
2SAMUEL 1: 1 After the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag;

As this is a continuation of the preceding history, without any interruption, it can scarcely be called another book. Originally this and the preceding made but one book, and they have been separated without reason or necessity. For a general account of both, see the preface to the first book of Samuel.

It is generally allowed that this book comprehends a period of forty years, from about A.M. 2949 to 2989. See the prefixed chronological account.

It has been divided into three parts: in the first we have an account of the happy commencement of David's reign, 2 Samuel 1-10. In the second, David's unhappy fall, and its miserable consequences, 2 Samuel 11-18. In the third, his restoration to the Divine favor, the re-establishment of his kingdom, and the events which signalized the latter part of his reign, 2 Samuel 19-24.

An Amalekite comes to David, and informs him that the Philistines had routed the Israelites; and that Saul and his sons were slain, 2Sam 1:1-4. And pretends that he himself had despatched Saul, finding him ready to fall alive into the hands of the Philistines, and had brought his crown and bracelets to David, 2Sam 1:5-10. David and his men mourn for Saul and his sons, 2Sam 1:11, 2Sam 1:12. He orders the Amalekite, who professed that he had killed Saul, to be slain, 2Sam 1:13-16. David's funeral song for Saul and Jonathan, 2Sam 1:17-27.

2SAMUEL 1: 2 on the third day, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes torn, and earth on his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and showed respect.

Verse 2

A man came out of the camp - The whole account which this young man gives is a fabrication: in many of the particulars it is grossly self-contradictory. There is no fact in the case but the bringing of the crown, or diadem, and bracelets of Saul; which, as he appears to have been a plunderer of the slain, he found on the field of battle; and he brought them to David, and told the lie of having despatched Saul, merely to ingratiate himself with David.

2SAMUEL 1: 3 David said to him, "Where do you come from?" He said to him, "I have escaped out of the camp of Israel."

2SAMUEL 1: 4 David said to him, "How did it go? Please tell me." He answered, "The people have fled from the battle, and many of the people also have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also."

2SAMUEL 1: 5 David said to the young man who told him, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?"

2SAMUEL 1: 6 The young man who told him said, "As I happened by chance on Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul was leaning on his spear; and behold, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him.

2SAMUEL 1: 7 When he looked behind him, he saw me, and called to me. I answered, 'Here I am.'

2SAMUEL 1: 8 He said to me, 'Who are you?' I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.'

Verse 8

I am an Amalekite - Dr. Delaney remarks that an Amalekite took that crown from off the head of Saul, which he had forfeited by his disobedience in the case of Amalek.

2SAMUEL 1: 9 He said to me, 'Please stand beside me, and kill me; for anguish has taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me.'

2SAMUEL 1: 10 So I stood beside him, and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he had fallen. I took the crown that was on his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord."

Verse 10

The crown - and the bracelet - The crown was probably no more than a royal fillet or diadem, both being the ensigns of royalty. It is sometimes customary in the East for a sovereign prince to give a crown and bracelets, when investing others with dominion or authority over certain provinces. Had Saul these in token of his being God's vicegerent, and that he held the kingdom from him alone?

2SAMUEL 1: 11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and tore them; and likewise all the men who were with him.

2SAMUEL 1: 12 They mourned, and wept, and fasted until evening, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

2SAMUEL 1: 13 David said to the young man who told him, "Where are you from?" He answered, "I am the son of a foreigner, an Amalekite."

2SAMUEL 1: 14 David said to him, "How were you not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?"

2SAMUEL 1: 15 David called one of the young men, and said, "Go near, and fall on him." He struck him, so that he died.

2SAMUEL 1: 16 David said to him, "Your blood be on your head; for your mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have slain the LORD's anointed.'"

Verse 16

Thy blood be upon thy head - If he killed Saul, as he said he did, then he deserved death; at that time it was not known to the contrary, and this man was executed on his own confession.

2SAMUEL 1: 17 David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son

Verse 17

David lamented - See this lamentation, and the notes on it at the end of this chapter, 2Sam 1:21 (note).

2SAMUEL 1: 18 (and he commanded them to teach the children of Judah the song of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jashar):

Verse 18

The use of the bow - The use of is not in the Hebrew; it is simply the bow, that is, a song thus entitled. See the observations at the end, 2Sam 1:21 (note).

2SAMUEL 1: 19 "Your glory, Israel, is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen!

2SAMUEL 1: 20 Don't tell it in Gath. Don't publish it in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

2SAMUEL 1: 21 You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew nor rain on you, neither fields of offerings; For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away, The shield of Saul was not anointed with oil.

Verse 21

As though he had not been - In stead of בלי beli, Not, I read כלי keley, Instruments.

Anointed with oil - See the observations at the end. 2Sam 1:18, etc.: He bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow, קשת kasheth.

The word kasheth is to be understood of the title of the song which immediately follows, and not of the use of the bow, as our translation intimates.

Many of David's Psalms have titles prefixed to them; some are termed Shosannim, some Maschil, Nehiloth, Neginoth, etc., and this one here, Kadesh or The Bow, because it was occasioned by the Philistine archers. 1Sam 31:3 : "And the archers hit him."

But especially respecting the bow of Jonathan, "which returned not back from the blood of the slain," as the song itself expresses. And David could not but remember the bow of Jonathan, out of which "the arrow was shot beyond the lad," 1Sam 20:36. It was the time when that covenant was made, and that affection expressed between them "which was greater than the love of women."

On these accounts the song was entitled Kasheth, or The song of the Bow, and David commanded the chief musicians, Ethan, Heman, and Jeduthun, to teach the children of Judah to sing it. "It is written in the book of Jasher." Sept., ἐπι βιβλίου του ευθους, "in the book of the upright." פֶּסֶם אֲתֵרֵיטָא siphra deoraitha, "The book of the Law." - Jonathan.

The Arabic says, "Behold it is written in the book of Ashee; this is the book of Samuel;" the interpretation of which is, "book of songs or canticles."

This lamentation is justly admired as a picture of distress the most tender and the most striking; unequally divided by grief into longer and shorter breaks, as nature could pour them forth from a mind interrupted by the alternate recurrence of the most lively images of love and greatness.

His reverence for Saul and his love for Jonathan have their strongest colourings; but their greatness and bravery come full upon him, and are expressed with peculiar energy.

Being himself a warrior, it is in that character he sees their greatest excellence; and though his imagination hurries from one point of recollection to another, yet we hear him - at first, at last, everywhere - lamenting, How are the mighty fallen!

It is almost impossible to read the noble original without finding every word swollen with a sigh or broken with a sob. A heart pregnant with distress, and striving to utter expressions descriptive of its feelings, which are repeatedly interrupted by an excess of grief, is most sensibly painted throughout the whole. Even an English reader may be convinced of this, from the following specimen in European characters: -

19. Hatstsebi Yishrael al bamotheycha chalal; Eych naphelu gibborim;

20. Al taggidu begath, Al tebasseru bechutsoth Ashkelon; Pen tismachnah benoth Pelishtim, Pen taalozenah benoth haarelim.

21. Harey baggilboa al tal, Veal matar aleychem usedey terumoth; Ki sham nigal magen Gibborim. Magen Shaul keley Mashiach bashshamen!

22. Middam chalalim, mecheleb gibborim, Kesheth Yehonathan lo nashog achor; Vechereb Shaul lo thashub reykam.

23. Shaul Vihonathan, Hannee habim vehanneimim bechaiyeyhem, Ubemotham lo niphradu. Minnesharim kallu, mearayoth gaberu!

24. Benoth Yishrael el Shaul becheynah; Hammalbishchem shani im adanim, Hammaaleh adi zahab al lebushechen.

25. Eych naphelu gibborim bethoch hammilchamah! Yehonathan al bamotheycha chalal!

26. Tsar li aleycha achi Yehonathan, naamta li meod Niphleathah ahabathecha li meahabath nashim!

27. Eych naphelu gibborim, Vaiyobedu keley milchamah!

The three last verses in this sublime lamentation have sense and sound so connected as to strike every reader.

Dr. Kennicott, from whom I have taken several of the preceding remarks, gives a fine Latin version of this song, which I here subjoin: -

O decus Israelis, super excelsa tua Miles!

Quomodo ceciderunt Fortes!
Nolite indicare in Gatho,
Nolite indicare in plateis Ascalonis:
Ne laetentur filiae Philistaeorum,
Ne exultent filiae incircumcisorum.
Montes Gilboani super vos
Nec ros, nec pluvia, neque agri primitiarum;
Ibi enim abjectus fuit clypeus fortium.
Clypeus Saulis, arma inuncti olec!
Sine sanguine Militum,
Sine adipe Fortium.
Arcus Jonathanis non retrocesserat;
Gladiusque Saulis non redierat incassum.
Saul et Jonathan
Amabiles erant et jucundi in vitis suis,
Et in morte sua non separati.
Prae aquilis veloces!
Prae leonibus fortes!
Filiae Israelis deflete Saulem;
Qui coccino cum deliciis vos vestivit,
Qui vestibus vestris ornamenta imposuit aurea!
Quomodo ceciderunt Fortes, in medio belli!
O Jonathan, super excelsa tua Miles!
Versor in angustiis, tui causa, Frater mi, Jonathan!
Mihi fuisti admodum jucundus!
Mihi tuus amor admodum mirabilis,
Mulierum exuperans amorem!
Quomodo ceciderunt fortes,
Et perierunt arma belli!
Dissertation I., p. 122.

In 2Sam 1:21 I have inserted כלי keley for בלי beli. Dr. Delaney rightly observes that the particle בלי beli is not used in any part of the Bible in the sense of quasi non, as though not, in which sense it must be used here if it be retained as a genuine reading: The shield of Saul as though it had not been anointed with oil.

In a MS. written about the year 1200, numbered 30 in Kennicott's Bible, כלי keley is found; and also in the first edition of the whole Hebrew Bible, printed Soncini 1488. Neither the Syriac nor Arabic versions, nor the Chaldee paraphrase, acknowledge the negative particle בלי beli, which they would have done had it been in the copies from which they translated. It was easy to make the mistake, as there is such a similarity between ב beth and כ caph; the line therefore should be read thus: The shield of Saul, weapons anointed with oil.

In 2Sam 1:22 נשוג nashog, to obtain, attain, seems to have been written for נסוג nasog, to recede, return. The former destroys the sense, the latter, which our translation has followed, and which is supported by the authority of 30 MSS., makes it not only intelligible but beautiful.

In 2Sam 1:19, 2Sam 1:22, and 2Sam 1:25, חלל and חללים chalal and chalalim occur, which we translate the Slain, but which Dr. Kennicott, I think from good authority, renders soldier and soldiers; and thus the version is made more consistent and beautiful. חלל chalal signifies to bore or pierce through; and this epithet might be well given to a soldier, q.d., the Piercer, because his business is to transfix or pierce his enemies with sword, spear, and arrows.

If it be translated soldiers in the several places of the Old Testament, where we translate it Slain or Wounded, the sense will be much mended; see Jdg 20:31, Jdg 20:39; Psa 89:11; Pro 7:26; Jer 51:4, Jer 51:47, Jer 51:49; Eze 11:6, Eze 11:7; Eze 21:14. In several others it retains its radical signification of piercing, wounding, etc.

After these general observations I leave the particular beauties of this inimitable song to be sought out by the intelligent reader. Much has been written upon this, which cannot, consistently with the plan of these notes, be admitted here. See Delaney, Kennicott, Lowth, etc.; and, above all, let the reader examine the Hebrew text.

2SAMUEL 1: 22 From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, Jonathan's bow didn't turn back. Saul's sword didn't return empty.

2SAMUEL 1: 23 Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives. In their death, they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions.

2SAMUEL 1: 24 You daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet delicately, who put ornaments of gold on your clothing.

2SAMUEL 1: 25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places.

2SAMUEL 1: 26 I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

2SAMUEL 1: 27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"