

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 9

This chapter relates David's inquiry after the posterity of Saul, whether any were living and where they were, (^{<1000>}2 Samuel 9:1-4); and on inquiry being informed of one, he sent for him, and kindly received him, (^{<1005>}2 Samuel 9:5-8); and restored to him the land of his fathers, and appointed a person to till it for him, and bring him the fruits of it, and maintained him at his own table, (^{<1009>}2 Samuel 9:9-13).

Ver. 1. *And David said*, etc.] To some of his courtiers:

is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul? which question was put by him, not in order to destroy them, lest they should disturb his government, as was usual with other princes, and especially such who got their crowns by usurpation; but to prevent any suspicion of that kind in the persons he inquired of, he adds,

that I may show him kindness, for Jonathan's sake? not for Saul's sake, who had been his implacable enemy, though he had sworn to him that he would not cut off his seed; but for Jonathan's sake, his dear friend, whose memory was precious to him. Some of the Jewish writers have thought, because this follows upon the account given of the officers of David, both in his camp and court, that this question was occasioned by a thought that came into his mind, while he was appointing officers, that if there were any of Saul's family, and especially any descendant of Jonathan, that was fit for any post or office, he would put him into one; but this seems to be a long time after David had settled men in his chief offices; for Mephibosheth, after an inquiry found out, was but five years of age when his father was slain, and so but twelve when David was made king over all Israel, and yet now he was married, and had a young son, (^{<1002>}2 Samuel 9:12); so that it was a long time after David was established in the kingdom that he thought of this; which is to be imputed to his being engaged so much in war, and having such a multiplicity of business on his hands.

Ver. 2. *And [there was] of the house of Saul a servant whose name [was] Ziba*, etc.] Or there was a servant that belonged to Saul's family; not that

any of Saul's family was a servant; and this servant the Jews commonly say was a Canaanitish servant, and who upon the death of his master was not made free, but became the inheritance and possession of his children after him, (⁴⁸²⁵⁴⁶Leviticus 25:46); though Josephus ^{f157} says he was made free by Saul:

and when they had called him unto David; who it seems was now at court, or in Jerusalem, on some account or another; or was in David's service, in some inferior post or another; however, having been a quondam servant of Saul, it was thought he could give the best intelligence of his family, and whether any were living, and therefore was sent for; and when he was come into the king's presence,

the king said unto him, [art] thou Ziba? for he had been told before by some of his courtiers what his name was:

and he said, thy servant [is he]; or my name is Ziba, and I am at thy command.

Ver. 3. *And the king said, [is] there not yet any of the house of Saul;* that is, remaining or living:

that I may show the kindness of God unto him? great kindness, some large favour or benefit; for the word God added to things, as to trees, mountains, etc. serves to set forth the excellency of them; and this kindness is in imitation of God, or such as he had sworn in the presence of God to show; and that is expressed in the same language, (⁴⁰⁰¹⁴1 Samuel 20:14);

and Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son; a son still living;

[which is] lame on [his] feet; on both his feet, as the Targum; of which occasion, (see Gill on "⁴⁰⁰⁰⁴2 Samuel 4:4").

Ver. 4. *And the king said unto him, where is he?* etc.] In what part of the land, city, or town, does he dwell?

and Ziba said unto the king, behold, he [is] in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel; a descendant of Machir, the son of Manasseh, to whom the land of Gilead was given, which lay on the other side Jordan:

in Lodebar; a place in that country, perhaps the same with Debir in (⁴⁸³³⁵Joshua 13:26). Here it may be his mother's relations lived, and here he might dwell in obscurity, and lie hid from the knowledge of David; who, it

might be feared by his friends, would have dispatched him, had he known where he was. Some take it to be an appellative, and render it, as Abarbinel observes, “without anything”; as if he was so poor that he had not anything to support himself with. No mention as yet is made of his name, perhaps because the historian had given it before, (^{<3004>}2 Samuel 4:4).

Ver. 5. *Then King David sent*, etc.] Messengers; it may be Ziba, none being more proper than he that knew him, and where he was:

and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar; they demanded him in the king’s name, and being delivered to them, they brought him from thence to Jerusalem.

Ver. 6. *Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul*, etc.] For that was his name, though sometimes called Meribbaal, (^{<3384>}1 Chronicles 8:34); and this was his relation to Jonathan and Saul, the son of the one, and grandson of the other:

was come unto David; to his court and palace in Jerusalem, being thither brought; for he could not go of himself, being lame:

he fell on his face, and did reverence; to him as a king, in a civil way, and in the best manner he could, considering that he was lame on his feet:

and David said, Mephibosheth; is it he? having learnt what his name was, this he expressed with great vehemency and affection, as glad that he had found one of Jonathan’s posterity: and

he answered, behold thy servant! he answered to his name, and owned his subjection to David, and was ready to take the oath of allegiance to him, and give him homage, and serve him in what way he could.

Ver. 7. *And David said unto him, fear not*, etc.] He might observe a dejection in his countenance, a trembling in his limbs, and might discover signs of fear lest David should cut him off, because he was of the seed royal:

for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake; whom he loved as his own soul, and to whom he had sworn that he would not cut off his kindness from his house for ever, and now remembering his oath was determined to observe it:

and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; his grandfather, such sometimes being called fathers; which David had taken to him, as crown lands, or in the right of his wife; or as being confiscated by Ishbosheth's rebellion:

and thou shall eat bread at my table continually; he gave him an apartment in the court, a place at his table, admitted him to be a guest with him as long as he should live; which was a very great favour and high honour, and showed what an unshaken friendship he had for his father, and would maintain with him. This was the kindness of God he meant to show to him.

Ver. 8. *And he bowed himself*, etc.] In token of gratitude, and as a sign of humility, and of the sense he had of his unworthiness to enjoy such a favour:

and said, what [is] thy servant, that thou shouldest look on such a dead dog as I [am]? one so mean, and base, and worthless; which he might say with respect to the infirmities of his body, the rejection of his family by the Lord, their attainder of high treason for rebellion against David, and the low circumstances he was brought into and now under; though one of the royal family, the son of a prince, and grandson of a king; such was his humility, and the sense he had of his being undeserving of any favour from the king, and says this with admiration and astonishment.

Ver. 9. *Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant*, etc.] Who had been his servant:

and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son; meaning either, as some, the son of Mephibosheth, Micha after mentioned; or rather Mephibosheth himself, the grandson of Saul, whose servant Ziba had been:

all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house; all his paternal estate, or what he had acquired, or in any wise belonged to him and his family; which David had in possession, and which he readily and cheerfully delivered up to Mephibosheth, having so great a regard to the memory of his father.

Ver. 10. *Thou therefore, thy sons, and thy servants*, etc.] Which were many, and whose numbers are after given:

shall till the land for him; manure it, plough it, sow it, and reap it:

and thou shall bring in [the fruits]; the corn, and oil, and wine, the land produces:

that thy master's son may have food to eat; meaning either Micha, the son of Mephibosheth, since Mephibosheth seems to be distinguished from him, and opposed to him in the next clause: and who would stand in no need of food from any other quarter, being a guest at the king's table continually; or else Mephibosheth, who by this means would have a sufficiency for his son and servants, and in which Ziba's family and servants would have a share:

but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat always at my table; wherefore the land was to be tilled not for him personally, but for his family, and for what uses he should think fit to put the produce of it to:

now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants: who were enough to cultivate a considerable quantity of land.

Ver. 11. *Then said Ziba unto the king, according to all the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do,* etc.] Till the land, and bring the fruits of it to Mephibosheth, for the support of his family; he promised very fair, had he been as faithful to his trust:

as for Mephibosheth, [said the king], he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons; which is repeated, for the confirmation of it, and to show that he should be treated with equal respect, and fare as the king's sons themselves did; though the clause "said the king" is not in the original text, and the words are thought by Abarbanel and others to be the words of Ziba continued; who promised to do what the king had ordered, though Mephibosheth had eaten at his table, as one of the king's sons, and needed not anything, and needed not to eat at the king's table; and if it was his pleasure, he would maintain him out of this estate like the son of a king; but the phrase "my table" seems to be too arrogant for Ziba to say, and rather fits the mouth of David the king.

Ver. 12. *And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name [was] Micha,* etc.] What his age was is not said from him sprung a progeny of several generations, (~~1388~~ 1 Chronicles 8:34-40);

and all that dwelt in the house Ziba [were] servants to Mephibosheth; his sons and his servants.

Ver. 13. *So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem*, etc.] Either in some apartments in the king's palace, or in some house in the city provided for him; for he returned not to Lodebar, nor to any mansion house upon the estate, of Saul restored unto him:

for he did eat continually at the king's table; to which he was invited, and he accepted of:

and was lame on both his feet; or "though" he was ^{f158}, yet this was no objection to David, he admitted him notwithstanding his infirmity; nor any obstruction to Mephibosheth, who found ways and means to be carried to the king's table daily.