that were friends with Saul that David went to Gath—to Achish, king of Gath. ✓Achish seemed content for a while to have Saul’s enemy, David, but his servants, on the other hand, warned, “Isn’t this David, king of the land? Didn’t they sing of him with dances, saying, ‘Saul slew thousands, but David, ten thousands’?”

### ***David gets out of Gath***

When David heard what these servants were saying to Achish, he became very scared of Achish and figured out a way to get out of Gath: He began to act insane, like a lunatic. He made marks on the doors of the gate. His spit fell on his beard. It was pitiful and gross sight!

Achish was disgusted. He said, “Look! You can see the man is a lunatic. Why did you bring him to me? Do I need a mad man in my house? Get him out of here!”<sup>3</sup>

David left, but where could he go next?

I wonder if David regretted his lying and not trusting, for Psalm 34:13, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit,” and Psalm 56:3, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you,” were both written during this time.

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<sup>1</sup> “[T]his Abimelech was king of Gath, the same with Achish, (1Sa 21:10); who either had two names; or this of Abimelech, as it should seem, was a common name to all the kings of the Philistines; see (Ge 20:2 26:8); as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings, and Caesar to the Roman emperors: the name signifies a “father king”, or “my father king”, or a “royal father”; as kings should be the fathers of their country” ([Introduction - Meaning and Commentary on Bible Verse \(biblestudytools.com\)](http://www.biblestudytools.com)).

<sup>2</sup>Psalm 56's title includes the words, "when the Philistines *seized* [David] in Gath" (emphasis added). The only hint in 1 Samuel 21 that David was actually "seized" is in Achish's question, "Why . . . have you brought him to me?" (emphasis added). Matthew Henry comments, "David, in this psalm, by his faith throws himself into the hands of God, even when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines; it was when they took him in Gath, whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mind of it, 1 Sa. 21:10, 1 Sa. 21:11" (Psalms 56 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete) (biblestudytools.com)).

<sup>3</sup>Some scholars think Achish's wife and sister or daughter were "mad." David was just too much of a bad thing.

### Lessons from This Lesson:

- We see Jesus:

The title of Psalm 56, written about this event, is "To the Dove on Far-off Terebinths." Matthew Henry states that David "was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in distant countries; there he was like the doves of the valleys, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God nor railing at the instruments of his trouble." In this way, David was "a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearers" (Psalms 56 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible (Complete) (biblestudytools.com)).

### Activities:

- Play dough: bread; sword
- Snack: Unleavened bread. A recipe and suggested condiments may be found at [How to Make Unleavened Bread From the Bible - Episode #52 \(thebiblicalnutritionist.com\)](http://thebiblicalnutritionist.com).
- Tell the flashcard story, "Peblos and His Many Hats," about lying. This story is found in a separate document entitled, "17.10a Peblos and His Many Hats." (After being unable to find the story or its author online, I have taken the liberty to reproduce my copy.)
- Read Psalms 34 and 56 to learn David's thoughts in the midst of great trouble.
- Review questions: (Game: The student who answers a question correctly gets to hold a toy plastic sword until the next person answers a question correctly.) [Generally, one or two students are "stars" at answering. Allow them to answer only three questions and then wait to give others a chance.]
  1. After David escaped from Samuel's town, where did he go? [To Nob, the town of the priests.]
  2. How did Ahimelech the priest receive David when he arrived in Nob? [With great fear.]
  3. What two things did David request of Ahimelech the priest? [Food and a spear.]
  4. What bread did Ahimelech give David? [The shewbread that had been on the table of shewbread the previous week.]
  5. What spear did Ahimelech give David? [Goliath's spear.]
  6. To what Philistine city did David go next? [Gath.]
  7. King Achish's servants said what about David? ["He is the king of the land"; "They say he has killed ten thousands."]
  8. What did David do to get out of his fearful predicament in Gath? [Pretended to be insane.]

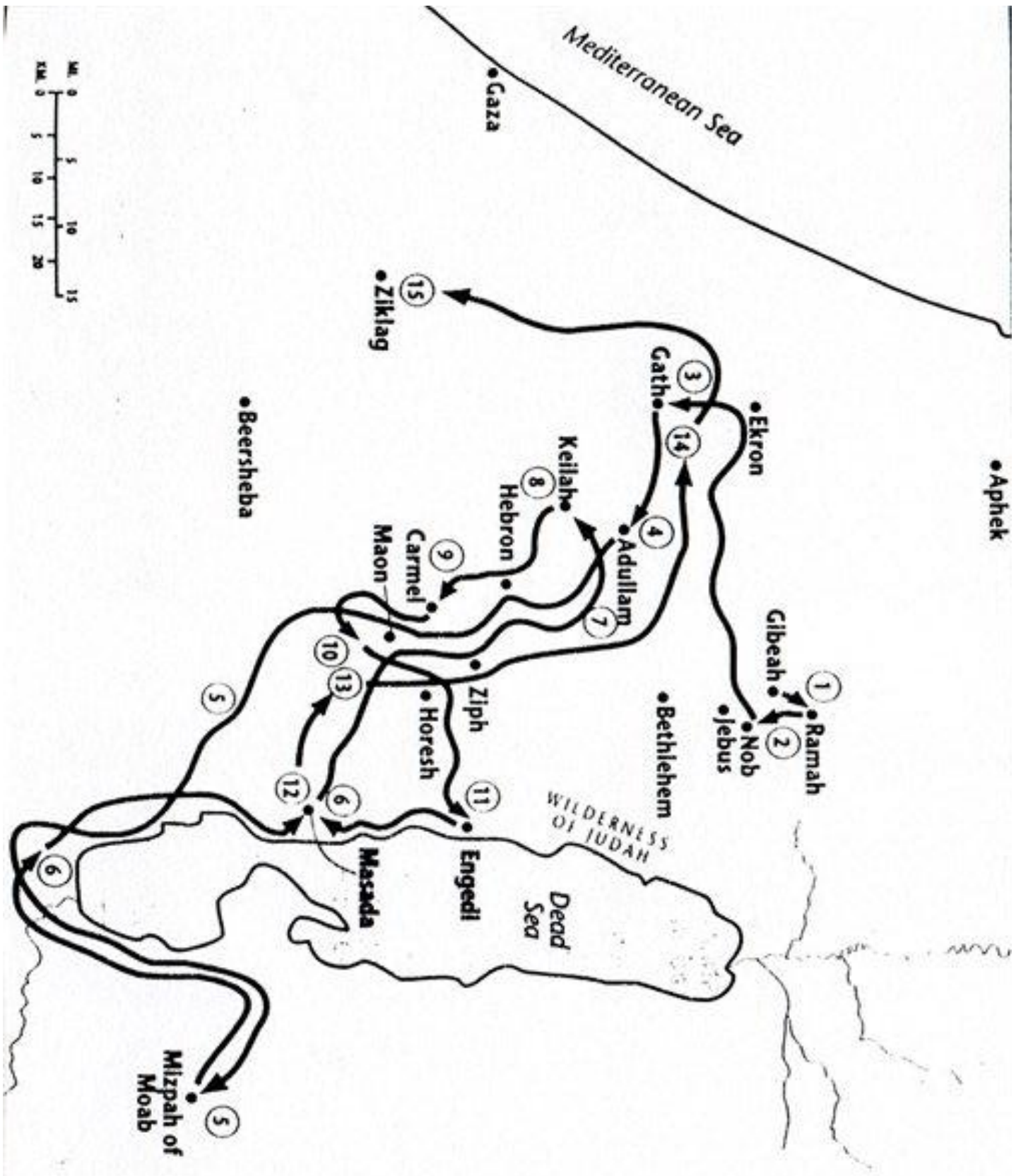
### Memory Verse[s]:

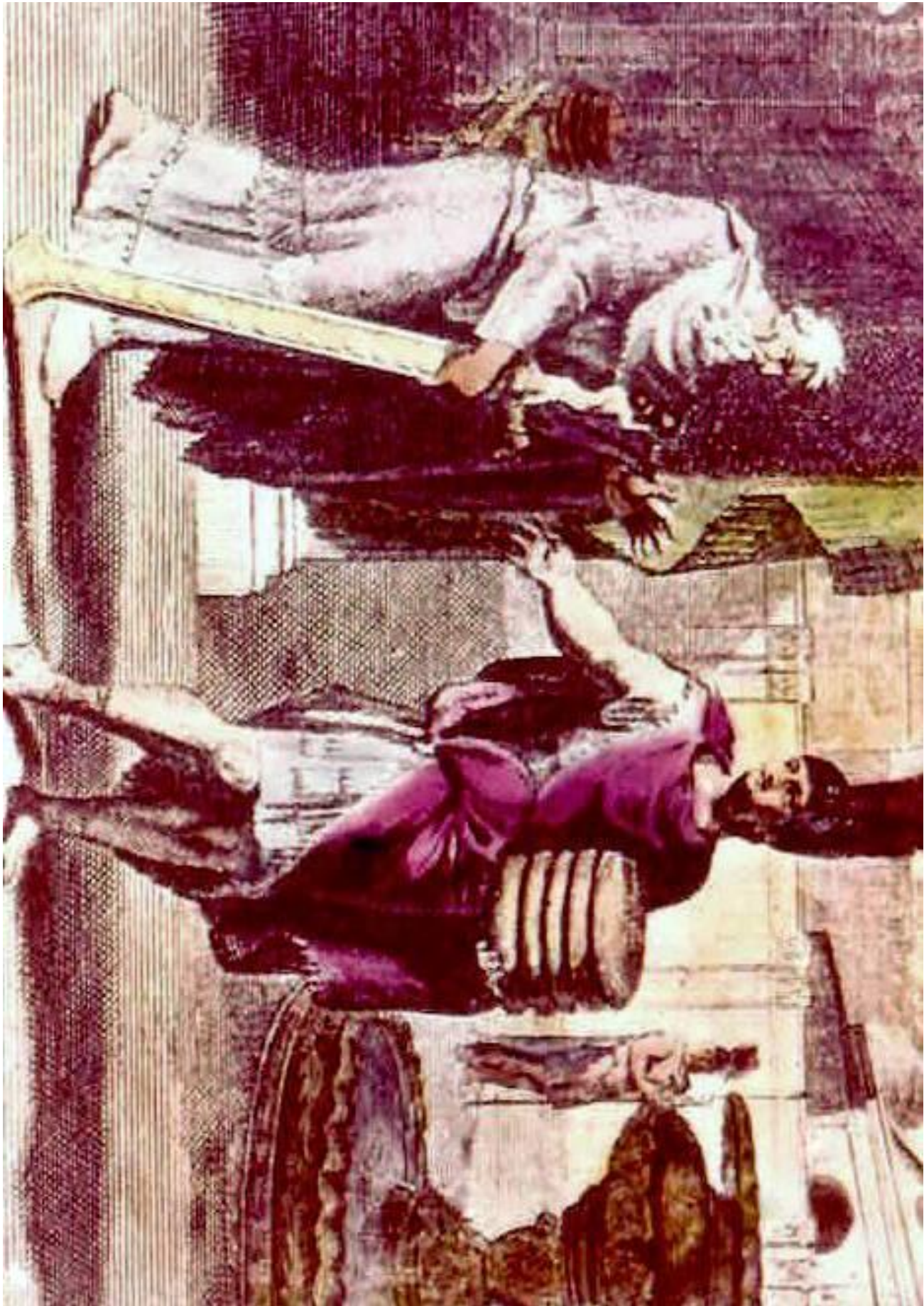
- Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

**Handwork:**

- Make a belt of truth. Step-by-step instructions with photos can be found at [Eagle Nest Mom: How to Make a Belt of Truth - Ephesians 6:13 - 18](#). This craft might be a little complicated for younger students.
- Or color the “belt of truth” page found below.

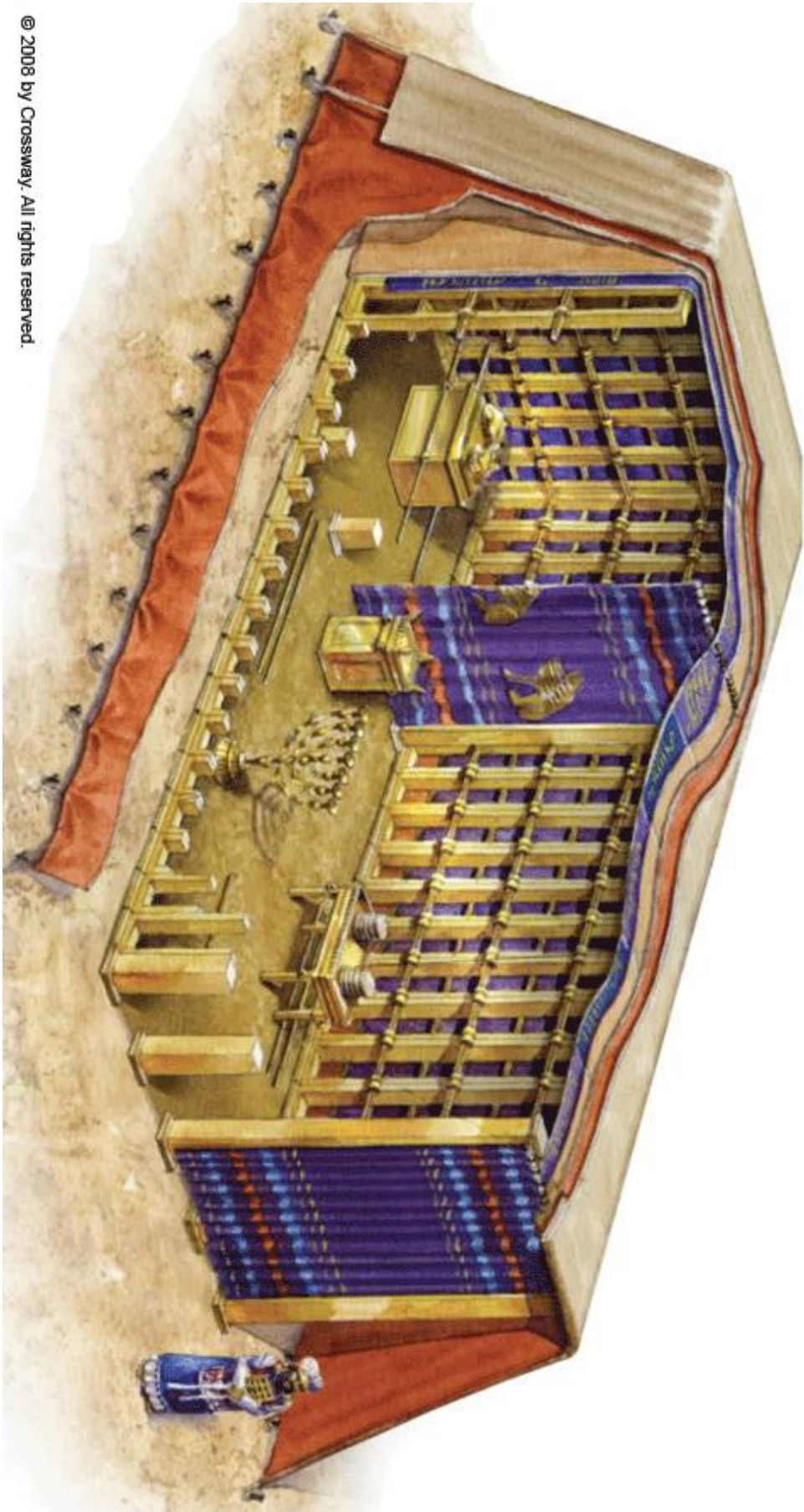
**shewbread**





<https://whatshotn.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/ahimelech-gave-david-five-loaves-of-shewbread.jpg>





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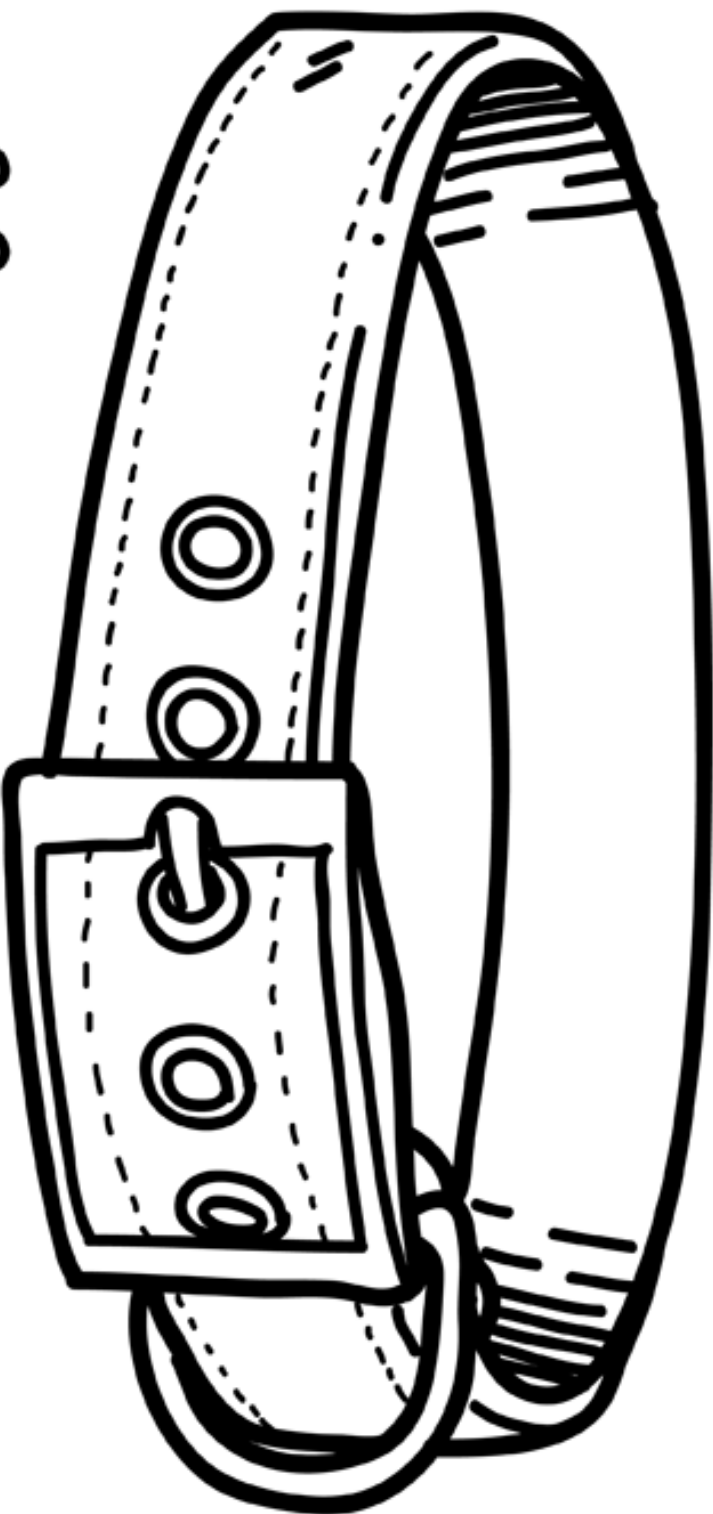
St-Takla.org



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Image: Image: صورة (st-takla.org)

Stand firm then,  
with the belt of truth



buckled around your waist

Ephesians 6:14