
1SAMUEL 18: 1 When he had made an end of speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

Jonathan and David commence a lasting friendship; and David acts prudently with respect to Saul, 1Sam 18:1-5. Saul becomes jealous of David, on account of the esteem in which he is held in Israel; and, in his fury endeavors to destroy him, 1Sam 18:6-12. David is made captain over a thousand; and the people love and respect him, 1Sam 18:13-16. Saul, in order to ensnare him, offers him his daughter in marriage, 1Sam 18:17-24; and requires a hundred foreskins of the Philistines for dowry; hoping that, in endeavoring to procure them, David might fall by the hands of the Philistines, 1Sam 18:25. David agrees to the conditions, fulfils them, and has Michal to wife, 1Sam 18:26-30.

Verse 1

When he had made an end of speaking - These first five verses are omitted by the Septuagint. See the notes on the preceding chapter, 1 Samuel 17 (note).

Jonathan loved him as his own soul - The most intimate friendship subsisted between them; and they loved each other with pure hearts fervently. No love was lost between them; each was worthy of the other. They had a friendship which could not be affected with changes or chances, and which exemplified all that the ancients have said on the subject; Την φιλιαν ισοτητα ειναι, και μιαν ψυχην, τον φιλον ετερον αυτον; "Friendship produces an entire sameness; it is one soul in two bodies: a friend is another self."

1SAMUEL 18: 2 Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

1SAMUEL 18: 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

1SAMUEL 18: 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him, and gave it to David, and his clothing, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his sash.

Verse 4

Jonathan stripped himself - Presents of clothes or rich robes, in token of respect and friendship, are frequent in the East. And how frequently arms and clothing were presented by warriors to each other in token of friendship, may be seen in Homer and other ancient writers.

1SAMUEL 18: 5 David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and it was good in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Verse 5

Set him over the men of war - Made him generalissimo; or what we would call field marshal.

1SAMUEL 18: 6 As they came, when David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with instruments of music.

Verse 6

When David was returned - This verse connects well with the 54th verse of the preceding chapter; and carries on the narration without any break or interruption. See the notes on 1Sam 17:54.

The women came out - It was the principal business of certain women to celebrate victories, sing at funerals, etc.

With instruments of music - The original word (שלשים shalishim) signifies instruments with three strings; and is, I think, properly translated by the Vulgate, cum sistris, "with sistrums." This instrument is well known as being used among the ancient Egyptians: it was made of brass, and had three, sometimes more, brass rods across; which, being loose in their holes, made a jingling noise when the instrument was shaken.

1SAMUEL 18: 7 The women sang one to another as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands."

Verse 7

Saul hath slain his thousands - As it cannot literally be true that Saul had slain thousands, and David ten thousands; it would be well to translate the passage thus: Saul hath smitten or fought against thousands; David against tens of thousands. "Though Saul has been victorious in all his battles; yet he has not had such great odds against him as David has had; Saul, indeed, has been opposed by thousands; David, by ten thousands." We may here remark that the Philistines had drawn out their whole forces at this time: and when Goliath was slain, they were totally discomfited by the Israelites, led on chiefly by David.

1SAMUEL 18: 8 Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands. What can he have more but the kingdom?"

1SAMUEL 18: 9 Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

1SAMUEL 18: 10 On the next day, an evil spirit from God came mightily on Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house. David played with his hand, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand;

Verse 10

The evil spirit from God - See on 1Sam 16:14 (note), etc.

He prophesied in the midst of the house - He was beside himself; made prayers, supplications, and incoherent imprecations: "God preserve my life," "Destroy my enemies," or such like prayers, might frequently escape from him in his agitated state. The Arabic intimates that he was actually possessed by an evil spirit, and that through it he uttered a sort of demoniacal predictions.

But let us examine the original more closely: it is said that Saul prophesied in the midst of his house, that is, he prayed in his family, while David was playing on the harp; and then suddenly threw his javelin, intending to have killed David. Let it be observed that the word ויתנבא *vaiythnabbe* is the third person singular of the future hithpael; the sign of which is not only to do an action on or for one's self, but also to feign or pretend to do it. The meaning seems to be, Saul pretended to be praying in his family, the better to conceal his murderous intentions, and render David unsuspecting; who was, probably, at this time performing the musical part of the family worship. This view of the subject makes the whole case natural and plain.

1SAMUEL 18: 11 and Saul threw the spear; for he said, "I will pin David even to the wall!" David escaped from his presence twice.

Verse 11

Saul cast the javelin - The javelin or spear was the emblem of regal authority; kings always had it at hand, and in ancient monuments they are always represented with it.

In ancient times, says Justin, kings used a spear instead of a diadem: *Per ea tempora reges hastas pro diademate habebant, Hist. lib. xliii.* And as spears were the emblems of supreme power, hence they were reputed as attributes of the Divinity, and were worshipped as representatives of the gods. *Ab origine verum, pro Diis immortalibus veteres Hastas coluerent, ob cujus religionis memoriam, adhuc deorum simulachris Hastae adduntur. - Ibid.*

1SAMUEL 18: 12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

1SAMUEL 18: 13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

Verse 13

Made him his captain - This was under pretense of doing him honor, when it was in effect only to rid himself of the object of his envy.

1SAMUEL 18: 14 David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.

1SAMUEL 18: 15 When Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he stood in awe of him.

Verse 15

He was afraid of him - He saw that, by his prudent conduct, he was every day gaining increasing influence.

1SAMUEL 18: 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David; for he went out and came in before them.

1SAMUEL 18: 17 Saul said to David, "Behold, my elder daughter Merab, I will give her to you as wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul said, "Don't let my hand be on him, but let the hand of the Philistines be on him."

Verse 17

Fight the Lord's battles - Mr. Calmet properly remarks that the wars of the Hebrews, while conducted by the express orders of God, were truly the wars of the Lord; but when the spirit of worldly ambition and domination became mingled with them, they were no longer the wars of the Lord, but wars of lust and profanity.

1SAMUEL 18: 18 David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?"

1SAMUEL 18: 19 But at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as wife.

1SAMUEL 18: 20 Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David; and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

1SAMUEL 18: 21 Saul said, I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Therefore Saul said to David, "You shall this day be my son-in-law a second time."

Verse 21

That she may be a snare to him - Saul had already determined the condition on which he would give his daughter to David; viz., that he should slay one hundred Philistines: this he supposed he would undertake for the love of Michal, and that he must necessarily perish in the attempt; and thus Michal would become a snare to him.

1SAMUEL 18: 22 Saul commanded his servants, "Talk with David secretly, and say, 'Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you: now therefore be the king's son-in-law.'"

1SAMUEL 18: 23 Saul's servants spoke those words in the ears of David. David said, "Does it seem to you a light thing to be the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?"

1SAMUEL 18: 24 The servants of Saul told him, saying, "David spoke like this."

1SAMUEL 18: 25 Saul said, "You shall tell David, 'The king desires no dowry except one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies.'" Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

Verse 25

But a hundred foreskins - That is, Thou shalt slay one hundred Philistines, and thou shalt produce their foreskins, as a proof, not only that thou hast killed one hundred men, but that these are of the uncircumcised. A custom similar to this still prevails among the Abyssinians, according to Bruce. See his Travels.

1SAMUEL 18: 26 When his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law. The days were not expired;

1SAMUEL 18: 27 and David arose and went, he and his men, and killed of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. Saul gave him Michal his daughter as wife.

Verse 27

Slew - two hundred men - The Septuagint has only one hundred men. Saul covenanted with David for a hundred; and David himself says, 2Sam 3:14, that he espoused Michal for a hundred: hence it is likely that one hundred is the true reading.

1SAMUEL 18: 28 Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David; and Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him.

1SAMUEL 18: 29 Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul was David's enemy continually.

1SAMUEL 18: 30 Then the princes of the Philistines went out: and as often as they went out, David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was highly esteemed.

Verse 30

Then the princes of the Philistines went forth - Probably to avenge themselves on David and the Israelites: but of this war we know no more than that David was more skillful and successful in it than any of the other officers of Saul. His military skill was greater, and his success was proportionate to his skill and courage; hence it is said, he behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul.