

2 SAMUEL

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL

This book, in many copies of the Hebrew Bible, is carried on without any new title put unto it; the reason of it is, because, by some, this, with the preceding, has been reckoned but one book: hence the Jews say ^{f1}, Samuel wrote his book, not his books; in others it is called Samuel Second; and by the Vulgate Latin the Second Book of Samuel, which we call the Second of Kings; though why his name should be put to it at all I see not, since it neither concerns him, nor could it be written by him, being an history of events after his death. The Greek version calls it the Second of Kings; and the Syriac version, the Second Book of the Kings of Israel; whereas there is but one king of Israel it makes mention of, and of whose actions only it is an history; and therefore with greater propriety it is called, as the Arabic version, the Book of David the Prophet, of whose reign, from the beginning to the end of it, it gives an account: wherefore Isidore ^{f2} thinks it was written by David; and if so, it has this mark of simplicity and integrity, that the writer does not spare himself, nor conceal his own faults, and particularly that very capital one, the affair of Bathsheba, and also his numbering of the people; but it is most probable that it was written by Nathan and Gad ^{f3}, (see ^{<1329>}1 Chronicles 29:29); but whoever was the penman of it, there is no doubt to be made of its being written by inspiration, or that it is canonical; which has never been questioned, since there stands in it a famous prophecy concerning the building of the temple by a son of David, which had an exact accomplishment, (^{<1072>}2 Samuel 7:12,13); as well as of the family of David, for a great while to come, which also was fulfilled, (^{<1079>}2 Samuel 7:19); and an eminent passage concerning the Messiah, the son of David, and of his divine sonship, (^{<1074>}2 Samuel 7:14); quoted by the Apostle Paul in proof of it, (^{<3016>}Hebrews 1:5). It contains an history of about forty years, for so long David reigned, seven years and six months in Hebron, over Judah, and thirty three years in Jerusalem, over all Israel and Judah; and this book relates his last words.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 1

This chapter contains an account of the death of Saul and Jonathan, as related to David by an Amalekite, (~~<1000>~~2 Samuel 1:1-10); of the sorrow he and his men were filled with at the news of it, (~~<1001>~~2 Samuel 1:11,12); of his order to put to death the messenger that brought the tidings, for his concern in the death of Saul, according to his own testimony, (~~<10013>~~2 Samuel 1:13-16); and of a lamentation composed by David on this occasion, (~~<10017>~~2 Samuel 1:17-27).

Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass after the death of Saul*, etc.] The third day after, as appears from the next verse:

when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites; as related in (~~<0817>~~1 Samuel 30:17);

and David had abode two days in Ziklag; which, though fired by the Amalekites, was not utterly consumed, but there was still some convenience for the lodging of David and his men; within this time he sent his presents to several places in the tribe of Judah, of which mention is made in the chapter before quoted, and at the same time it was that so many mighty men came to him from several tribes spoken of in (~~<1310>~~1 Chronicles 12:1-40).

Ver. 2. *It came to pass on the third day*, etc.] After the battle was fought, in which Saul was slain:

that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul; that is, from them who were in the camp with Saul, for he was dead. Some say ^{f4} this was Doeg the Edomite, which is not likely that he should come with such tidings to David; besides, if he was Saul's armourbearer, as others say, (see ~~<0810>~~1 Samuel 31:4); he died with Saul; nor his son, as others ^{f5}, which is not at all probable, though his being an Edomite is no objection, since the Amalekites were of the race of Edom:

with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: in token of mourning, and was the bringer of bad tidings, (see ^{<BOOK>}1 Samuel 4:12);

and [so] it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance; as being the rising sun, Saul's successor, and now king.

Ver. 3. *And David said unto him, from whence comest thou?* etc.] It is very likely by his appearance and circumstances he suspected from whence he came:

and he said unto him, out of the camp of Israel am I escaped; which plainly suggested that that was in danger, confusion, and distress.

Ver. 4. *And David said unto him, how went the matter? I pray thee, tell me,* etc.] That is, how went the battle? on which side the victory?

and he answered, that the people are fled from the battle; meaning the people of Israel, they had given way, and turned their backs upon their enemies, and were fled:

and many of the people also are fallen and dead; fell by the sword in the pursuit of them, and were not only wounded, but were slain, and these great numbers of them:

and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also; which are mentioned last, because they fell some of the last; and this part of the account is reserved by the messenger to the last, because it was the article of the greatest importance; the death of these two persons, the one the enemy, and the other the friend of David, and the death of both made way for his accession to the throne.

Ver. 5. *And David said unto the young man that told him,* etc.] These tidings:

how knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? this he particularly inquired after, as what most affected him, and was most material for him to know; and his meaning is, whether he had this of his own sight and knowledge, or by report.

Ver. 6. *And the young man that told him,* etc.] So it seems he was, and therefore could not be Doeg, more likely his son of the two; but there is no reason to believe he was either of them, who cannot be thought to be well disposed to David:

said, as I happened by chance upon Mount Gilboa; who was either a traveller that came that way just as the army was routed, and part had fled to Gilboa; or if a soldier, was not one of those that attended Saul, and was of his bodyguard, but happened on the flight to come to the same spot on Gilboa where Saul was:

behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; that that might pierce him through and die; but this seems not true, for he fell upon his sword for that purpose, (~~1~~ 1 Samuel 31:4);

and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him; the charioteers and cavalry, of which part of the Philistine army consisted; though this also does not agree with the account in the above place; for according to that they were the archers that pressed him hard, and hit him.

Ver. 7. *And when he looked behind him,* etc.] To see how near the enemy was, and who were pursuing him:

he saw me, and called unto me; by which it should rather seem that he belonged to the Philistines than to the Israelites, and as his being an Amalekite shows; for such an one would hardly be admitted among the latter, though it is most likely he was with neither, but happened to come that way just at that time:

and I answered, here [am] I; ready to hear what thou hast to say, and do thy pleasure.

Ver. 8. *And he said unto me, who [art] thou?* etc.] Being willing to know whether a friend or an enemy, which by his coming behind him he could not tell:

and I answered him, I [am] an Amalekite: which he might be; but it is not likely he should tell Saul he was, which would not recommend him to him; though indeed he was now in such circumstances, that the Amalekites had nothing to fear from him; and if he was slain by him, as Josephus⁶ affirms he was, it seems to be a just retaliation on him for sparing any of that race, contrary to the will of God.

Ver. 9. *And he said unto me again, stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me,* etc.] Which it can hardly be thought Saul would say; since he might as well have died by the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, which he endeavoured to avoid, as by the hands of an Amalekite:

for anguish is come upon me; or trembling, as the Targum, not through fear of death, but through fear of falling into the hands of the Philistines, and of being ill used by them. Some render the words, “my embroidered coat”, or “breastplate”, or “coat of mail”, holds me ^{f7}, or hinders me from being pierced through with the sword or spear; so Ben Gersom ^{f8}:

because my life [is] yet whole in me: for though he had been wounded by the archers, yet he did not apprehend he had received any mortal wound, but his life was whole in him; and therefore feared he should fall into their hands alive, and be ill treated by them.

Ver. 10. *So I stood upon him, and slew him*, etc.] Pressed with all his weight upon his body, that so the spear might pierce through him, and slay him; thus he represents his death to be brought about:

because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen; this is not consistent with what he had said before, both that he was leaning on his spear, and not fallen to the ground, and that his life was whole in him:

and I took the crown that [was] upon his head; which made him conspicuous, and therefore the Philistines aimed at him, and pressed hard after him, (~~1006~~ 2 Samuel 1:6); though some think that this was not on his head, but carried into the field of battle, ready to be put on if victory was on his side; and others say it was in the possession and care of Doeg, who at his death gave it to his son to carry to David, and thereby gain his favour:

and the bracelet that [was] on his arm; of gold no doubt, so Josephus ^{f9}; such as great personages used to wear, men as well as women, (see ~~01318~~ Genesis 38:18 ~~2630~~ Ezekiel 23:42), especially military men ^{f10}. Jarchi takes them to be the “totaphot” or phylacteries on the arm, which is not probable:

and have brought them hither unto my lord; as ensigns of royalty, fit only for a king, Saul’s successor, as this person, by calling him lord, owned him to be, and thought by bringing those to him to be highly he neared and rewarded.

Ver. 11. *When David took hold on his clothes*, etc.] Not on the young man’s but his own:

and rent them; on bearing of the death of Saul and Jonathan, (see ^{<1574}Genesis 37:34); from whence the Jews ^{f11} gather, that a man is bound to rend his clothes for a prince, and for the father of the sanhedrim, since Saul, they say, was the prince, and Jonathan the father of that court:

and likewise all the men that [were] with him; rent their clothes also, in imitation of him; the same custom obtained among the Gentiles on mournful occasions ^{f12}.

Ver. 12. *And they mourned and wept*, etc.] Inwardly mourned, and outwardly wept, no doubt sincerely:

and fasted until even; ate no food all that day until it was evening, the manner in which fasts used to be kept:

for Saul, and for Jonathan his son; it is no wonder that David and his men should mourn for Jonathan, a good man, and a valiant one, and a dear and faithful friend of David's; but it may seem not so clear a thing that they should, mourn for Saul, a wicked man, and a persecutor of David without cause: but it should be observed that he had been reconciled to David, and had not since attempted anything against him; besides, he was his prince, his father-in-law, and the rather he might be grieved for his death, and his men with him, because it was matter of joy to the Philistines, and they would endeavour to avail themselves of it; and especially the manner of his death, that he should be the cause of it himself, and die without repentance, as it might be feared, and quickly after consultation with a witch, and when left of God, if these particulars were known to David:

and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; that is, the people of the Lord, even the house of Israel, or who were of the house of Israel; or if they are to be distinguished, the former may respect the people of the Lord who died in battle, for whom mourning was made; and the latter the people that survived, the whole kingdom of Israel, which had sustained a great loss by the slaughter made in this battle, as it follows:

because they were fallen by the sword; so many of them.

Ver. 13. *And David said unto the young man that told him, whence [art] thou?* etc.] From what place, or of what people and nation art thou? though Abarbinel thinks it neither respects place nor people, but that David thought he was another man's servant; so that the sense of the question is, to what man did he belong?

and he answered, I [am] the son of a stranger, an Amalekite; he was not any man's servant, but the son of a proselyte, of one that was by birth and nation an Amalekite, but proselyted to the Jewish religion; he might know of what nation he originally was, by the account he had given of what passed between him and Saul, (^{<1008>}2 Samuel 1:8); though the mind of David might so disturbed as not to advert to it; or if he did, he might be willing to have it repeated for confirmation's sake.

Ver. 14. *And David said unto him, how, wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand*, etc.] By which it should seem that he did more than stand upon him, and press his body, that the spear might pierce through him, but that he drew his sword, and slew him; so David understood him, and is the sense of the phrase in (^{<0975>}1 Samuel 17:51);

to destroy the Lord's anointed? a reason why David did not destroy him, when it was in the power of his hands, and which he made use of to dissuade others from it; and here charges it not only as a criminal, but a daring action in this young man, at which he expresses his admiration how he could do it; hereby representing it as a very shocking and detestable action; (see ^{<0246>}1 Samuel 24:6 26:9,11).

Ver. 15. *And David called one of the young men*, etc.] His servants that attended on him:

and said, go near, [and] fall upon him; by smiting him with his sword:

and he smote him, that he died; his orders were instantly obeyed. Kings and generals of armies had great power in those times and countries to execute a man immediately, without any other judge or jury: what may serve, or David might think would serve, to justify him in doing this, is what follows.

Ver. 16. *And David said unto him, thy blood [be] upon thy head*, etc.] The blood that he had shed, let him suffer for it; for as he had shed blood, his blood ought to be shed, according to the law of God; and for proof of this, that he had so done, he appeals to his own confession:

for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed; and what might serve to confirm the truth of what he had said were the crown and bracelet which he brought along with him; and besides he was an Amalekite, of a nation that was devoted to destruction; and, as Abarbanel thinks, David might suppose that he killed Saul to take

vengeance on him for what he had done to their nation; but, after all, both he and Maimonides^{f13} allow the punishment of him was not strictly according to law, but was a temporary decree, an extraordinary case, and an act of royal authority; for in common cases a man was not to be condemned and put to death upon his own confession, since it is possible he may not be in his right mind^{f14}; but David chose to exercise severity in this case, partly to show his respect to Saul, and to ingratiate himself into the favour of his friends, and partly to deter men from attempting to assassinate princes, who himself was now about to ascend the throne.

Ver. 17. *And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son.*] Composed the following elegy on account of their death, and sung it in a tune agreeable to it, he and the men that were with him.

Ver. 18. *(Also he bade them teach the children of Judah [the use] of the bow, etc.)* These words, with what follow in this verse, are rightly put into a parenthesis, since they do not begin nor make any part of the elegiac song, or lamentation of David; and are here inserted to show, that, amidst his sorrow and lamentation, he was not unmindful of the welfare of the people, and to provide for their defence and security; and therefore gave orders that care should be taken, especially in the tribe of Judah, which was his own tribe, and where he had the greatest authority, and for whom he might have the chiefest concern, that they should be trained up in military exercises, learn the art of war, and the use of every weapon of war, particularly of the bow, which, being a principal one, may be put for all; and which may be the rather mentioned, because the Philistines were expert in the use of it, and seemed to have done much execution with it in the recent battle, (see ^{<0808>}1 Samuel 31:3). They are said^{f15} to be the inventors of it; though Pliny^{f16} ascribes it to others; and it may be the people of Israel and of Judah had of late neglected to learn the use of it, and to make use of it, and instead of that had taken to other sort of arms in fighting; for that that was not unknown to them, or wholly disused, is clear from this song, (^{<1022>}2 Samuel 1:22); see also (^{<1312>}1 Chronicles 12:2). Moreover, as the Philistines, especially the Cherethites, were expert in archery, David found ways and means to get some of them afterwards into his service, and by whom he might improve his people in the art, (see ^{<1088>}2 Samuel 8:18); though some^{f17} are of opinion that the word “keshet”, or bow, was the title of the following lamentation or song, taken from the mention of Jonathan’s bow in it; which song the children of Judah were to be taught to sing; but

then, as has been observed by some, for this there would have been no need of the following reference, since the whole this song is here recorded:

behold, it is written in book of Jasher); which the Targum calls the book of the law; and Jarchi and Ben Gersom restrain it to the book of Genesis, the book of the upright, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and suppose respect is had to the prophecy concerning Judah, (⁰⁴⁹⁸Genesis 49:8,9), but Kimchi, extending it to all the five books of Moses, adds his blessing, in (⁰⁸³⁷Deuteronomy 33:7). In the Arabic version it is explained of the book of Samuel, interpreted the book of songs, as if it was a collection of songs; which favours the above sense. Jerom ^{f18} interprets it of the same book, the book of the righteous prophets, Samuel, Gad, and Nathan: hut this book seems to have been a public register or annals, in which were recorded memorable actions in any age, and had its name from the uprightness and faithfulness in which it was kept; and in this were set down the order of David for the teaching the children of Judah the use of the bow, and perhaps the method which he directed to for instruction in it; (see Gill on “⁰⁶⁰³Joshua 10:13”).

Ver. 19. *The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places*, etc.] The high mountains of Gilboa, where Saul their king, and Jonathan his son, a prince of the blood, and natural heir to the crown, and multitudes of young men, the flower of the nation, were wounded and slain. Here begins the lamentation, or the elegiac song:

how are the mighty fallen! mighty men of war, strong and valiant, as Saul and his sons were, and the soldiers in his army.

Ver. 20. *Tell [it] not in Gath*, etc.] One of the five principalities of the Philistines, and the chief of them, being raised to a kingdom, and whose king was at the head of the armies of the Philistines that engaged with Saul. This is not to be understood of a command of David, who could not hinder the victory the Philistines had got over Israel being known at Gath, and talked of with pleasure there, but a wish it had not:

publish [it] not in the streets of Ashkelon; another of the principalities of the Philistines, and the sense the same as before:

lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph; it being usual in those times and countries for women, young women more especially, to express their joy, on occasion of

victories obtained, by singing and dancing, (^{<0713>}Judges 11:34) (^{<0816>}1 Samuel 18:6,7).

Ver. 21. *Ye mountains of Gilboa*, etc.] On which fell Saul and his sons, and many of the people of Israel, (^{<0016>}2 Samuel 1:6 ^{<0810>}1 Samuel 31:1);

[let there be] no dew, neither [let there be] rain upon you; which is not to be understood as a real imprecation; for David would never curse any part of the land of Israel, for which he had so great a regard; but only as a poetical figure, expressing his concern for, and abhorrence of what happened on those mountains; much less did this in reality take place, as some have feigned, as if never dew nor rain descended on them ^{f19} afterwards; which has been refuted by travellers, particularly Borchard ^{f20}, who, speaking of this mountain, says, that as he was upon it, there was such a violent shower fell, that he was wet through his clothes; and in the year 1273, laying all night upon this hill, there was a great dew fell upon him:

nor fields of offerings; of heave offerings; the meaning is, that he could wish almost that those hills were not fruitful, and that they brought no fruit to perfection, so much as that heave offerings for the service of the sanctuary might be taken; which is expressive of great sterility and scarcity, (see ^{<2013>}Joel 1:13,16);

for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away; mighty men were obliged to cast away their shields and flee, which were greatly to their reproach and scandal, and to that of the whole nation: it was always reckoned very scandalous, and a great crime, even punishable with death, to cast away a shield, both with the Greeks and others ^{f21}: yea, also

the shield of Saul, [as though he had] not [been] anointed with oil; as if he was not the anointed king of Israel, but a common soldier: or else this respects his shield, as if that was not anointed, as shields used to be, that they might be smooth and glib, and missile weapons, as arrows and others, might not pass through them, but slide off, (see ^{<2315>}Isaiah 21:5); though Gersom gives a different turn, that Saul's shield being in continual use, needed not to be anointed, as those did which for a time had been laid aside. Abarbinel interprets these words thus, that he, who was the shield of the mighty, even Saul himself, was vilely cast away, or become loathsome; and that his shield was anointed, not with oil, but with the blood of the slain, and the fat of the mighty, connecting them with the words following.

Ver. 22. *From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back,* etc.] That is, it always did execution, the arrows shot from it pierced into men, shed their blood, and slew them; even they entered into the fat of the mighty, or mighty ones, that were fat, and brought them down; so the arrows of the Medes and Persians, the expert men among them, are said not to return in vain, (^{<2810>}Jeremiah 50:9);

and the sword of Saul returned not empty; but was the means of slaying many; though Abarbinel observes also that this may be interpreted of the blood of the slain, and of the fat of the mighty men of Israel; and that though Saul and Jonathan saw many of these fall before their eyes, yet “for” or “because” of their blood, they were not intimidated and restrained from fighting; the bow of the one, and the shield of the other, turned not back on that account.

Ver. 23. *Saul and Jonathan [were] lovely and pleasant in their lives,* etc.] To one another, had no quarrel or difference with each other, only on the account of David; otherwise they agreed together in the court, and in the camp, in their councils, and in their conduct:

and in their death they were not divided; neither from the people, nor from one another; Jonathan stuck close by his father to the last; which is observed to clear him from any imputation of conspiracy against him:

they were swifter than eagles; in the quick dispatch of business, in hastening to the relief of the distressed, as Saul to the men of Jabeshgilead, and in the pursuit of their enemies, as of the Philistines, more than once:

they were stronger than lions; fighting with their enemies, who became an easy prey to them; and what is stronger than a lion among beasts? (^{<0748>}Judges 14:18 ^{<3880>}Proverbs 30:30); or swifter than an eagle among birds, which is said to cut the air with its wings ^{f22}?

Ver. 24. *Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,* etc.] In their mournful elegies;

who clothed you with scarlet, with [other] delights; not only with scarlet, but with other fine and delightful apparel, such as were very pleasing to the female sex, especially young people, who are delighted with gay apparel; this Saul was the means of, through the spoil he took from his enemies, and by other methods taken by him to the enriching of the nation, whereby

husbands and parents were enabled to provide rich clothes for their wives and children:

who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel; broidered work, jewels of gold, etc. (see ^{<2488>}Isaiah 3:18-23 ^{<2660>}Ezekiel 16:10-13).

Ver. 25. *How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!* etc.] The mighty and valiant men of war, the common soldiers as well as their general officers, whose loss David mourns, and the repetition of shows how much it affected him:

O Jonathan, [thou wast] slain in thine high places; in the high places of the land of Israel, the mountains of Gilboa, which though high, and in his own country, could not protect him from his enemies, and from falling by their hands: he who had been so valiant and victorious a prince, and yet he fell, not in an enemy's country, but his own.

Ver. 26. *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan,* etc.] So he was, not only by nation and religion, but by affinity, having married the sister of Jonathan; and still more so by affection and friendship, he being a friend of David's, that stuck closer to him than a brother, and who loved him as his own soul; he was distressed for him, not on account of his spiritual and eternal state, which he doubted not was happy, but for the manner of his death, his loss of him, and want of his pleasant conversation, of his counsel and advice, and assistance in his present circumstances:

very pleasant hast thou been unto me; in their friendly visits of, and conversation with, one another; many a pleasant hour had they spent together, but now must see each other's faces no more in this world:

thy love to me was wonderful; as indeed he might well say, being towards one of a mean extract in comparison of his, to one who was not his own brother, but a brother-in-law; and to one that was a rival to the crown he was heir to, and would take it before him: and who ran the risk of losing his father's affection, and even his life, for espousing his cause: (see ^{<0980>}1 Samuel 18:1,3,4 19:2,4 20:30,33);

passing the love of women; either that which they are loved with by men, or that with which they love their husbands and children; which is generally the strongest and most affectionate. The Targum is,

“more than the love of two women,”

than his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail; so Kimchi; meaning that he was more strongly and affectionately loved by Jonathan than by them, who yet might love him very well too.

Ver. 27. *How are the mighty fallen*, etc.] This is the burden of this elegiac song, being the third time it is mentioned:

and the weapons of war perished! not only the valiant soldiers were killed, but their arms were lost; and particularly he may mean Saul and Jonathan, who as they were the shields of the people, so they were the true weapons and instruments of war, and with them all military glory perished; which must be understood as a poetical figure, exaggerating their military characters; otherwise David, and many mighty men with him, remained, and who revived and increased the military glory of Israel, as the following history shows.