

I Samuel 29-II Samuel 5 The Death of King Saul and the Rise of David

Introduction

Saul has lived a life of unrest for many years. Internally he has pursued his perceived nemesis, David, and at the same time the ongoing battles with the Philistines have demanded great energy as well. It is a sad thing when the perceived enemies demand so much time and energy one cannot focus on the real enemy –and the Philistines were very real enemies of Israel.

We must go back to Chapter 27 where we read the account of David stepping away from Saul's relentless pursuits by taking 600 of his men and finding respite in none other than Gath, formerly the home of Goliath the giant. David convinced the king of Gath that he is a refugee in need of asylum and he and his army of men will serve the king of Gath in trade for peace from Saul. David and his men take their wives, children and livestock with them into the land of the Philistines and settle in the town, Ziklag, in the land of the Philistine for a year and four months.

During this time David and his men served Achish, son of Maach, king of Gath, by going on raids against a number of enemies of the Philistines. They raided communities among the Geshurites, Girzites, Amalekites, and as far south as Egypt. These are all native tribes and are natural enemies of Israel as well. When David and his men went on these raids they killed every man and woman in each village and returned with great wealth in terms of livestock and possessions. However, David often reported to Achish and Maach that he was raiding Israelite communities in Judah, so they were very pleased that David was making them richer and killing off the people they hated and of whom David was a traitor.

Chapter 29 Philistines Commanders do not trust David

Vs. 1-5 Major war was developing between the Philistines and Israel. The fighting against King Saul was intensifying and a major battle was about to take place in the north central part of Israel. The armies of the Philistine were gathering at Aphek while Saul was gathering the Israelite armies by the spring which is at Jezreel. David and his men were in the rear of the Philistine army with Achish, son of Maach, king of Gath. When the Philistine commanders recognized David and his men they questioned his loyalty and determined they could not trust David, for surely as the battle raged, David and his men would turn against the Philistines and attack them from the rear, join their Israelite brothers. They quoted the song of the women of Israel, who drove Saul to anger and bitterness, "*Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands*" (18:7). David and his men were dismissed back to Ziklag.

Chapter 30 Return to chaos

Vs. 1-6 The return to Ziklag took three days from the Jezreel Valley which is a good distance north of Ziklag and Gath. Upon returning David and his men found their city ransacked, burning, and all their families, livestock and wealth had been carried away. The Amalekites had been raiding across the Negev, the desert southern territory of Israel and had captured Ziklag, taking all the people and the spoils.

David and his men lifted their voices and wept till they had no more energy to weep. Even David's two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, were carried away. The hurt of the men was so great, as was their despair; they began to blame David and began to threaten to stone him.

“But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God”.

Here we see something of the character of David, the man after God's own heart. For almost a year he has lived the lie in the land of the Philistine getting some peace from Saul's pursuits, but now his own men and their families had been attacked by another party, ambushed, while away from home. Where do you turn when everything is against you? David knew the source of his strength and blessing; it was through the God of Heaven. (Psalm 18:2-27; 50:15)

Vs. 7-10 David does something very significant at this time. David calls for the high priest of Israel, Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, the high priest slain by Saul's head shepherd, Doeg, (Chapter 21-22) to bring the ephod, the breast plate containing the Urim, and inquire of God whether they should pursue the Amalekites.

The ephod or breast plate contained, on the outside twelve stones, each representing a tribe of Israel. Within the breast plate was a parchment containing the Name of God. The high priest could ask God a question and in some miraculous way, God would communicate the answer through the ephod. (Exodus 28:15-30; 39:8-21)

(Note, Saul had been commanded by God to go destroy the Amalekites and blot them off the face of the earth. Saul failed to do so saving the women and children and even sparing Agag, the king; chapter 15)

David has the high priest inquire as to whether they should pursue the Amalekites, and the answer was given in the affirmative, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and you shall surely rescue all”. So David and his 600 men headed out to find the Amalekites and rescue their families.

They arrived at the Brook Besor, and 200 of his men were exhausted and remained behind while David and the remaining 400 continued to pursue the Amalekites.

Vs. 11-15 An Egyptian was found wandering in a field and he was brought before David. The man had been with the Amalekites but became ill and was left behind, presumably to die. He had not had food or water for three days so after being sufficiently fed and given drink, he agreed to take David to the Amalekites as long as David would spare his life.

Vs. 16-20 When David and his men located the Amalekites they were scattered around feasting on the spoils of their raiding and pillaging. They were eating and drinking and dancing, making themselves easy prey for David and his men who slaughtered them all, spending two days to do so. In Luke 17:26,27 Jesus paints the picture of the earth just prior to the great flood – “they were eating and drinking and marrying until the day Noah entered the ark”. The Amalekites “flood” was about to take place! Four hundred young men on camels were aware enough and fleet enough to escape the wrath of David and his men. All of David’s men’s possessions and family members were intact and were saved that day from the Amalekites. Great numbers of livestock were recovered, livestock that had been taken from several villages along the way, and they became the spoils of war for David and his men.

Vs. 21-31 We see something about David in these last verses of chapter 30, a sense of fairness, care for his men and for others. Even though 200 men were too exhausted to go all the way with David and stayed back at the Brook Besor, David made sure they received a fair portion of the spoils of war just as those who did the fighting.

Additionally, David sent some of the spoils of the battle to various elders of villages within Judah: Bethel; Ramoth in the Negev; Jattir; Aroer; Siphmoth, Eshtemoa; Racal; the Jerahmeelites; Kenits; Hormah, Borashan; Atach; and those in Hebron. Even more Judahites received portions of the spoils of the battle which gives an idea of how much livestock had been taken from the Amalekites on that day.

Chapter 31 The demise of Saul and his sons

Vs. 1-6 While David had been fighting the Amalekites in the south of Israel, in the Negev, the battle with the Philistines raged in the north, around Jezreel, heading east along the Jezreel Valley and to the small mountain range to the east of the Jezreel Valley, Mount Gilboa. Many Israelites were slain at Mount Gilboa including Jonathan, Ahinadab and Malchi-shua, the sons of King Saul. King Saul too found himself in grave danger of being overtaken.

In Chapter 28 we read of Saul going to the witch at Endor, a sorceress, whom Saul paid to conjure up the spirit of the prophet Samuel for advice. Samuel’s report to Saul was that the very next day Saul and his sons would die, joining Samuel in the after-life.

It is interesting that the first century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, in his “Antiquities of the Jews”, made a favorable report concerning the witch or sorceress of Endor. Josephus points out her positive traits as contrasted to her forbidden black arts:

- She did not refuse the king as a stranger
- She had compassion on him because he was in obvious distress
- She comforted him by giving him bread to eat as he had not eaten all day and was in a weakened position
- Even though she was frightened by him, he could have her put to death, she put his needs above her own
- She was kind even in knowing the prophet reported Saul was very soon to die

Saul was wounded by the archers and knew he was about to die. He did not want to die at the hands of the Philistines so he selfishly begged his armor bearer to kill him with a sword, which, out of great fear, the armor bearer refused to grant. Eventually Saul fell on his own sword and ended the tragedy that was his life. When the armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and joined his master in the after-life.

Vs. 7-13 When news of Saul’s death spread throughout the Israelites, the people of Israel fled, abandoning towns and villages, and the Philistines literally moved in and took over. Strategically, this area of battle netted the Philistines great wealth, not just from the plunder of the Israelites, but it gave them control of the major trade routes between the east and Egypt to the south. The Jezreel Valley was a major route connecting to the coastal plains and the coastal routes, and going east and south was the Kings Highway, the major trade route running down the east side of the Jordan River, and the Philistines now controlled all of these routes and could charge tariffs on all caravans.

The next day when the Philistines went back to the battlefields to strip the warriors of weapons, armor and personal effects, they found the bodies of Saul and his sons. They cut off the heads of the bodies, stripped them of weaponry, and sent the heads throughout all the towns of the Philistines. They put Saul’s weapons in the temple of Ashteroth and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

When the valiant men of Jabesh-gilead heard of the atrocities to Saul and his son’s bodies, they walked all night to Beth-shan and removed the bodies from the wall. They carried the bodies to Jabesh where they burned the bodies and buried the bones under the tamarisk tree. After this, the men fasted for seven days.

II Samuel Chapter 1 David grieves over Saul and Jonathon

(In the original manuscripts, the masoretic traditions, of the Jews, the books I Samuel and II Samuel are actually just one book known as “Samuel”. This is also true with I and II Kings

and I and II Chronicles; these were also each one book. In that tradition, there is no artificial break between the two so the narrative is not interrupted but continues to move forward.)

Genesis 3:15 tells us that in this world there will be two very distinct types of people, “seeds of the woman” and “seeds of the serpent”. Scripture gives us many examples of these differences: Cain and Abel; Isaac and Ishmael; Laban and Isaac; Jacob and Esau; Pharaoh and Moses; and in these last several chapters of Samuel, Saul and David. As Saul wanders farther away from God, we see such righteous characteristics in the life of David. Saul seeks to kill David and David preserves Saul’s life on multiple occasions. Though Saul walked contrary to God’s way, David held great respect for the fact God had placed Saul on the throne and God had not removed Saul from that position, therefore it was not David’s responsibility to harm Saul or even show him disrespect.

Vs. 1-16 David and his men have returned to Ziklag to rebuild and restore their town when a stranger comes to report the death of Saul and his sons. The man was an Amalekite who had been captured by the Israelites and had managed to escape. Presumably, he found David’s camp assuming David was still a traitor to Israel and that David would find great amusement in the death of Saul and his sons, perhaps even give him a reward. When pressed for information, the young man reported it was he who actually killed Saul, at Saul’s request, when Saul was unable to bring himself to successfully fall on his own sword. As proof of Saul’s death and the veracity of his story, the young man produced Saul’s gold crown and gold arm bracelets.

There is an irony that must not be missed; Saul’s great undoing was his failure to obey when commanded by God to go to war against the Amalekites **and wipe them all out**, and Saul did not comply with God. And now, it was a young Amalekite who actually took Saul’s life.

David responded that the young man’s own words condemned him of striking down the LORD’s anointed, and David had the young man executed.

Vs. 17-27 a song for Saul and Jonathon

David lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan through a song, a dirge, and he instructed his men to teach this song to the sons of Judah – the “Song of the Bow”.

In Lesson Three we discussed the significance and meaning of the third Command from Exodus 20 – **“You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God in vain”**. So far we see in the life of David this concept played out immaculately. David refused to harm Saul even though Saul pursued David to kill him. God had anointed Saul and placed Saul on the throne and it was not David’s place to remove Saul. When the Amalekite man reported he had killed Saul, at Saul’s own request, David executed the man for killing the anointed of God. David’s

respect for Saul and his monarchy was based on his love and respect for God. Even though it meant great hardship on David, Saul was God's appointee and David could accept that.

"O precious one of Israel – upon your heights lie the slain!

How have the mighty fallen!

Do not tell it in Gath; do not spread the tidings

in the Streets of Ashkelon –

Lest the Philistine girls rejoice, lest the daughter of the uncircumcised jubilate.

O mountains of Gilboa – let neither dew nor rain

Be upon you, nor fields of bounty,

For rejected there was the shield of the mighty ones,

The shield of Saul, as if unanointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,

The bow of Jonathan would not recoil,

The sword of Saul would not return empty.

Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their lives,

And in their death not parted.

They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.

O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,

Who would cloth you in scarlet with finery,

Who would place golden jewelry upon your clothing?

How have the mighty fallen in the midst of battle –

Jonathan slain above your heights?

I am distressed over you, my brother Jonathan;

Your love was more wondrous to me than the love of women!

How have the mighty fallen and the weapons of war gone to waste?"

(The Stone Edition Tanach)

Chapter 2 David anointed king over Judah

Vs. 1-7 David had been living in the land of the Philistine for nearly one and one-half years when Saul is killed in battle. He was anointed successor king by Samuel in I Samuel 16 but has spent many years running from Saul.

David inquires of God, "Shall I go to one of the cities of Judah?" God answers affirmatively and sends David to Hebron, not too far from his home town of Bethlehem. David is from the tribe of Judah. (Remember Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin). Hebron may be one of the most significant cities in Judah at this time. It is located on a significant, though not major, trade route to Egypt to the south and connected to major trade routes to the east. **More significantly, it is the burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the great patriarchs of the Hebrew people.**

David moved to Hebron with his two wives and his army of 600 men.

There the men of Judah anointed David king over the house of Judah (**not all of Israel, just one tribe out of twelve**)

David's first recorded act as king: David was informed it was the men of Jabesh-Gilead, a town in the tribe of Gad, and east of the Jordan River, who buried the remains of Saul. David sent these men a blessing for their valor, and he also stated he had been anointed as King of Judah.

We see a messianic picture here, David as King of Judah, and reaching out to his brothers across all Israel. Yeshua, Jesus, was first recognized as King of Judah, though His crown initially was made of thorns, and soon was recognized as King of not only all of Israel, but King of all Kings and LORD of all LORDs. Another king was anointed over the rest of Israel, Ish-bosheth, just as Herod or Caesar were recognized as kings over Israel king at the time Yeshua was crowned.

Vs. 8-11 Ish-bosheth was Saul's son, 40 years old, and Abner, the commander of Saul's army, had him anointed as king over all Israel. Ish-bosheth served as king for two years while David ruled over Judah for seven years and 6 months. Abner's loyalty was to his king, Saul, and not to God as we have seen in the life of David. However, the House of Judah followed David.

Chapter 2:7-4:12 Civil War in the Land

Civil war erupted throughout the land, Ish-bosheth and his commander of the army, Abner, against David and the men of Judah. Over time, **David became stronger and the House of Saul became weaker.**

Chapter 3:2 In the midst of the war David's own family began to grow. Sons were born to David; Amnon, Chileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah and Ithream. David had acquired six wives and each wife had a son. When he had moved to Hebron he brought two wives with him and he acquired four more wives while in Hebron. A king is given certain rights that may or may not reflect the will of God. Pursuing these rights can and will increase stress and unrest in the life of the king, and can detract from his singularly most important role, lead the people in their relationship with the true King, God. Later we will read of the family strife in the household of David.

There is little wonder that problems arise in David's family as these sons are all close in age, being born of six different mothers.

Vs. 6-25 Life got complicated for David. While he was in the middle of a civil war against Ish-bosheth, king of Israel, Abner, King Ish-bosheth's commander of the army deserted and joined forces with David. King Ish-bosheth falsely accused Abner of sleeping with the king's concubine, Rizpah. Abner rejected the king and promised to bring all of Israel under allegiance to David, thus guaranteeing the transition of David as king over all Israel. Abner had been King Saul's commander of the army and essentially placed Ish-bosheth on the throne after Saul died in battle. The people of Israel had allegiance to Abner and if he became loyal to David, so would they.

In the midst of this drama, David begins to think about his first wife, Michal, the daughter of Saul. In an attempt to get David killed, Saul gave Michal to David as a wife and the dowry was 100 Philistine foreskins. David and his men went out and immediately killed 200 Philistines and delivered the foreskins to Saul, thus Saul gave Michal to David as a wife (1 Samuel 18:20-29). However, (1 Samuel 25:44) when David took two additional wives, Abigail of Carmel and Ahinoam of Jezreel, Saul took Michal away from David and gave her to a man named Palti of Gallim to be his wife. The traditional view of the sages is that David was betrothed to Michal but the marriage was not consummated when Saul intervened and gave her to Paltiel (Palti) as a wife. This is important as the Torah forbids a man and wife to reunite when divorce and remarriage occurs (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Along with the problems that come with taking multiple wives, has David violated God's instructions by re-marrying a wife who he is divorced from, but whom both he and she have married another? There is a carnal side of David that we see that becomes important in our understanding of redemption. God does not have any perfect people to work with. Every person in the Bible, except Jesus, is a flawed and broken pot. Yet, God works His will through broken and imperfect people, and David is one of those. Today it is no different – God has only imperfect and flawed people with whom to work and to accomplish His will, the expansion of His kingdom on earth.

Vs. 26-30 One of David's loyal men is opposed to Abner and the acceptance of Abner's shifting loyalty to David. Abner had killed Joab's brother, Asahel, in battle (2:18-23) and Joab takes his vengeance on Abner and murders him. David mourns the loss of Abner because they are similar in nature, and David recognizes this can hurt his coronation as king over all Israel because so many Israelites trusted and respected Abner.

Chapter Four – Ish-bosheth is murdered by two of his military leaders. The brothers cut off the head of Ish-bosheth and take it to Hebron to present to David. Mistakenly, Banaah and Rechab thought they were doing a good thing, but David condemned them for murdering a good and righteous man in his own bed chamber. David had the two executed and buried the head of Ish-bosheth in the grave of Abner.

Chapter 5 David becomes king of all Israel

Vs. 1-5 The leaders of all the tribes of Israel went to Hebron to meet with David and anoint him as king of all Israel.

“Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who lead Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel’.

All the elders came to Hebron, to King David, and made a covenant with him and anointed him king over all Israel.

David was 30 years old and reigned over Judah for 7 years and 6 months and over all Israel for 33 years.

Vs. 6-11 David defeats the Jebusites at Jerusalem and takes for himself the town, calling it the City of David. To this very day the City of David sits just on the south of the Temple Mount and archeologists have recently discovered what they believe to be David’s palace in that place.

David grew in strength on a daily basis for the LORD God of hosts was with him!

Vs. 11-16 Hiram King of Tyre on the northern coast of the Mediterranean sent cedar, stone masons and carpenters to build David a palace.

David settled into his new capital and took more wives and concubines and fathered 11 more children.

Vs. 17-25 The Philistines heard of the new king David in Israel and set out to test him. Twice they approached the City of David, threatening. **David inquired of God for direction and then meticulously followed the directions given by God.** God made David hugely victorious on both occasions over the Philistines. The point here is for the reader to see the contrast between David and Saul, his predecessor. David sought God’s direction and then followed it completely, and for that he was greatly

blessed. Saul was arrogant and disobedient, and his monarchy was doomed very early in his reign.