

What is the significance of Keilah in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Keilah-in-the-Bible.html>

Keilah is mentioned sixteen times in the Bible, all in the Old Testament. In one instance, Keilah is a personal name, and in the others it is a place name. The meaning of the name Keilah is “fortress” or “citadel.”

A man named Keilah is mentioned in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles (4:19). Every other time, Keilah refers to a geographical location. Although there are fifteen other uses, they occur in only three passages.

The place Keilah is first mentioned in Joshua 15:44 as one of the Canaanite cities that was allotted to Judah when the Promised Land was first being conquered and divided among the tribes.

Keilah is also mentioned twice in Jeremiah 3:17-18 where those who repaired the wall around Jerusalem are listed. Here Keilah is a district. Two leaders are mentioned, each of them over “half the district of Keilah.”

Keilah is mentioned twelve times in 1 Samuel 23:1-14. Before he became king and when he was fleeing from Saul, David led a band of about 600 men who served to protect him and to help other Israelites in need. Keilah, a fortified city in the Judean plain, was being terrorized by the Philistines and was in need of help.

“Now they told David, ‘Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors’” (1 Samuel 23:1, ESV). David inquired of the Lord twice about going to Keilah (verses 2a and 4a), and twice the Lord promised victory over the

Philistines (verses 2b and 4b). “And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah” (verse 5, ESV).

The report of David’s rout of the Philistines reached King Saul, and, thinking he had David trapped, Saul immediately “summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men” (1 Samuel 23:8, ESV). In Keilah, David consulted with Abiathar the priest and asked God if David and his men were safe in Keilah (verses 9-11). The Lord’s response was that David and his men were not safe. Saul would come down to the city, and the people of Keilah would surrender David into Saul’s hands (verse 12). “Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go” (verse 13, ESV). Saul gave up his plan to besiege Keilah but continued to search for David. “And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand” (verse 14, ESV).

This passage illustrates how David relied on God’s leading in his day-to-day decisions and his desire to help his fellow countrymen. In 1 Samuel 23:1-12, David prays no fewer than four times. And David does not act until he knows the Lord’s will in the matter. Amazingly, the people of Keilah were disloyal to David, even after he had saved them. They were even willing to betray David into the hands of his enemy. In spite of this, David did not take vengeance on Keilah. He simply left before it became an issue.

In contrast to David’s four prayers, Saul does not pray at all. Rather, he assumes the circumstances that seemed favorable to him were proof of God’s blessing and that he was following God’s leading (1 Samuel 23:7). He had convinced himself that murdering David was God’s will, but God thwarted those evil plans and preserved David’s life.