**2 Samuel Commentary**

**2 Samuel Chapter 1**

2Sm 1:1

**“after the death of Saul.”** When King Saul died, David’s time of fleeing from Saul ended, and he went and established his first capital city at Hebron, in southern Judah.

[For the details of David’s journeys once he started running from Saul, see commentary on 1 Sam. 19:18.]

2Sm 1:2

**“paid homage.”** The Hebrew word *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), refers to bowing down, falling prostrate, giving honor, and also worshiping.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 1:6

**“happened, yes, happened.”** The Amalekite uses the figure of speech polyptoton to emphasize that it was only mere chance that he was on the slopes of Mount Gilboa and came upon the wounded Saul. The Amalekite apparently hoped that would make his story more believable, since he had not been a part of Saul’s bodyguard.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16, “eat, yes, eat.”]

This Amalekite made up a story about mercifully fulfilling Saul’s request and killing him quickly rather than letting the Philistines come upon him while he was still living, which might even lead to Saul’s being tortured. He apparently hoped to win David’s favor and likely wealth and fame along with it. But David had the Amalekite executed. The exact reason is not given. It is possible that David was not fooled by the man’s lie especially if the Amalekite, thinking that Saul was David’s enemy, showed signs of glee or satisfaction along the lines of, “I killed your enemy.” It is also possible that David thought if Saul could communicate so clearly then the Amalekite should have tried to rescue him. It is also possible that because the person was an Amalekite, he was immediately suspected of treachery, and David sought more information. In that case, even though the text does not say so, it is possible that David started hearing from others who came from the battle (not every Israelite was dead). In any case, the Amalekite said he killed Saul, Yahweh’s anointed, and was executed for it. 1 Samuel 31:3-5 tells us what actually happened, and this Amalekite was snared by his own words (Prov. 6:2).

2Sm 1:8

**“I am an Amalekite.”** Saul was supposed to kill the Amalekites. Now an Amalekite lied and said he killed Saul.

2Sm 1:9

**“dizziness has seized me.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word *shabats* (#07661 שָׁבָץ) is debated. It only occurs here in the Old Testament, but is related to “mix” or “interweave.” The meaning “dizziness” is derived from the Aramaic Targums, Peshitta, and Septuagint, and fundamentally agrees with Josephus, who says Saul was so “weak” he could not kill himself (Antiquities, Book 7.1.1). The NET reads, “I’m very dizzy.” Everett Fox (The Schocken Bible) has “for dizziness has come upon me.”[[1]](#footnote-15369)

In this story made up by this Amalekite, Saul’s wounds had made him so disoriented and confused he could not successfully kill himself. What really happened is told in 1 Samuel 31:3-5. Saul was wounded so he committed suicide.

2Sm 1:13

**“sojourner.”** That is, a temporary resident.

2Sm 1:15

**“attack him!”** The Hebrew, “fall on him,” is an idiom for killing him. Some modern versions (cf. CSB, CJB, ESV) translate the meaning of the idiom for easier English reading (cf. HCSB: “Come here and kill him!”).

2Sm 1:18

**“the book of Jashar.”** See commentary on Joshua 10:13.

2Sm 1:19

**“Your splendor, O Israel.”** What David said about Saul and Jonathan was the first elegy in the Bible, the longest being the book of Lamentations. An “elegy” is not to be confused with a “eulogy.” A “eulogy,” (from the Greek prefix *eu*, meaning “good” and *logos*, meaning “word”) is a “good word” that is spoken about someone who has died, and it is usually given at a funeral or gathering in honor of someone who has died. In contrast, an “elegy” is a poem of deep reflection, typically, not always, it is a lament for the dead. What David said about Saul and Jonathan was an elegy (2 Sam. 1:19-27), as is the book of Lamentations.

2Sm 1:20

**“Gath…Ashkelon.”** Two of the 5 capital cities of the Philistines, which were Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Ashdod (cf. Josh. 13:3; Judg. 3:3; 1 Sam. 6:16). It is almost certain that in this poem of David, Gath and Ashkelon are mentioned as a synecdoche of the part, the part (those two cities) being put for the whole (the whole area controlled by the Philistines). David did not want any Philistines anywhere to rejoice, not just in those two cities.

**“the daughters of the Philistines.”** The reference to the daughters is because when the men went out to war, the women would anxiously wait, hoping that their men would come home, and better, come home completely victorious. When the men did come home safe, there was great rejoicing. In this battle between Israel and the Philistines, the Philistines had a resounding victory and there would have been much rejoicing throughout the Philistine cities, and David laments that fact.

2Sm 1:21

**“no longer anointed with oil.”** Most shields had at least some leather, and that was rubbed with oil to keep it strong and flexible.

2Sm 1:24

**“daughters of Israel.”** Just as the daughters of the Philistines would rejoice when the men returned victorious (see commentary on 1 Sam. 1:20), the women in Israel would weep because their men did not return from the battle.

**“who put ornaments of gold on your clothing.”** Saul had won many battles (1 Sam. 14:47) and would have brought much booty back to Israel. This enriched the people of Israel, especially the families of the men of war, who shared in the spoils of war.

2Sm 1:26

**“Your love to me was wonderful.”** Jonathan and David had a deep friendship for one another. This was a true friendship based on godliness, honor, mutual respect, and compatible abilities and desires. It is the kind of friendship that everyone longs for but too few find. There was no jealousy although there certainly could have been room for it. Jonathan was the crown prince of the house of Saul, but he knew the will of God was that David would be king, and he was good with that, which shows tremendous humility and submitting to the will of God (1 Sam. 23:17). The Bible shows that Jonathan and David were very close (1 Sam. 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; 23:15-18), and they made at least three covenants together (1 Sam. 18:3; 20:16; 23:18).

Although it has been suggested by some, there is no hint of homosexual love in any of the records. David and Jonathan were comrades in arms.

2Sm 1:27

**“How.”** This is not an actual question, but is being used rhetorically to express emotion. It is almost like “Alas!” (See commentary on Lam. 1:1).

**2 Samuel Chapter 2**

2Sm 2:1

**“To Hebron.”** The town where the patriarchs were buried: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2Sm 2:2

**“Ahinoam the Jezreelitess.”** This is the “Jezreel” of Judah, not the Jezreel in the Jezreel Valley. This Jezreel is in south-central Judah, not far from Maon, Ziph, and Carmel (cf. Josh. 15:56; 1 Sam. 25:43; 27:3; 30:5; 2 Sam. 2:2; 3:2; see commentary on Josh. 15:56).

**“the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.”** It is understood in the record that Nabal had died. David was not committing adultery here but the record is pointing out that Abigail had been married before (1 Sam. 25:37-42).

2Sm 2:4

**“the House of Judah.”** That is, the tribe of Judah. The other 11 tribes of Israel were being ruled by Saul’s son Ish-bosheth at this time (2 Sam. 2:8-9). The phrase, “the House of David” was found in the Tel Dan inscription and Moabite Stone inscription, so the phraseology was well-known.

2Sm 2:5

**“shown covenant faithfulness.”** The Hebrew verb translated “shown” is more literally, “done.”

2Sm 2:7

**“and also the House of Judah has anointed me king over them.”** David not only honored Saul, he was an astute leader. He knew that Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, had taken Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, and gone to Mahanaim some distance up the Jabbok River Valley in the Transjordan. So David took advantage of being told about the men of Jabesh-gilead and sent them a blessing and included in that the fact that he had been anointed king by the tribe of Judah. No doubt David hoped the men of Jabesh-gilead would join forces with him, giving him followers both north and south of Ish-bosheth’s capital city.

2Sm 2:8

**“But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army,”** Abner the son of Ner was Saul’s first cousin and thus a very close relative. He was the commander of Saul’s army. Although he was the commander of Saul’s army, he is not portrayed in a good light in Scripture, and sought power and position for himself. He certainly did not have a strategy for defeating Goliath even though he was the commander of Saul’s army at the time (1 Sam. 17:55). In the time that David was in Saul’s army, it was David, not Abner, who led the army in successful campaigns against the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:5, 13-16). Also, in the war with the Philistines in which Saul and three of his sons died, Abner somehow managed to escape. Also, although Abner knew David was God’s chosen king (2 Sam. 3:17-18), he decided to make Saul’s son king instead, which could only have been due to his desire for power and influence. He worked to gain influence in Ish-bosheth’s kingdom (2 Sam. 3:6-7), and when it looked like things would not go well and he was in open conflict with Ish-bosheth, he worked to shift the kingdom to David, likely hoping for a powerful position there (2 Sam. 3:9-21). His lack of military awareness was displayed and ended when he was killed by Joab. He had recently killed Joab’s brother (2 Sam. 2:18-23) and should have known that Joab would hold a grudge about it, but he seems to have been blissfully unaware of it and it cost him his life.

Looking at the career of both Saul and Abner, it seems Saul appointed Abner to be the commander of his army in large part because of his family relation to Saul. In the end, that turned out badly for Saul, Abner, and the people of Israel who all suffered because of it. Sadly, it is common for leaders or bosses to place others in jobs because of personal favoritism rather than actual qualifications. Leaders who do that knowingly, and thus cause others to suffer, will suffer for it themselves on Judgment Day, but in the meantime, believers can rest in the knowledge that when Jesus is king on earth the people in leadership positions will be qualified for them.

[For more about when Christ rules the earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“Ish-bosheth.”** This is the same person as Esh-baal, see commentary on 1 Chronicles 8:33.

**“brought him over *the Jordan* to Mahanaim.”** The location of Mahanaim is still debated, but it is agreed that it is east of the Jordan River and likely near the Jabbok River.

2Sm 2:9

**“and made him king.”** The political situation in Israel was very confusing and uncertain at this time. As the son of Saul, Ish-bosheth had a legitimate worldly claim to the throne of Israel, and Abner had installed him as king over the northern tribes of Israel. But Israel was God’s people and God had taken the kingship from Saul and given it to David. Of course, that was what the prophet Samuel had said, and it is likely that some people doubted Samuel while others were confused about it. Nevertheless, the people of the tribe of Judah recognized God’s choice and anointed David as their king.

There is a great lesson here. The kingdom of David was a shadow of the kingdom of the Messiah and so there are many parallels between the two kingdoms. Here at the start of David’s kingdom, we see that there was a rival kingdom, a worldly one, promoted by Abner, who was more interested in himself than in the truth (see commentary on 2 Sam. 2:8). The two kingdoms fought against each other, but eventually David’s kingdom won the war and covered all Israel and even more territory than that. Similarly, Jesus came as king but was not universally recognized. From his lifetime until now there has been a spiritual war going on between his followers and the followers of his rival, Satan. But just as David won and his kingdom covered Israel, Jesus Christ will win and his kingdom will cover the earth.

**“Gilead and over the Asshurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin and over all Israel.”** This list is an interesting blend of geographical areas and tribal areas, but it is meant to communicate “over all Israel” and perhaps even more up north.

Gilead was east of the Jordan and in this context meant the territory of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The term “Asshurites” is disputed and could refer to the Geshurites, those living in a territory in north Transjordan. Jezreel is the area of the Jezreel Valley (although the Philistines certainly controlled it after Saul’s death), and Ephraim and Benjamin were the two tribes in Israel directly north of the tribe of Judah.

2Sm 2:11

**“the length of time.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic and is literally, “the number of days.”

2Sm 2:12

**“the servants of Ish-bosheth,”** In this context, “servants” refers to men in the army.

**“went out.”** In this context, this phrase has a military connotation, such as “went out to battle.”

**“to Gibeon.”** Gibeon was in the tribal area of Saul, and it seems that in going to Gibeon, Abner wanted to shore up the southern border of the tribes that might well follow him and Ish-bosheth instead of David.

2Sm 2:14

**“play.”** The Hebrew word is *sachaq* (#07832 שָׂחַק), and it generally means “to laugh, play, mock” (older lexicons often have “make sport” when “sport” referred to laughing and playing). According to the *HALOT*,[[2]](#footnote-16511) when combined with “in our presence” it means to struggle or fight. This was a fight or to-the-death contest in front of others. Although it has been suggested that it was some kind of winner-take-all battle, the context argues against that because that limited fight led to the larger battle (2 Sam. 2:17). Many different suggestions have been made for how to translate *sachaq* in this context: “fight” (NET); “fight it out” (CJB, NJB); “fight hand-to-hand” (NIV, NLT); “compete” (HCSB, ESV); “perform” (NAB); “hold a contest” (NASB); “play” (JPS, KJV, RSV); “make sport” (DBY, Rotherham). It may be that *sachaq* was used as a way for Joab to speak of the fight in a mocking and minimizing fashion even though lives were at stake, which they were.

2Sm 2:16

**“seized his opponent by the head, and *thrust* his sword.”** The verb “thrust” is left out of the text, such that the verb “seized” is with both the head and the side, likely indicating that the action was simultaneous; the opponents grabbed each other’s heads and thrust at the same time.

**“Helkath-hazzurim.”** The meaning of this is uncertain, which is one reason why most versions leave it untranslated. Various suggestions have been made, such as “Field of sides” (NAB), “Field of flints” (NET), and “Field of sword edges” (Schocken Bible).

2Sm 2:18

**“three sons of Zeruiah were there.”** Zeruiah was David’s sister (1 Chron. 2:13-16), so Joab, Abishai, and Asahel were David’s nephews.

**“as swift of foot as one of the gazelles.”** Asahel was a fast, smooth runner who could run long distances. People like that were valuable in the ancient world, which had no telephone or other quick method of long-distance communication. They often became royal runners.

2Sm 2:21

**“take his spoil for yourself.”** If one man killed another in battle, the victor could take the armor of the one he killed, and that was to his honor, showing his courage and ability in battle. Sadly, the young man Asahel greatly overestimated his ability. He was so brash and inexperienced that he followed too closely to Abner. Abner, a seasoned warrior and acquaintance of Joab, Asahel’s brother, did not want to kill Asahel and tried to get him to pick a fight with someone else that he might be able to beat. But when Abner could not dissuade Asahel from trying to kill him, because Asahel was so close, Abner was able to simply ram the back end of his spear through Asahel and kill him. The back of the spear was often pointed so it could be stuck in the ground and stay upright.

This is a sad record because Asahel was likely a good person but inexperienced and overconfident; Abner did not want to kill him, and later Asahel’s brother Joab killed Abner.

2Sm 2:24

**“the hill of Ammah that lies before Giah.”** Both locations are unknown. But they were “on the road to the wilderness of Gibeon,” so Abner and his army were heading east or northeast. So when Joab pursued Abner, the motion of those armies was to the east. Eventually, Abner will return to Mahanaim, across the Jordan River and to the north and east from the battle site.

2Sm 2:25

**“the sons of Benjamin.”** Abner was a Benjamite, so it makes sense that the men of Benjamin would form a group positioned to defend him. Tribal loyalty always runs very deep.

2Sm 2:26

**“the end will be bitterness.”** Hand-to-hand combat has always been a nasty business, and here we see how close the opposing armies were because Abner and Joab are so close they can speak to each other. Abner was right of course. Israelite killing Israelite would only end in bitterness.

2Sm 2:28

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

2Sm 2:30

**“David’s servants.”** David’s “servants” in this context are the men of his army.

2Sm 2:32

**“Hebron.”** The town of Hebron was 15 miles south of Bethlehem, so we can see why it took Joab and his army all night to get there. Hebron was David’s capital at this time in history, so Joab and likely a good part of David’s army lived there.

**“went all night.”** Soldiering has always been a physically demanding job. Here we see Joab and his army march all night to reach Hebron. But then, life is difficult and demands mental and physical toughness on the part of every human. The Devil is the god of this age and the whole world is under his influence, so of course life is difficult (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19). It is easy to whine and complain about things, but that never changes the circumstances, it only makes the situation more difficult and intolerable. Mature people realize life is difficult and don’t whine about it, they just soldier on. The difficulty of this life should make our great Hope of paradise on earth shine even more brightly.

[For more on the wonderful future earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on how the future will unfold from this present age to the Millennial Kingdom to the Everlasting Kingdom, see commentary on Rev. 21:1.]

**2 Samuel Chapter 3**

2Sm 3:1

**“And the war.”** 2 Samuel 3:1 should have been the concluding summary verse of chapter 2. The war, started in chapter 2, went on for a long time.

**“between the house of Saul and the house of David.”** The war is not categorized as a full-fledged civil war between warring Israelite tribes, but rather is a power struggle for control of Israel between the house of Saul (his descendants and followers) and the house of David. Other Israelites would have certainly been pulled into the conflict, but it was a battle for the kingship of Israel between David and Saul’s house.

2Sm 3:2

**“Now sons were born to David.”** The Law of Moses warns kings not to take many wives (Deut. 17:17), and the fact that David started his kingdom with six is somewhat troubling. Although it was important for the wife of a king to have sons who could take over the kingdom, sons born by different wives to a king almost always meant trouble because each son would not only be supported and promoted by the mother, but by the whole clan, tribe, or kingdom from which the mother and son came. Thus it was common in the ancient world for the sons of kings to murder each other or otherwise be in conflict. David’s household was no different: Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar; Absalom murdered Amnon then later rebelled against David and was killed, and Adonijah was executed by Solomon for conspiring to take the kingdom. Not a happy family.

**“his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess.”** Very quickly after being anointed king over the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4), David had six sons by six different women (2 Sam. 3:2-5). It is unlikely that all David’s wives had only sons, suggesting that this list is more to show the strength of the kingdom than to give a full representation of David’s family. Scripture had just said David’s house was getting stronger (2 Sam. 3:1), and a king having sons was one way that happened. The diversity of David’s harem supports the conclusion that he was marrying for political reasons. David had not yet gained control of all Israel and needed a broad base of followers and allies to succeed. “Ahinoam the Jezreelitess” was from the “Jezreel” of Judah, not the Jezreel in the Jezreel Valley. This Jezreel is in south-central Judah, not far from Maon, Ziph, and Carmel (see commentary on Josh. 15:56). So Ahinoam and Abigail were both from the hill country of Judah, which was David’s birth territory, and those marriages solidified his friend and family base in that area.

Another of David’s wives was Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:2). She was not an Israelite. Geshur was a territory just north of the territory conquered by the tribe of Manasseh in the Transjordan (east of the Jordan River). Geshur was not conquered by Israel during the time of Joshua and remained independent. Since Geshur was just north of the territory controlled by Saul’s son Ish-bosheth when he set up his capital in the Transjordan in Mahanaim (2 Sam. 2:8), David’s marriage to Maacah assured him that Ish-bosheth would not secure military allies from the region north of him. Years later, however, when Absalom, David’s son by Maacah, murdered his brother Amnon, Absalom fled to his grandfather Talmai king of Geshur who protected him (2 Sam. 13:37).

The fact that David married a non-Israelite for political and military reasons may have seemed wise at the time, and certainly seemed to pay off in his war with Ish-bosheth, but it certainly also may have set a bad precedent for his family. Solomon married a non-Israelite before he even became king. He married Naamah the Ammonite who gave birth to Rehoboam, and Rehoboam became the king of Judah after Solomon died (1 Kings 14:21). Solomon went on to marry many non-Israelite women, and they greatly contributed to his downfall in life (1 Kings 11:4).

2Sm 3:3

**“Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.”** Chileab had a second name, “Daniel” (1 Chron. 3:1).

Abigail had been the wife of Nabal, who was evil and whom David was going to kill, but Abigail interceded for her husband and household and kept David from killing Nabal (1 Sam. 25:2-35). Nabal died, likely of a stroke (1 Sam. 25:37-38), and then David sent and took Abigail as a wife (1 Sam. 25:39-42). Abigail’s son, David’s second son, was likely first named “Daniel” (thus the name in 1 Chron. 3:1). “Daniel” is a compound of “God” (*el*) and the verb “judge” and would have meant something like, “God has judged,” with the idea being, “God has judged me and found me innocent.” Thus, Daniel was likely given his name because David felt himself innocent in Nabal’s death and in the fact he had taken Nabal’s wife as his own. David noted as much when he said that Yahweh had pleaded his case in the death of Nabal (1 Sam. 25:39).

It is likely that in time “Daniel” was given the name “Chileab,” which means “like the father,”[[3]](#footnote-19727) which would have happened if Chileab was known to be like his father in certain ways. Nothing is known about Chileab other than that he was David’s second son. He almost certainly died young. Neither Absalom, David’s third son, nor Adonijah, David’s fourth son, saw Chileab as being in the way in their bids for David’s throne, which Chileab would have been had he been alive.

**“son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur.”** This was a marriage for political expediency, which seems to show a weakness on David’s part. Note that the Geshurites were not Israelites (Josh. 13:13). Geshur was a small kingdom on the east side of the Jordan River and north of where Ish-bosheth had established his capital at Mahanaim. There is no doubt that this marriage was one of political expediency. David wanted support north of Ish-bosheth so he could harass and attack Ish-bosheth from the north as well as the south. It is said that success is harder to handle than failure, and while David was running from Saul he had to rely on Yahweh. Now it seems he is leaning on his own human logic instead of just trusting that what God said would come to pass and making truly godly choices. His marriage to Maacah also produced Absalom, who ultimately was killed by Joab for treason and rebelling against David.

2Sm 3:6

**“making himself strong.”** Abner was “gaining strength” in the house of Saul, which the NET translates as “becoming more influential.” While that is no doubt true, the Hebrew verb can be reflexive, and many versions take it that way and for a good reason. It seems that Abner knew Ish-bosheth was a weak king, and so Abner was making moves to make himself stronger in the kingdom. We certainly see that in his having sex with one of Saul’s concubines (2 Sam. 3:7-8).

2Sm 3:7

**“a concubine whose name was Rizpah.”** It is possible that Saul had only one concubine, because she is the only one named, and it is not clear why she was called a “concubine” and not a wife. Was she a slave? It is possible that Saul did not formally marry her. In any case, she lived a very unfortunate life. She lost her husband and benefactor when Saul died, apparently did not develop any lasting relation with Abner (and in any case he died too), and then her two sons, both by Saul, were executed for Saul’s sin (2 Sam. 21:8).

**“Ish-bosheth.”** The name is added for clarity; the Hebrew text is just “he.”

**“Why did you.”** Ish-bosheth challenged Abner because in Eastern culture when a king was killed or deposed the successor claimed the right to his wives and concubines. Saul was dead and Abner had sex with Rizpah, one of Saul’s concubines. Ish-bosheth thought that Abner was positioning himself to claim the throne; and he may have been doing just that in case something happened to Ish-bosheth.

**“go into.”** In this context, this is an idiom for sexual intercourse.

2Sm 3:8

**“Am I a dog’s head.”** It is unclear why Abner used this expression. It may have simply been because dogs were unclean animals and known to be backbiters (and they were also sexually promiscuous) and they were looked down upon in biblical society (unlike today when dogs are loved and considered faithful companions). Some fanciful explanations have been made to try to explain the expression, but there is no good reason not to take it at face value and admit we do not know why Abner used it.

**“loyalty.”** The Hebrew word is *checed* (#02617 חֶסֶד), and it has a wide semantic range, but its basic meaning is covenant loyalty. However, it was also used of loyalty and the actions associated with loyalty, thus the translation “kindness” in many English versions. There is no indication in the text that Abner and Saul made a covenant together, so the REV simply has “loyalty” here.

Abner could have indeed transferred the whole kingdom to David, something he now tried to do, but he had not moved in that direction because of his loyalty to Saul, so he was greatly insulted that Ish-bosheth would basically accuse him of trying to take Saul’s throne by sleeping with Rizpah. It is not clear why Abner slept with Rizpah. It does not seem he was trying to take Saul’s throne by stealth, and he knew the prophecies that David would be king. Perhaps it was as simple as the fact that she was beautiful and available.

**“have not delivered you into the hand of David.”** Surprising words from the mouth of Abner! This shows that he knew about God’s condemnation of Saul and the promise that David would be king (1 Sam. 13:13-14; 15:26-28, and 1 Sam. 15:35-16:14), but why he had not acted on that earlier is unknown other than what he said was his loyalty to Saul. In any case, Ish-bosheth’s criticism of Abner changed his position and he began to work to turn the kingdom over to David.

This incident is a clear example in the Word of God showing the power of words. Because of this one reproof by Ish-bosheth, Abner’s direction in life changed. No wonder there are so many verses in the Bible about being careful with our words and what we say.

**“this woman.”** Abner does not mention Rizpah by name, but calls her “this woman,” which in this context is a reflection of the lower cultural status of women at the time, something that shows up in many verses in 1 and 2 Samuel.

2Sm 3:11

**“Ish-bosheth.”** The Hebrew text reads, “he,” but the name “Ish-bosheth” is inserted for clarity, as it is in many modern versions.

2Sm 3:12

**“Whose is the land?”** Exactly what Abner meant by that statement is debated, but the most likely explanation is that Abner knew Yahweh had given the land to David, which is why he wanted to cut a covenant with David, but Abner also knew that there was a lot of work to be done to bring the tribes of Israel firmly under David’s hand and so David would want to make a covenant with Abner. The terms of the covenant are never mentioned but it likely involved Abner having a position of power in David’s kingdom.

2Sm 3:14

**“Give me my wife Michal.”** This seems cruel since David had other wives and Michal seemed to be happy with the man Paltiel, but in the culture, once David became king over Israel he could not afford to have a wife (there had been no divorce) with any other man in the kingdom because if she had a child people could claim it was David’s and set up a rival to the throne. David knew this and so said he would not meet with Abner unless Michal was returned to him. Along with that, David’s being reunited with Michal reconnected him to the house of Saul and thus in one way legitimatized David’s rule over the Kingdom of Israel once ruled by Saul.

The Law of Moses forbade a man from marrying a woman, divorcing her, then remarrying her (Deut. 24:1-4). Since David does generally obey the Mosaic Law, the fact that David reunites with Michal is a strong indication that he never divorced her, but her father, King Saul, took her from David when he had the chance when David had to flee for his life (1 Sam. 19:14-18). Saul gave Michal to Paltiel, but she was not legally divorced from David at the time, a point specifically made in Scripture (1 Sam. 25:44). But at that time in his life Saul was ignoring and defying the Word of God in many different ways, and that was just one more way that Saul disobeyed God.

2Sm 3:15

**“took her from her husband.”** In a very real sense Paltiel brought trouble upon himself when he agreed to marry Michal. He had to know that she was married to David. Now that bad decision comes back to cause him (and everyone involved) trouble.

2Sm 3:16

**“Bahurim.”** Ancient Bahurim was just east of Mount Scopus, which is just north of the Mount of Olives and connected to it by a lower saddle between the mountains. Thus, Abner had given Paltiel plenty of time and miles to deal with reality and return back home. In another mile or so, immediately south of Jerusalem, Abner would leave the tribal area of Benjamin and be in the tribal area of Judah where the locals might not be so friendly, so he told Paltiel to go back home. Abner had another 30 miles or so to reach Hebron, so he was still more than a day’s march away from David.

**“And he returned.”** Paltiel would have been killed had he not left, and he knew that. Abner would never have let him jeopardize the reunification of the tribes of Israel, and besides, he was not legally married to Michal anyway.

2Sm 3:17

**“elders of Israel.”** These would have been elders from the various tribes of Israel who were recognized as leaders by their respective tribes.

**“Even yesterday, even before.”** Abner uses language that reminds the people that it was not that long ago they loved David and followed him (1 Sam. 18:16). The Hebrew text, which is idiomatic and choppy in English, is smoothed out in most English versions, but the way Abner speaks and the force of it seems important to present.

2Sm 3:18

**“By the hand of my servant David.”** There is no place in Scripture where this prophecy and promise was specifically stated, but the fact that the elders did not challenge it and agreed to follow David means that in essence, it was well-known.

**“out of the hand of the Philistines.”** There are likely many things that Abner said when he met with the elders of Israel, but it is clear from what is in Scripture that he spoke in terms of their interests and what they wanted, and they certainly wanted to be delivered from the threat of the Philistines, which David did when he became king.

2Sm 3:20

**“banquet.”** The Hebrew is *mishteh* (#04960 מִשְׁתֶּה). It is a banquet with lots of wine. Everett Fox (The Schocken Bible) translates it “drinkfest.”

2Sm 3:22

**“Just then.”** The Hebrew text reads, “And, behold,” but in this context it has the force of “just then.”

**“the servants of David.”** In this context, men of David’s army.

2Sm 3:23

**“it was told to.”** The person or persons is unnamed, which shifts the focus to the message and not the messenger.

2Sm 3:24

**“gone, yes, gone.”** The Hebrew text has the figure of speech polyptoton.[[4]](#footnote-22487)

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

2Sm 3:25

**“your going out and your coming in.”** This is spoken as an idiom and technically is the figure of speech polarmerismos. Polarmerismos occurs when two extremes are used to represent a whole. Here, “going out and coming in” represents the two extremes of life, such as when a person goes out in the morning and comes back in at night. In this context, it means all that you are doing, which is doubled for emphasis in the last phrase of the verse: “know all that you are doing.” Joab was adamant that Abner only came to David to spy on what he was doing and gain an advantage in elevating Ish-bosheth to the throne over Israel.

[For more on polarmerismos, see commentary on Josh. 14:11, and for a similar use of polarmerismos, see 1 Kings 3:7.]

2Sm 3:26

**“the well of Sirah.”** According to ancient witnesses and modern historians and archaeologists, this is almost certainly a place about 2.5 miles northeast of Hebron. This means that when Joab came back from raiding and met David, Abner had just left, which is supported by 2 Samuel 3:22, which indicates that that is what happened. The fact that Abner did not get very far was likely one reason Abner agreed to go back to Hebron.

2Sm 3:27

**“he died on account of the blood of Asahel his brother.”** This gives us at least one reason Joab killed Abner; the ancient right of the avenger of blood and the blood feud. Although Abner killed Joab’s brother Asahel in a war, the fact still remains he killed Joab’s brother, and Joab would not forgive it.

2Sm 3:29

**“may it fall.”** More literally, “may it swirl around,” likely with the idea of a continuation, not a one-time action. And the “it” refers to the blood.

**“and on all his father’s house.”** David’s saying the bloodguilt for the death of Abner should alight on all Joab’s “father’s house” implicates Joab’s brother Abishai as well, and we learn from 2 Samuel 3:30 that Abishai was part of the plot to kill Abner. The Bible does not say what part Abishai played in Abner’s death; perhaps he was part of the delegation that brought Abner back to Hebron. David asks that the blood of Abner alight on all “his father’s house,” and he says that knowing that Joab’s mother is his sister, Zeruiah (2 Sam. 2:18; 1 Chron. 2:15-16), and therefore Joab and Abishai are his nephews.

**“Let there not fail from the house of Joab.”** This curse pronounced by David is very serious and is multigenerational. No doubt Joab committed murder, but does that warrant a curse upon his descendants forever such that they are sick, diseased, and hungry? This seems to be one of the places where David’s emotions overpowered his good judgment.

David pronounced a curse, but he did not move to execute Joab as a murderer, perhaps because of the ancient law of the avenger of blood, and that it could be argued that Joab acted as the avenger of blood for his brother Asahel. But it seems clear that Abner did not feel he needed protection from an avenger of blood because if he had then he would have gone to live in one of the cities of refuge in Israel, and apparently David did not feel that way either because if he had, he would not have had Abner come to Hebron to meet him.

**“who holds a spindle.”** The scholars debate whether this should be “crutch” or “spindle,” and the versions and commentaries are divided. Those who argue for “crutch” point out that it fits well in the context and there is lexical grounds for the translation (cf. CJB, JPS, NIV, NLT). Those who argue for “spindle” also say that it fits well in the context—a curse that Joab’s male descendants would not be warriors but would do women’s work—and also claim lexical support for their position (cf. HCSB, ESV, NET, NRSV). The decision is difficult, and what David meant is still uncertain. The REV went with “spindle.”

2Sm 3:30

**“Joab and Abishai…killed Abner.”** See commentary on 2 Samuel 3:29.

2Sm 3:33

**“godless fool”** The Hebrew noun translated “godless fool” is *nabal* (#05036 נָבָל). “The substantival adjective נָבָל, *nabal*, denotes the most extreme kind of ‘fool.’ Such fools reject the very existence of God and mock him as if he were powerless.”[[5]](#footnote-28527)

2Sm 3:36

**“good in their eyes.”** And idiom meaning it was good to them, it pleased them. What David did pleased the people.

2Sm 3:39

**“weak.”** More literally, “soft,” but here meaning “weak.”

**“too hard.”** The Hebrew is *qasheh* (#07186 קָשֶׁה), in this context, too hard, rough, severe; perhaps also cruel.

**2 Samuel Chapter 4**

2Sm 4:1

**“his hands became feeble.”** This is an idiom for him being discouraged and dismayed and as a result not really knowing what to do.

**“troubled.”** The Hebrew verb is *bahal* (#0926 בּהל), and it means to be disturbed, dismayed, anxious, or even terrified. It is hard to pick a single word in the translation because different people would have had different emotions. Some people would have been just disturbed, others dismayed, and others anxious, and many would have had different emotions at different times. In any case, the people were troubled at the death of Abner, one of the pillars of the kingdom.

2Sm 4:2

**“commanders of raiding bands.”** It is possible that these two men got to be leaders because they were from the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Saul, and Ish-bosheth. Because they were from Benjamin they should have been expected to have been especially loyal to the house of Saul, but obviously, they were not.

These men were part of the people of Benjamin who moved into Beeroth, which was originally a Gibeonite city (Josh. 9:17), but most of the Gibeonites moved out as 2 Samuel 4:3 says.

**“Beeroth.”** Originally a Hivite city, it became part of the tribal allotment of Benjamin.

2Sm 4:3

**“until this day.”** This lets us know that at the time 2 Samuel was written the original people of Beeroth were still living in Gittaim.

2Sm 4:4

**“had a son.”** This event about Mephibosheth seems to be inserted to assure the reader that the house of Saul had not been wiped out by the death of Ish-bosheth. Mephibosheth was still left. It also makes the point that David did not become king of all Israel by wiping out the house of Saul, because we learn later that David took care of Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:3-13).

The fact that Jonathan had a son also makes the point that he had a wife, and it is noteworthy that nothing at all is said about what happened to her. In much of the biblical record the wives are in the background, as in the record of Jonathan.

2Sm 4:7

**“Arabah road.”** Literally, “the road of the Arabah.” This is the road that ran from north to south along the Jordan River Valley. It was not close to the Jordan River itself because of all the dense growth there, but was on the edge of the growth. The two men would have been traveling north to south, and heading for Hebron where David was.

2Sm 4:8

**“Yahweh has granted vengeance.”** It is very common that people act on their own but attribute what they did as being the will of Yahweh when it is not.

2Sm 4:12

**“cut off their hands and their feet.”** This dishonored their bodies and graphically pointed to the parts of the body that participated in this great crime: the hands that killed and the feet on which the men walked to carry out their evil deed.

**2 Samuel Chapter 5**

2Sm 5:1

**“tribes.”** The Hebrew word is “staff,” with the staff representing the leader of the tribe and thus the tribe itself. Thus, the word “staff” means “tribe” in a number of verses. All the tribes came through their representative leaders; not everyone in Israel was present.

**“Behold, we are your bone and your flesh.”** That is, we are fellow Israelites.

2Sm 5:2

**“In times past.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “yesterday, even the day before,” meaning “in the past.”

**“shepherd.”** The verb “to shepherd” often meant “to rule” (see commentary on Jer. 2:8).

2Sm 5:3

**“and they anointed David.”** This was the third time David was anointed king. The first was by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13), the second was in Hebron (2 Sam. 2:4), and this is the third time.

2Sm 5:6

**“the blind and lame.”** Much in the life of David foreshadows the life of the Greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ. There seems to be an interesting, but complicated, foreshadowing in this record of David capturing the Jebusite city of Jerusalem. According to the pagan Jebusites, the city was so well fortified that the blind and lame could prevent David from taking the city (2 Sam. 5:6). This was a hyperbolic belittling of David, and unrealistically arrogant of the Jebusites seeing that David had been leading armies and defeating enemies for years. As it turned out, the blind and the lame, and the best of the Jebusite army, could not keep David from capturing the city, and once he did, he made it the capital of Israel. After David captured Jerusalem, the phrase “the blind and the lame” became used to describe David’s enemies (2 Sam. 5:8).

The Jebusites’ use of the phrase “the blind and the lame” as a fighting force is unique and occurs only here in the Bible and in extant Eastern literature, but the phrase certainly seems prophetic of the situation that the Lord Jesus Christ encountered in Israel. According to biblical prophecy, the Messiah would heal the blind and the lame (Isa. 35:5-6, cf. Isa. 29:18). There certainly were a large number of blind and lame people in Israel at the time of the Messiah. Could they prevent Jesus from proving that he was the Messiah and keep him from taking his throne as the rightful king of Israel? Would their presence show that Jesus was not the Messiah? No. Just as David established himself as king in spite of the blind and lame, the blind and lame not only could not prevent Jesus from showing himself as the Messiah, Jesus healed them and thus demonstrated that he was the Messiah. When John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus to ask if he were indeed the Messiah, Jesus answered, “Go and tell John the things that you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk” (Matt. 11:4-5; cf. Luke 7:20-22). In fact, in the Gospel of John the only miracles Jesus did in Jerusalem, besides raising Lazarus from the dead, which was technically in Bethany outside of Jerusalem, were healing the lame man (John 5:5-9), and healing the blind man (John 9:1-7), although other Gospels show that Jesus healed other blind and lame people in Jerusalem as well (Matt. 21:14). Jesus also healed other blind and lame people in other places (cf. Matt. 15:30; 20:29-34). Although Jesus did not heal every blind and lame person in Israel, what he did were certainly works that demonstrated he was the Messiah (John 10:25, 37, 38; 14:10-11). So the blind and lame could not keep David from being king in Jerusalem, and they could not keep Jesus from proving that he was the Messiah and rightful king of Israel.

**“saying.”** That is, saying to each other and even possibly shouting it over the wall to David and his men.

2Sm 5:7

**“Nevertheless.”** This event is in 1 Chronicles 11:5.

**“the City of David.”** Jerusalem and Bethlehem are both called “the City of David.” It refers to Jerusalem in the Old Testament, and Bethlehem in the New Testament (Luke 2:4, 11).

2Sm 5:8

**“water shaft.”** The Jebusite city was built on the south end of Mount Zion and its main water source was the Gihon Spring, a spring on the southeast end of the city, just outside the city wall. The Jebusites had a shaft leading down from their city to the spring, and Joab used that shaft to gain access to the city and conquer it.

**“house.”** The word “house” could refer to the house of the king, the palace, or the house of God, the Temple. The Jebusites were hated so they were not allowed into places where others could go.

2Sm 5:9

**“David lived in the stronghold.”** David lived in the original Jebusite city when he first conquered Jerusalem. Then, as 2 Samuel 5:9-11 indicate, Hiram of Tyre built him a palace and he moved into it, and it would have been north of the original Jebusite city (see commentary on 2 Sam. 5:11).

**“supporting terrace.”** The Hebrew is “the *millo*,” where *millo* is a Hebrew word that refers to fill, as in fill dirt. The city of David is built on a steep, narrow spur, which was why it was so defensible. But as David’s kingdom grew more land was needed on top, so terraces were built and strengthened to provide for more flat land on which to build.

**“the house.”** This is usually translated “inward,” but the Hebrew text gives more direction than that. The terracing “to the house” could refer to providing for more flat land for David’s house or possibly even to make room for the modifications that would allow for the Temple to later be built.

2Sm 5:10

**“And David grew greater and greater.”** This is a summary statement, and 2 Samuel 5:10-16 are a summary rather than a strict chronological development of David’s reign.

2Sm 5:11

**“and they built David a house.”** When David conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, he lived in that stronghold and named it the “City of David” (2 Sam. 5:9). Then, some time later, Hiram king of Tyre built a palace for David (2 Sam. 5:11). But where? Evidence from the Bible, archaeology, and logic leads us to conclude that David built his palace just north of the original Jebusite city of Jerusalem.[[6]](#footnote-30575) Kathleen Kenyon excavated around the ancient Jebusite city in the 1960s, and uncovered a massive public structure, and based on the pottery associated with it, dated it to the time of David and Solomon (the tenth century BC).

Kenyon did not consider that the structure she found could be associated with David because it was outside the original Jebusite city, and Kenyon thought David would have had to have built inside the city. But that would not have left much room for David’s palace, nor much room for the tent he set up for the ark of the covenant. Kenyon acknowledged this, and wrote, “David must have cleared a space within the Jebusite town, but the size of this residence is unlikely to have been great, for anything grandiose would have taken too much space within the restricted area of the Jebusite-Davidic city.”[[7]](#footnote-15027)

But 2 Samuel 5:9 informs us that after David conquered Jerusalem, he enlarged it, and the most natural way to enlarge it was to build a section north of the original city. Besides, as Kenyon said, the original Jebusite city would have been very densely built up and would not have had room for an adequate palace for David. So David would have mainly expanded Jerusalem to the north because the Jebusite city had steep valleys to the east, south, and west, whereas there was room to the north for his palace and the tent he set up for the ark of the covenant. But the northern area would not have been as well fortified as the original city, which explains why David would have gone back “down” to the Jebusite stronghold, the old Jebusite city, when the Philistines were threatening to attack (2 Sam. 5:17).

Kenyon uncovered a huge stepped-stone structure on the east slope of Mount Zion, just north of the Jebusite city, and that structure has been discovered by later archaeologists, especially Eilat Mazar, to be the supporting wall associated with and supporting the huge building above it, which is almost certainly David’s palace.

It seems likely that this verse is not in exact chronological order but is inserted here to show that Yahweh has established David as king over Israel and that is even recognized by foreign powers.

2Sm 5:13

**“And David took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem.”** While having many wives and concubines is an evidence of kingship, it seems to be an ominous sign of bad things to come, considering the limitation in Deut. 17:17. The Bible does not even give us the names of these women, except for Bathsheba, which we learn from a later context. The mention of Solomon shows that these verses about David’s wives and sons are not chronological but are summary statements.

2Sm 5:14

**“Shammua, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon.”** These sons of David were the sons of Bathsheba (1 Chron. 3:5). Nathan was the son of David from whom Joseph, the husband of Mary, was descended (Luke 3:31).

2Sm 5:17

**“all the Philistines went up to search for David.”** It is noteworthy that the Philistines did not attack David when he reigned as king over Judah and lived in Hebron, even though at that time his army would have been much smaller and more vulnerable than it was when David was king over all the tribes of Israel. It is likely that as long as the Philistines thought that there was a civil war between the south (David), and the north (Ish-bosheth and his successors) they were happy to have the two sides deplete their men and resources fighting each other, but when David united the twelve tribes the Philistines saw the need to go to war with Israel if they were ever to gain territory or even keep the territory they had gained from their battles with Saul.

**“went down to the stronghold.”** This is most likely in the Jebusite city.

2Sm 5:18

**“the Valley of Rephaim.”** One of the routes into Jerusalem, coming from the southwest. It has a wide bottom.

2Sm 5:19

**“give, yes, give.”** This is the figure of speech polyptoton, where “give” is doubled for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

2Sm 5:20

**“like the breaking out of water.”** The Valley of Rephaim has an area where there are springs that break forth out of the ground, and that could be the general area of the battle.

2Sm 5:21

**“And they abandoned their idols there.”** The Philistines wanted their gods to be with them at the battle so they could help them. The Israelites had done the same kind of thing earlier and brought the ark of God to their battle to help them (1 Sam. 4:3-4). But the Philistines’ gods did not help them in this battle and were abandoned on the battlefield.

**“David and his men carried them away.”** It was common that the important gods of a pagan culture would be decorated with silver, gold, and other precious things, so David carried the gods back to his headquarters where they were burned and the precious metals no doubt recovered. The record in Chronicles says David burned the idols (1 Chron. 14:12) which indeed he did, but he did not burn them on the battlefield. When we put Samuel and Chronicles together we can see he had the idols taken away and burned in such a way that the valuable things were recovered.

2Sm 5:23

**“Circle around behind them.”** The first time the Philistines attacked, David defeated them but apparently many of them escaped and went home (2 Sam. 5:17-21). For this second battle God told David to circle behind the Philistines, that is, get between them and their home area and attack from that direction, the southwest. This would cut off the main Philistine escape route and allow David and his men to more permanently rid themselves of the Philistines.

2Sm 5:24

**“then go quickly.”** When David heard the sound of God’s invisible army marching toward the Philistines, he was to attack them too. God’s command to David was to be ready to move when God moved, and that is an important lesson for believers to learn. We do not always know when God will move, but our hearts have to be ready to move when God moves.

2Sm 5:25

**“from Geba all the way to Gezer.”** This summary of David’s war against the Philistines shows that David did not just have one localized battle with the Philistines, but rather waged a campaign against them to drive them from the heart of Israel and back to the Mediterranean coast. Although the battle started in the Valley of Rephaim, to the southwest of Jerusalem, David’s army defeated them “to Gezer,” which was more than 20 miles west of Jerusalem, and also “from Geba” which was to the north of Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 14:16 reads “Gibeon” instead of “Geba,” and the Septuagint does too, and that may have been the original reading. However, both cities are to the north of Jerusalem and only about five miles apart. It is even possible that both cities were points of attack for David. The point is that David drove the Philistines out of the heartland of Israel and thus opened the door for his reign over all of Israel, from the south to the north.

**2 Samuel Chapter 6**

2Sm 6:2

**“Baale of Judah.”** That is another name for Kiriath-jearim (1 Chron. 13:6).

**“called by the Name.”** The ark of God was never “called” “the Name” or called Yahweh. The phase here means called in a way associated to the Name.

**“*between* the cherubim.”** Yahweh dwelt between the cherubim that were on the atonement cover (traditionally “mercy seat”) of the ark of the covenant (see commentary on Num. 7:89). Although 2 Samuel 6:2 does not specifically use the word “between,” Numbers 7:89 does, so we learn from other verses that God appeared and spoke from over the Atonement Cover and between the cherubim.

2Sm 6:3

**“that was on the hill.”** The Hebrew “on the hill” is close to the word “Gibeah,” and the King James Version translates this as “in Gibeah,” but that is incorrect. Gibeah was miles to the northeast.

2Sm 6:5

**“many branches of fir trees​.”** There is no Hebrew word for “instruments” here, and the idea that there were musical instruments made from fir wood is an interpretation. When kings entered a city it was common to wave branches, just like the crowd did for Jesus (John 12:13; cf. Rev. 7:9), and here God Himself is going to enter Jerusalem, so it was appropriate to wave branches in celebration.

2Sm 6:10

**“the Gittite.”** The inhabitants of the Philistine city of Gath were referred to as “Gittites” (see commentary on Josh. 13:3).

2Sm 6:14

**“danced.”** The Hebrew word is unique and only occurs in 2 Samuel 6:14 and 6:16 in the Old Testament. It is connected to whirling around or spinning around.

**“before Yahweh.”** The lack of clarity in the Hebrew vocabulary leaves us without knowing if David was ahead of the ark, or just “in the presence of the ark.”

2Sm 6:15

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

2Sm 6:17

**“the tent that David had pitched for it.”** Why David did not take the ark and put it back inside Moses’ Tent of Meeting is not explained. See commentary on 1 Chronicles 16:1.

2Sm 6:20

**“who uncovered himself today.”** The text makes it clear that David was not naked, he was wearing a linen ephod (2 Sam. 6:14), but that was not what a king would ordinarily wear in public. Michal accused him of “uncovering” himself, which in her eyes meant not wearing the clothes that were appropriate for a king.

**“one of the rabble.”** A more literal translation might be “empty ones,” meaning the unlearned and undisciplined rabble.[[8]](#footnote-25645)

**2 Samuel Chapter 7**

2Sm 7:6

**“since the day that I brought up Israel out of Egypt to this day.”** This would have been a time period of very close to 450 years, and in that time the cloth of the Tabernacle would have needed refurbishing.

2Sm 7:7

**“tribe leaders.”** The Hebrew is simply “tribes,” put for the leaders of the tribes. The parallel record in 1 Chronicles 17:6 has “judges.”

2Sm 7:9

**“I will make you a great name.”** See commentary on 1 Chronicles 17:8.

2Sm 7:10

**“I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, and they will live in their own place and not be disturbed any more.”** After Christ fights the Battle of Armageddon and conquers the earth, he will divide up the earth and assign different people to different places. Israel will be given the land of Israel and it will be divided up among the tribes of Israel (Ezek. 47:13-48:29). That will be their homeland during Christ’s Millennial Kingdom.

**“the sons of wickedness.”** The phrase, “the sons of wickedness” is idiomatic for wicked people. “Sons” followed after their father, and “sons of” is a common idiom in the Bible. Sons of wickedness are evil people. When the Messiah comes evil people that are alive at the time will be killed (Isa. 11:4). Many of the wicked will be killed in the Battle of Armageddon, which is when Christ comes down from heaven and conquers the earth (Rev. 19:11-21). The rest will be rounded up and killed right after they are judged in the Sheep and Goat Judgment. Wicked people who died before Christ’s return will be in the Second Resurrection and will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

[For more information on the Sheep and Goat Judgment and the order of end-times events, see commentary on Matt. 25:32. For more information on the different resurrections in the future, see commentary on Acts 24:15. For more information on Christ’s future Millennial Kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on how the future will unfold from this present age to the Millennial Kingdom to the Everlasting Kingdom, see commentary on Rev. 21:1.]

2Sm 7:13

**“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”** It is important to notice that it is the “throne” (the rulership) of the kingdom that is established forever, and this promise is repeated in 2 Samuel 7:16. That is why the kings that sat on the throne did not reign forever but the throne passed from generation to generation until the Messiah, who will reign forever because he will live forever. When the angel came to Mary to tell her that she would give birth to the Messiah, he said, “the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32). That was one of the key things that the angel said that told Mary that her child would be more than just a remarkable child such as John the Baptist, but the actual Messiah himself. Old Testament prophecies showed that the Messiah’s kingdom would last forever (e.g. Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14; cf. Ps. 2, Ps. 110).

2Sm 7:14

**“father...son.”** This verse shows the father-son relationship in the biblical world, that a responsibility of the father was to disciple the son and raise him up to be a good and godly citizen.

2Sm 7:16

**“Your house.”** In this case, “your house” refers to your dynasty, the Davidic dynasty, which would culminate in the Messiah and be established forever. Many times the Messiah is referred to as “the Son of David” because he was descended from David and is the reigning king in the Davidic dynasty (see commentary on Matt. 1:1).

**“before me.”** Although the Masoretic text reads “before you,” the Septuagint, the Aramaic Peshitta, and some medieval Hebrew MSS read “before me,” and that makes more sense in the context because God would be the One who would be around forever to establish and support the Davidic dynasty.

**“Your throne will be established forever.”** See commentary on 2 Samuel 7:13.

2Sm 7:18

**“my house.”** David is not referring to his immediate household, but to the dynasty that would come from him and last forever.

2Sm 7:21

**“you have worked all this greatness to make it known to your servant.”** David is saying that God worked much greatness in his life which, combined with what Nathan said, made it known to David that he would indeed be the founder of a dynasty after him culminating in the Messiah.

2Sm 7:22

**“For there is none like you.”** The “you” is in the second-person masculine singular form. There is no Trinity here; if there were, the “you” would be plural. In this verse, Yahweh is God and there is no other God other than Yahweh (“you,” singular). So there are no other “Persons” in God.

**“nor is there any God other than you.”** The Bible has many verses that say there is only one God, “Yahweh.”

[For more on Yahweh being the only God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son,” point 11, and the REV commentary on Deut. 6:4.]

2Sm 7:23

**“whom God went forth to redeem.”** The plural “Elohim” here could refer to God or God’s agents, the angels (or some Jewish commentators say it refers to Moses and Aaron).

2Sm 7:24

**“and you, O Yahweh, became their God.”** This is a reference to the covenant that Israel made with Yahweh at Mount Sinai when the people made a covenant that Yahweh would be their God (Exod. 24:1-4).

2Sm 7:27

**“I will build you a house.”** This is the use of “house” meaning a dynasty, “the house of David.” This does not refer to David’s physical house that he lived in.

**2 Samuel Chapter 8**

2Sm 8:1

**“the bridle of the mother-city.”** 1 Chronicles 18:1 says this refers to Gath and her daughters, that is Gath and the cities near her that were controlled by her. There is, however, no scholarly consensus that that is the correct meaning of the verse.

2Sm 8:3

**“as he was going.”** The “he” refers to Hadadezer, not David. Hadadezer was heading north to restore his control on the Euphrates, and David cut him off and struck him.

**“to restore his control.”** The Hebrew might mean, “restore his monument” (1 Sam. 15:12), where the monument was a symbol of his control.

2Sm 8:5

**“When the Syrians of Damascus.”** This is exactly the same as 1 Chronicles 18:5.

2Sm 8:6

**“And Yahweh saved David wherever he went.”** See commentary on 2 Samuel 8:14.

2Sm 8:7

**“servants.”** This is a clear use of the servants of the king being his officers and generals.

2Sm 8:9

**“Toi.”** In Chronicles the man’s name is spelled “Tou,” while in 2 Samuel it is spelled “Toi” (cf. 1 Chron. 18:9).

2Sm 8:10

**“Joram.”** In 1 Chronicles 18:10 he is called “Hadoram.” The Hebrew root words are the same.

**“he had fought.”** That is, David had fought against Hadadezer.

2Sm 8:12

**“Edom.”** This makes sense geographically and is the reading of some Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint, and the Syriac texts. The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “Syrian,” which does not fit the context or the geography, but is very close in Hebrew spelling to “Edom.”

2Sm 8:13

**“David made a name *for himself* when he returned from striking down the Edomites.”** This is a good example of the principle of “author-agent” (or “principal and agent”) in Scripture. Here in 2 Samuel, King David is credited with defeating the Edomites, while from 1 Chronicles 18:12 we learn that one of David’s generals, Abishai, was the one who actually led the battle and got the victory. It often happens in Scripture that a “principal” is credited with doing something that was actually accomplished by one of his agents. For example, God is sometimes said to do things that are actually carried out by His agents, but His agents are under His command.

**“Edomites.”** See commentary on 2 Samuel 8:12, “Edom.” Also, 1 Chronicles 18:12 says “Edomites.” Also, this fits with “Edom” in verse 14.

2Sm 8:14

**“And Yahweh saved David wherever he went.”** The Hebrew text is identical to 2 Samuel 8:6. Yahweh saved his anointed king in battle after battle and thus set the kingdom up for a wonderful reign of justice and righteousness. This is more evidence of king David being a type of the Messiah, the Greater David, who was saved in situation after situation by God, who thus set us all up for the wonderful future Kingdom of Christ.

2Sm 8:16

**“recorder.”** This is like a court historian, someone who has a good memory but mainly notes and records what is going on in the kingdom. For example, when the Bible mentions “the chronicles of the kings” (cf. 1 Kings 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31, etc.) it would have usually been the recorder who wrote or dictated that so that it was written down. Pagan kings kept a chronicle of the goings on in the kingdom as well (Esther 6:1).

**2 Samuel Chapter 9**

2Sm 9:1

**“Is there anyone who is still left from the house of Saul.”** We can estimate the time that passed between the death of Saul and Jonathan and this point by noting that Mephibosheth, the descendant of Saul, was five years old when Saul was killed (2 Sam. 4:4). But now he is old enough to be married and have a child (2 Sam. 9:12). If we assume that Mephibosheth married at 15 and had a child the very next year, that would mean that 11 years had passed from the time Saul and Jonathan died until David sought out Mephibosheth, but it was likely a little longer than that.

**“show.”** The Hebrew is more “do” than “show,” but we say “show” in English meaning to do something.

2Sm 9:3

**“he is crippled in both his feet.”** Ziba likely added this to emphasize that Mephibosheth was not a threat to David; he could not effectively command an army.

2Sm 9:6

**“paid homage.”** The Hebrew word *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), refers to bowing down, falling prostrate, giving honor, and also worshiping.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 9:7

**“show, yes, show.”** The text has the figure polyptoton for emphasis, repeating the verb twice (see commentary on Genesis 2:16).

2Sm 9:8

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. It is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

**“dead dog.”** Cf. 1 Samuel 24:14.

2Sm 9:10

**“20 servants.”** The Hebrew can also be translated as “20 slaves,” and that could well be the correct meaning here.

2Sm 9:11

**“the king’s table.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text has “my table,” but that does not fit the context. The NET text note correctly points out that “The ancient versions are not unanimous in the way that they render the phrase.” The Septuagint reads, ‘the table of David,’ the Latin Vulgate has ‘your table,’ and the Syriac Peshitta has ‘the table of the king.’ The REV follows the Septuagint.

2Sm 9:12

**“Mica.”** Mica is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 8:34-35; 9:40-44.

**2 Samuel Chapter 10**

2Sm 10:3

**“lord.”** The word “lord” is plural in the text, which is the plural of emphasis.

2Sm 10:5

**“Jericho.”** This is the ruins of Jericho. The city had not yet been rebuilt and fortified, but was still sometimes called “Jericho.”

2Sm 10:6

**“the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians.”** This battle is given with different details in 1 Chronicles 19:6-7.

**“the king of Maacah with 1,000 men.”** The small kingdom of Maacah was south and east of the Sea of Galilee in the tribal area of Manasseh, but when Israel was conquering the land in the time of Joshua, the Manassites did not drive the people of Maacah or Geshur, which was to the immediate north of Maacah, out of the land (Josh. 13:13). Called “Aram-maacah” in 1 Chronicles 19:6.

**2 Samuel Chapter 11**

2Sm 11:1

**“in the spring of the year.”** The Hebrew reads, “at the return of the year,” a reference to springtime.

**“his servants.”** In this context, the word “servant” refers to the military officers and officials of the king. It does not refer to David’s household servants or slaves, or the rank-and-file men in the army, because those people would be part of “all Israel.”

In the ancient world, everyone serving the king was technically a “servant,” so the word “servant” was used for all kinds of officials of the king, both civil servants and military “servants.” This was commonly known in the ancient world and so the Bible was not confusing to people who lived in ancient times. However, we do not use the word “servant” that way today. We would never call the Vice President of the United States a “servant of the President,” nor would we call the captain of a battleship the “servant of the Admiral,” but that is the way those men would have been thought of in the ancient Near East.

If we are going to understand the Bible today, we must learn the jargon of the ancient world and pay attention to the context when the word “servant” is used. Sometimes it is clear from the context that “servant” refers to high civil officials (Gen. 41:37; Isa. 42:1); at other times it refers only to military officers (1 Sam. 19:1); and in some cases, “servants” encompasses both civil and military officers and officials. Often it can be difficult to determine the exact role of the “servants.” The Bible has many references to “servants” who are highly ranked officials and military officers (e.g., Exod. 9:30, 34; 1 Sam. 8:14; 2 Sam. 13:24; 1 Kings 20:6, 23; 22:3; Esther 3:2; Jer. 22:2; 37:18). In Job 4:18, high ranking spirit beings are referred to as God’s “servants.” Of course there are times when the “servant” is just a menial servant (or slave) in the modern sense of the word “servant” (e.g. 2 Kings 5:2).

**“Rabbah.”** The capital city of Ammon, now much bigger and renamed Amman.

2Sm 11:3

**“Bathsheba.”** The name means “daughter of an oath.”

**“the daughter of Eliam.”** Eliam was one of David’s mighty men (2 Sam. 23:34). Eliam’s father was Ahithophel (2 Sam. 23:34), who started out as one of David’s trusted counselors (2 Sam. 15:12; 16:23). However, after David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah killed, Ahithophel sided with David’s son Absalom against David (2 Sam. 15:31). There is no evidence, however, that Eliam also turned against David.

2Sm 11:4

**“now she had just purified herself from her uncleanness​.”** The Law of Moses required that a woman was unclean for seven days after her menstrual cycle ended (Lev. 15:19-33), and then she could lawfully have sex with her husband. At the end of those seven days of uncleanness she would wash herself and be clean. Bathsheba was washing herself at the end of her uncleanness. This also happens to be the time when a woman is very fertile, which seems to be the reason that this parenthesis is even in the text—it is letting the reader know that it would not have been unusual for Bathsheba to get pregnant from intercourse at that time of the month, which of course is what happened.

2Sm 11:5

**“I am with child.”** For the army of Israel to be fighting the Ammonites when David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and for them to still be in that fight when Bathsheba knew she was pregnant shows that David’s army had been in the field battling for weeks.

2Sm 11:11

**“the ark.”** Uriah’s statement shows us that the army carried the ark of the covenant to the battlefield with them, a seemingly precarious move. Given that the ark had been captured by the Philistines years earlier, one would think that David and his advisors would have left the ark in Jerusalem.

**“staying in booths.”** The Bedouin had tents and lived in them, but the army would not have had tents, they would have constructed temporary dwellings wherever they camped.

**“encamped in the open field.”** More literally, “are camping on the face (“surface”) of the field.” It seems most of the army simply laid on the ground at night.

2Sm 11:16

**“where he knew that valiant men were.”** The fortress in Aman Jordan has steep sides all around except on the north side. That would seem to be the natural point where the fighting would be the fiercest.

2Sm 11:21

**“Jerubbesheth.”** This is Gideon, “Jerubbaal” in Judges, but Jerubbesheth here in Samuel. “Jerubbesheth” means something like “shame will contend.” Due to the way Gideon ended his life, David referred to him as one with whom shame contended. This is ironic, because what David did was so shameful. Gideon’s sin was shameful, but David was in no position to point fingers.

**“Didn’t a woman cast an upper millstone on him from the wall.”** This record is in Judges 9:50-55.

2Sm 11:25

**“Do not let this thing be evil in your eyes.”** David’s words are ironic. What David and Joab did was evil. To an outsider who did not know the situation, the “evil” was the death of a good man in a battle with the enemy. But the real “evil” was the plot that David hatched and Joab carried out to kill Uriah. What David did was clearly evil in the eyes of God (2 Sam. 11:27).

**“So you *are to* encourage him.”** David tells the messenger to encourage Joab.

2Sm 11:26

**“she lamented over her husband.”** 2 Samuel 11:26 is saying that Bathsheba openly and publicly wept and wailed over her husband. The Hebrew word translated “lament” is *saphad* (#05594 סָפַד) and in general, it refers to the more public lamentation and crying and wailing than the word *'ebel* (#060 אֵבֶל), which is used in 2 Samuel 11:27 and is translated “mourning.” Although the words may sometimes be used synonymously, generally *saphad* refers to the outward and public lamentation that occurred when someone died, while *'ebel* refers to the longer and more personal mourning that occurs in a person’s mind and heart after someone dies, although especially with women in the biblical culture, it was common to wear clothing that indicated that the person was mourning the death of a loved one.

In the ancient biblical world there were women who were professional mourners, who would come to a funeral and loudly weep and wail, and often speak various laments (cf. Jer. 9:17). Those women helped draw the emotion of loss out of the people present. In the biblical world of the Jews, a person’s dead body was buried the same day the person died, and death often came quickly and unexpectedly. That meant that it often happened that there was no time to inform the extended family and gather them for the funeral, which could mean that some funerals did not have many family members present. But it was customary and considered important to make a loud weeping and wailing when someone died to demonstrate one’s feeling of loss and make a kind of tribute to the dead person. The professional mourners helped with the serious and sad tone of the funeral. Also, when other people at the funeral cried, it was easier for family members to feel the emotion and cry too. All this contributed to there being professional mourners, women, who would loudly cry and lament the death of the person. It also meant that the culture had a word for the loud, public lamentation at the funeral or announcement of someone’s death, and a different word for the internal mourning in the heart of a person who had lost a loved one. Here in 2 Samuel 11:26-27, we see both aspects: the lament and then the mourning. It is also worth noting that if there were musicians available that could help with the sad emotional tone, they might come to, as we see at the funeral of Jairus’ 12-year-old daughter (Matt. 9:23).

The crowd that came to the house of Jairus when his daughter died would have had professional mourners in it, and that is part of the reason that crowd could go from “crying and wailing loudly” (Mark 5:38) to laughing out loud (Mark 5:40) so very quickly (cf. Mark 5:38-40).

**2 Samuel Chapter 12**

2Sm 12:5

**“deserves to die!”** The Hebrew is literally, “is a son of death.” David said this in a flash of anger, even though the sin did not deserve the death penalty.

2Sm 12:6

**“He must restore the lamb fourfold.”** Repaying fourfold for stealing and slaughtering a sheep was demanded in the Mosaic Law (Exod. 22:1). There is little doubt that David knew the law, but being human he had a hard time keeping it and overcoming his personal weaknesses. Ironically, four of David’s sons are specifically said to have died. The baby of Bathsheba died. Then Absalom, David’s third son, killed his oldest son Amnon. Then Absalom revolted against David and was killed in the battle between the two sides. Then David’s fourth son, Adonijah, was killed by Solomon.

2Sm 12:7

**“I myself anointed you king over Israel.”** This is an example of the Jewish principle of agency with the Author-agent. Samuel actually anointed David as king over Israel, but Yahweh says He did it.

2Sm 12:8

**“and your lord’s wives into your bosom.”** David is never said to have slept with any of Saul’s wives, however, since Nathan made the statement it is possible that David did acquire Saul’s wives and had sex with them. That a conquering king would take the harem of the king he conquered was likely such a common occurrence that it simply was not mentioned in other contexts (cf. Jer. 6:12; 8:10). On the other hand, Nathan may have made the statement for effect, stating what David could have had if he wanted. There is no evidence in the Bible that Saul had more than two wives. Saul married Ahinoam (1 Sam. 14:50) and had four sons: Jonathan, Ishvi (also called Abinadab), Malchishua, and Esh-baal (1 Sam. 14:49; 1 Chron. 8:33). Saul also had a concubine named Rizpeh (2 Sam. 3:7), but there is no evidence that David married either one of them. The point of God’s bringing up Saul’s wives in Nathan’s rebuke seems to be to make the point that if David had wanted more wives he could have built his harem without doing it in such an ungodly way.

**“many more such things.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic and hard to translate, some versions have “such and such” things. The idea is “whatever else.”

2Sm 12:9

**“my eyes.”** The Masoretic printed text reads “his eyes,” but the notations of the Masorites says it should be read as “my eyes,” which makes more sense in the context because Yahweh is speaking.

2Sm 12:10

**“for years to come.”** The Hebrew word translated “for years to come” is *olam* (#05769 עוֹלָם), and it has a range of meanings about the past or future. It can refer to a future or past period of long duration, indefinite duration, or it can mean forever, everlasting, or perpetual. In terms of the past, it can mean from eternity past or simply mean old or ancient. In the context of David’s house and the problems it would experience, the meaning is “for a long time, for years to come,” and does not mean “forever” because in Christ’s kingdom those troubles will come to an end. The sword will not be part of David’s “house,” his dynasty, when the Messiah reigns on earth as king. Many English versions simply leave it untranslated.

2Sm 12:11

**“to another.”** the Hebrew word is often translated “neighbor,” but it can also have the meaning of “another” person, which is the meaning it has here. In this case, the “other” person was David’s own son, Absalom.

**“in the sight of this sun.”** An idiom meaning in broad daylight; in public view. This prophecy was fulfilled when Absalom slept with some of David’s wives on the roof of the palace in full view of the people (2 Sam. 16:21-22).

2Sm 12:13

**“transferred.”** The Hebrew word translated “transferred” here in 2 Samuel 12:13 is *`abar* (#05674 עָבַר) and the lexicons show that its most common meaning is to “pass over, pass through, cross over, move through,” and in its causative sense (hiphil form) it means to “pass on” or to “transfer.” The word *`abar* can have the meaning “put away,” and God certainly did put David’s sin away from him, but in a way we do not expect: He put it away by passing it on. That *`abar* means “transfer” or “pass on” in this context becomes clear when we see that God used *`abar* for David’s sin instead of using other common words for “forgive” that do not imply transferring the sin. For example, the Hebrew word s*alach* (#05545 סָלַח), which means “forgive,” is often used for forgiving sins and does not imply passing the sin on (cf. 1 Kings 8:34; Jer. 31:34). Also, the Hebrew word *nasa'* (#05375 נָשָׂא), which means to “lift up” or “carry,” i.e., “carry away” (cf. Exod. 10:17; 32:32) is used for “forgive,” and so is the word *kaphar* (#03722 כָּפַר), which means “to cover, to purge, to make atonement” (cf. Deut. 21:8; Jer. 18:23). The point is that God had words for “forgive” that would have indicated that David’s sin would have been forgiven and covered at that time, but He did not use those words, instead, God used a word that indicated the sin—actually the consequences of the sin—would be passed on. Everett Fox (The Schocken Bible) translates the sentence, “As for Yahweh, he has transferred your sin—you will not die.”

That the sin of David was sometimes transferred to others is what we see when we read about the life of David. The immediate consequence of the sin of David being transferred was the death of his child, the “son of David.” Note that Nathan said to David, “You will not die,” but then added, “However…the child also who is born to you will die” (2 Sam. 12:13-14), and the child did indeed die. After David’s sin, a large number of terrible circumstances occurred in David’s house and kingdom. Four of his sons met untimely deaths (see commentary on 2 Sam. 12:6), one of his daughters was raped, his wives were raped by one of his sons while Israel watched, and there were other consequences as well. Nathan had said, “now the sword will not depart from your house” (2 Sam. 12:10), and that prophecy came to pass.

It would be wrong to think that the consequences of our sin are always passed on to others, especially now that believers are forgiven and cleansed in Christ. In both the Old and New Testaments we see sins being simply forgiven. However, there are times when the consequences of sins we commit are passed on to others, and that is uncomfortable and leaves some unanswered questions, but it does happen and even in the Ten Commandments God warns us that the sins people commit can affect others. God tells us that He is jealous, “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, *even* on the third and on the fourth *generation* of those who hate me” (Exod. 20:5). Another record of someone’s sin being passed down is in 2 Samuel 21:1-14, and is the record of Saul sinning against the people of Gibeon, which then affected the weather and harvest in Israel many years later. Although we do not fully understand how it is that the sin of one person or generation can be passed on to another person or generation, we know that it happens and thus it should be one of the many things that motivate us to live a holy and obedient life.

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death, and that a consequence of sin is death leads to another important point that begs to be made about David’s sin being “transferred” to someone else. What God did for David, He did for all of us, because we all sin and there are consequences for that sin that have to be paid for. Ultimately, the sin of every human was transferred to Jesus Christ, “the Son of David.” God laid on Jesus Christ the sin of us all (Isa. 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21), and Jesus died as the payment for sin so that those who believe in him could have everlasting life.

2Sm 12:14

**“contempt, yes, contempt…die, yes, die.”** The Hebrew text uses a double polyptoton for emphasis. David’s utter contempt for Yahweh had dire consequences. In this case, “die, yes, die,” is the same phrase as God used when speaking to Adam, except there God used the second person while here in 2 Sam. 12:14 the second verb is in the third person.

[For more on the figure of speech polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

**“for Yahweh.”** There is very good evidence that “Yahweh” was the reading of the original text and not “the enemies of Yahweh,” and so Yahweh (or “the LORD”) is the translation in a number of modern versions (BBE, CJB, HCSB, ESV, NAB, NET, NIV, NJB, NLT, NRSV, Rotherham, RSV). It occasionally happened that the ancient scribes desired to protect Yahweh or someone especially important, so they would alter the Hebrew text but make a notation they did so. E. W. Bullinger refers to these changes as “the emendations of the sopherim” and has an appendix in his Bible on the subject.[[9]](#footnote-10084) P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. has a good explanation of the emendation.[[10]](#footnote-10675) David showed utter contempt for Yahweh when he committed adultery and murder.

2Sm 12:16

**“fasted.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “fasted a fast,” but that is idiomatic and means “fasted.”

**“would go in and lay all night.”** David did this for the days the boy lived. David really did what he could at this point to save the child’s life.

**“on the ground.”** David would have been in some room in the palace.

2Sm 12:18

**“He may do some harm.”** Although most versions translate “himself” into the text, thus having, “He may do himself some harm,” the word “himself” is not in the text. It is likely that the people had in mind more than David just harming himself, but doing things that would harm others as well.

2Sm 12:20

**“worshiped.”** The Hebrew verb is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), and it is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.” The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 12:23

**“I will go to him.”** David knows that he will die too one day.

2Sm 12:24

**“he called.”** There is a Qumran manuscript that reads “she called,” but the Masoretic text reads “he called.”

**“And Yahweh loved him.”** It is rare for the text to point out an individual and say that Yahweh loved him, and it is an interesting parallel that this “son of David” was loved, just as the greater Son of David, Jesus Christ, was loved, “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17).

2Sm 12:25

**“he sent *a message*.”** That is, Yahweh sent a message to David via Nathan.

**“by the hand of Nathan,”** This is idiomatic and means that Yahweh used Nathan as His agent, Nathan’s “hand” was not involved, it was just part of the idiom.

**“Jedidiah.”** Jedidiah means “beloved of Yahweh.”

2Sm 12:27

**“the city of waters.”** Rabbah had water associated with it, so Joab is likely speaking of a precinct in the city such as the royal precinct or a precinct that controls the waters in the city.

2Sm 12:28

**“and my name be called over it.”** This is the literal translation of the Hebrew text. Although most English versions translate the phrase as if it said, “it will be called by my name,” that does not seem to be the meaning of the text; the city was not called “the city of David” when David captured it. What Joab is saying is that his name would be associated with the conquest of the city, not David’s name.

2Sm 12:29

**“all the people.”** In this context, the “people” are the fighters; the army and other able-bodied men.

2Sm 12:30

**“a talent of gold.”** Although the word “talent” was used in different cultures, the weight differed. An Israelite talent was 75 pounds, whereas a Babylonian talent was 66 pounds. Thus, this crown was 75 pounds. Although this seems too much for a head, there are actual statues from ancient Ammon that show men wearing huge crowns, although they would not have worn them very long.

**2 Samuel Chapter 13**

2Sm 13:1

**“Tamar.”** An important name in David’s family, going all the way back to Tamar, who was married to Jacob’s son Judah’s oldest son Er, but ended up having a child in David’s line by Judah himself (Gen. 38). David named his daughter Tamar, and Absalom named his daughter Tamar (2 Sam. 14:27).

**“and Amnon the son of David fell in love with her.”** This “love” was not actual love, but simply animal lust. Amnon, being the oldest son of David and the crown prince, was spoiled and could not control his desires. The rape of Tamar by Amnon was the start of the fulfillment of Nathan’s prophecy to David that the sword would not depart from his house and evil would arise from his own house (2 Sam. 12:10-11).

2Sm 13:2

**“in the eyes of Amnon it seemed impossible​.”** This may have been because Amnon could not think of any legitimate way to be with Tamar since the Mosaic Law forbid brothers and sisters, even half-brothers and sisters, from having sex with each other (Lev. 18:6, 9; 20:17). However, since Amnon ignored those Mosaic Laws, it may have also been due to the fact that the unmarried daughters of the king would be closely guarded because any child they gave birth to would be a potential heir to the throne. Amnon may have felt it impossible to get to Tamar without her guardians, which eventually led to his ruse and his directly going to king David to send Tamar to him, which got rid of the guards.

**“to do anything to her.”** In this context, the phrase is euphemistic for sexual contact.

2Sm 13:3

**“a friend whose name was Jonadab.”** Although Jonadab was Amnon’s cousin, in this context it was their friendship that was important. In fact, often in royal families, the cousins were rivals and more enemies than friends. This record emphasizes how important it is to choose friends wisely. This “friend” ultimately cost Amnon his life.

**“Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother.”** In 1 Samuel 16:9, Shimeah is called Shammah, and was David’s brother, the third son of Jesse. So Shimeah is Amnon’s uncle and Jonadab is Amnon’s cousin.

**“shrewd.”** The Hebrew word is *chakam* (#02450 חָכָם), and it can mean “wise, experienced, shrewd, cunning, crafty, etc., depending on the context. Jonadab was all those things, but in this context, shrewd, cunning, or crafty would fit well. It is not godly or wise to give someone bad advice. Perhaps Jonadab thought if he could help Amnon get what he wanted then Amnon, who was David’s first son and thus was in line to be king when David died, would someday give him power and authority in the kingdom.

2Sm 13:4

**“Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.”** Amnon was Tamar’s half-brother. But Absalom, David’s third son (2 Sam. 3:3), was Tamar’s full sister. Nevertheless, Amnon is called Tamar’s brother in 2 Samuel 13:10 because he was her half-brother.

2Sm 13:6

**“heartcakes.”** The Hebrew is *labiybah* (#03834 לָבִיבָה), and the meaning is not just “cakes,” but heart-shaped cakes.[[11]](#footnote-21319) Fox writes: “…others [have] simply ‘cakes,’ but the ‘heart’ (Heb. *leiv*, *leivav*) motif is central to the Avshalom [*sic*] stories, as I have argued…. Shaped foods were known in the ancient Near East.” Fox goes on: Amnon “pretends to be ill and requests that his half-sister make *levivot*, usually translated as ‘cakes,’ for him. …But as some interpreters have noticed, the homonym (*levav*) means ‘heart,’ and the verbal form of *l-b-b* (the biblical *v* and *b* are the same letter) occurs in the Song of Songs 4:9, ‘You have captured my heart’ (NJPS). So a word connected in love poetry with seduction is appropriate enough in the mouth of the lovesick Amnon, and on this and other grounds…we are justified in understanding *levivot* as something like ‘heartcakes.’”

Since Amnon would have had many people who could cook for him, it may have made more sense to David that Amnon asked for “heartcakes” specifically from Tamar, who may have been known for cooking them. In fact, it is possible that Tamar even brought her own pan to cook them in (see commentary on 2 Sam. 13:9, “pan”).

2Sm 13:9

**“pan.”** The Hebrew is a rare word, *maserath* (#04958 מַשְׂרֵת), only occurring here in the Old Testament but well attested in post-biblical Hebrew. There is no reason not to believe that shallow pans would have been available, especially among the king’s household, for specialty baking.

**“and set it out.”** The Hebrew text is unclear here. For one thing, there is no object to the verb, “it” is supplied. The act could be that she “set them out,” “poured them out,” “dished them out,” “set it [the pan] out” etc. What she actually did we cannot tell from the text. It is also possible that she is somewhat suspicious, because she seems to be keeping her distance and not feeding him with her hand, as he seemed to have wanted.

2Sm 13:10

**“her brother.”** Actually her half-brother.

2Sm 13:13

**“you will be as one of the *godless* fools in Israel.”** This is true, but it was also an attempt on Tamar’s part to get away from Amnon by getting him to stop what he was doing by realizing the consequences of what he was doing.

**“for he will not withhold me from you.”** It is very unlikely that Tamar was being serious when she said this, but was rather trying any tactic she could think of in the moment to escape Amnon. The Law of Moses forbid marriage between half brothers and sisters (Lev. 18:9; 20:17; Deut. 27:22), and thus it is unlikely that David would consent to Tamar being with Amnon, especially if Tamar did not want it.

2Sm 13:16

**“Because this wrong.”** Most versions smooth out the Hebrew text which is very choppy and reads more literally like Fox’s translation: “About this great evil—more than the other thing you did to me—sending me away…!” Kyle McCarter writes that the Masoretic Hebrew text “as it stands is unintelligible.”[[12]](#footnote-32703) However, Everett Fox points out that the halting syntax of the Hebrew text may not be due to a defective text but rather to Tamar’s broken emotional state: she had just been raped.[[13]](#footnote-15742) The NET text note seems to agree, saying, “Perhaps the broken syntax reflects her hysteria and outrage.” Tamar was likely speaking through sobs, and Amnon would have understood perfectly what she was saying in spite of her broken sentences. The beauty of the Hebrew text lies in its preservation of the emotional scene that was occurring between Amnon and Tamar, and Amnon’s coldness to Tamar’s situation continues a coldness and calculating determination that would continue throughout his life.

2Sm 13:17

**“Send this one outside.”** This could even be translated, “Send this out.” Amnon speaks with great contempt. Many versions supply “woman,” but it is not in the Hebrew text; the word “this” is feminine, referring to Tamar. The word “send” is plural, and while it may be a plural of emphasis, it may also be that he expected Tamar to resist and made sure there were others who could help cast her out.

2Sm 13:19

**“crying aloud.”** It is possible that Tamar was even crying out that she had been raped. If a woman was raped in the city, she was supposed to cry out to get help, and while Tamar was likely too intimidated to do that when she was with Amnon, she may well have cried out after the incident (Deut. 22:22-29). By her actions, the torn robe, the ashes, and her crying aloud, Tamar is declaring that she has been raped as soon as she can.

2Sm 13:20

**“been with you.”** In this context, the phrase is a euphemism for sex.

**“For now, my sister, be quiet​.”** Absalom pretends to care for his sister, but in reality, he is using her as part of his plan to gain the throne. Amnon’s rape of Tamar will give Absalom, David’s third son, a chance at removing Amnon, David’s first son and apparent heir to the throne. David’s household was riddled with evil.

**“Do not take this thing to heart.”** This statement was “heartless” on Abaslom’s part. What was Tamar supposed to do?

**“desolate.”** The Hebrew word occurs almost 100 times in the Hebrew Old Testament and most often refers to land that is not farmed and is barren (cf. its first use, Gen. 47:19). Thus, when used of a woman it refers to her being unmarried and therefore without children. It occurs in Isaiah 54:1, where it is used of the northern country of Israel which has been carried away into exile by the Assyrians and is compared to a “desolate woman.” The prophecy in Isaiah that the desolate woman will have more children than the woman with a husband is a prophecy of the fruitfulness of Israel in every way in the future Millennial Kingdom. Tamar was unmarried, without children, and mostly isolated from others. The joy in her life was gone, and almost any contact with the family of David would have only reminded her of the crime of her half-brother Amnon who was the crown prince and likely heir to the throne of David. The Bible does not say if Tamar remained unmarried in her brother’s house for the rest of her life, we just don’t know because the record of Tamar ends here and we hear nothing more about her. Her brother Absalom died in his rebellion against David, and certainly after that, she likely would have had to move. She stayed in Absalom’s house for an unstated amount of time; it is possible that she even married and moved on with her life.

2Sm 13:21

**“he was very angry.”** The Septuagint adds to the text, and some English versions add the Septuagint addition to their English text. For example, the NRSV adds: “but he would not punish his son Amnon, because he loved him, for he was his firstborn.” Other English versions that add the Septuagint ending to the text include the BBE, CEB, Douay-Rheims, NAB, and NJB. The addition, while no doubt partly right in the reason why David did not deal with Amnon, was not likely in the original Hebrew text but was likely an explanatory note added in the Greek text. Most scholars have concluded that the original is preserved in the Hebrew text.

David was very angry but did nothing. Likely for many reasons. No doubt David’s own adultery played a part, as did the fact that Amnon was his firstborn son. However, one of David’s faults was his indulgent affection for his sons (but not for his daughters), something that shows up several times in the biblical narrative, and it shows up here. Sadly, David was like many parents who do not raise their children in both the “training” and “admonition” of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). David did not upset his children by reproving and correcting them (1 Kings 1:6), but reproof and correction, and putting up with the emotional pain that children feel when they are reproved, are a necessary part of good parenting.

David apparently had a totally different relationship with his daughters than he did with his sons. While David indulged his sons and was blind to their faults, even coming close to losing his own life due to his blindness, there is no indication that he felt the same way toward his daughters. This was in part cultural, for example, David’s sons are listed in Chronicles but only his daughter Tamar, and that almost certainly only because of the part she played in the eventual death of Amnon. Nevertheless, that daughters would be treated so differently from sons was certainly not God’s intention or what we tend to think about a “man after God’s own heart.” There is no indication in the text that David sought any kind of justice for Tamar, or even did anything to comfort her. In fact, not only are no other daughters of David named in the Bible, even Tamar is never called David’s daughter, only the sister of her brothers, David’s sons.

2Sm 13:23

**“Baal-hazor.”** This is a large hill just about four miles northeast of Bethel. Today there is a large Israeli military installation there. It is in the southern part of Ephraim, close to the border of the tribal area of Benjamin.

2Sm 13:24

**“let the king.”** Absalom addresses his father in the third person as a sign (to Absalom, likely a pretend sign) of respect.

**“and his servants.”** This would not refer to David’s household servants; that some of them would likely go with David did not need to be stated. The “servants” in this case are officials in David’s kingdom, which would include his military leaders.

[For more on “servants” being used for people of high position in the kingdom, see commentary on 2 Sam. 11:1.]

2Sm 13:25

**“He pressed him.”** In 2 Samuel 13:25 and 13:27, the REV follows the reading of the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QSam(a ), which reads “and he pressed” rather than the reading in the Masoretic text, “and he broke through.” The Qumran reading is likely original because it fits better with the context and agrees more with the readings in the Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Latin Vulgate.

**“but blessed him.”** David blessed Absalom.

2Sm 13:26

**“Why should he go with you?”** David knew Absalom and Amnon were at odds, and in fact, Absalom was not speaking with Amnon (2 Sam. 13:22). The Bible does not tell us what Absalom said to convince David, but we might guess that perhaps Absalom said that being at a feast together might help heal the rift between the two men. In any case, David agreed to let Amnon go.

2Sm 13:27

**“he let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.”** That David did not suspect that something evil was being plotted when Absalom asked specifically that Amnon be allowed to go to his sheepshearing banquet (2 Sam. 13:26) is more of David’s blindness concerning his sons. Why didn’t David remember that Amnon had raped Absalom’s sister (and David’s daughter!) only two years earlier and now Tamar was living in Absalom’s house as a “desolate woman” (that is, unmarried and without children), and thus was a constant reminder and source of bitterness to Absalom? Especially given that in royal societies brothers were always trying to eliminate one another to gain power, especially the throne itself, and especially since Nathan had told David that one from his own house would lie with his wives (2 Sam. 12:11), which was a clear reference to someone trying to take the throne from him, it seems David would be more on the alert that there would be serious trouble from his sons. But David’s blindness when it came to his sons prevented him from seeing the danger and taking measures to prevent it.

**“So Absalom made a banquet like a king’s banquet.”** Although this sentence is missing from the Masoretic Hebrew text, it was almost certainly in the original and omitted due to a homoioteleuton (words that have the same ending, causing the copyist to skip words). The sentence can be found in the Septuagint, and also in the Old Latin. Also, there is evidence that it was in a Qumran manuscript (Dead Sea Scrolls book of Samuel taken from cave #4). Josephus (*Antiquities,* 7.8.2) mentions that Absalom threw a banquet and waited for Amnon to be weary from wine.[[14]](#footnote-25997)

That Absalom would have a banquet like “a king’s banquet,” which meant it had lots of wine, would be natural and would help explain why Absalom would be so confident that Amnon would become “merry with wine.” Also, such a banquet would make sure the other sons of David would not be in a position to defend Amnon.

2Sm 13:28

**“sons of valor.”** The literal Hebrew is “sons of valor,” and it means “valiant.” A “son of” something often had the characteristics or attributes of that something. So a “son of disobedience” was disobedient. A person who was “bar mitzvah” was a “son of *the* commandment [law].”

2Sm 13:29

**“mule.”** It seems strange to see royalty, especially David and his sons, riding on mules since the mule is a crossbreed between a horse and donkey, and crossbreeding was against the Mosaic Law (Lev. 19:19). Nevertheless, the mule does seem to be the royal mount of choice at least during the time of David (no mule is mentioned in the Bible before David’s time; according to Judges 5:10, the wealthy rode on donkeys). David’s sons had them, as we see here, and Absalom rode one into battle (2 Sam. 18:9), and David had one (1 Kings 1:33, 38, 44). The mule was bigger than a donkey and sturdier on the steep hillsides and loose soil of Judea than a horse. It is possible the mules were not bred by the Jews, but imported (cf. 2 Chron. 9:24).

It may have been that since a mule is a sterile animal David was not concerned that they would breed and make more and thus infringe upon the Law. It may have been that David realized the practical value of the animal and kept them for that reason. We cannot be sure, but one thing is certain: no matter why David had them, he was not concerned about “setting a bad example” by having them.

2Sm 13:30

**“a rumor came to David.”** The Bible does not say how the news of what Absalom did reached David at Jerusalem before the king’s sons did, who were riding on mules. It is possible that someone at the feast had a horse and outran the mules, and if that is the case, it is also possible that the person left the feast immediately upon seeing Amnon in the process of being killed and rode away assuming that all the king’s sons would be killed the same way, and thus inadvertently started the rumor.

2Sm 13:32

**“Jonadab.”** We are introduced to Jonadab the son of Shimeah in 2 Samuel 13:3 when we learn he was Amnon’s “friend” and also a very shrewd, worldly-wise, person (Shimeah was one of David’s brothers and therefore Jonadab was Amnon’s and Absalom’s cousin). Jonadab was the person who hatched the plot for Amnon to be with Tamar, which ended up with her being raped (2 Sam. 13:5). Now, while Absalom is having a huge banquet, Amnon’s “friend” Jonadab is not only conspicuously missing from the banquet, but he is at the palace with David and also has inside information about what happened at the banquet even before accurate news about it reached David and his officials (2 Sam. 13:30-32). The Bible does not tell us how Jonadab knew what had happened at Absalom’s banquet, but it could well be that he noticed how angry Absalom was when Tamar was raped and ingratiated himself with Absalom in order to get more inside information about what was happening between the brothers. If he knew, and we can see from the text that he knew something, he was not really Amnon’s friend if he suspected harm would come to Amnon at the banquet but did nothing to help. It seems that because Jonadab had such accurate information about what happened at Absalom’s banquet that David would have started some kind of investigation into what happened and who knew about it. But David was too emotionally involved with his sons to deal with them in a righteous manner, and neither could he deal righteously with people who might have been involved with Amnon’s murder. The murder went unavenged, just as Tamar’s rape had been unavenged, and Absalom left the country.

2Sm 13:33

**“take the thing to his heart.”** In this context, “take...to heart” means to take it seriously, believe it.

2Sm 13:34

**“But Absalom had fled.”** Absalom would have known that people would have wanted to avenge the death of Amnon, and so would have planned an escape long before having Amnon killed.

2Sm 13:36

**“wept bitterly.”** The Hebrew says, “they wept a great weeping.”

2Sm 13:37

**“and went to Talmai…king of Geshur.”** Absalom fled out of Israel to his maternal grandfather, who had a marriage alliance with David and who protected him. The marriage of David and Talmai’s daughter is in 2 Samuel 3:3, but see commentary on 2 Samuel 3:2.

**“*David* mourned for his son every day.”** The Hebrew is “he mourned for his son,” but “David” is inserted for clarity. But what “son” is David mourning for, Amnon or Absalom? This is a difficult question because the word “son” is singular. David did miss Absalom (2 Sam. 13:39, 14:1).

2Sm 13:39

**“and King David’s spirit for going out against Absalom was spent.”** As the years passed, Amnon was long dead and the king tired of thinking of taking revenge on Absalom. The Masoretic Hebrew text reads, “and David longed to go out to Absalom,” but some scholars make a good case that the original text read “and the king’s spirit was spent for going out against Absalom,” in other words, David lost all enthusiasm for trying to do anything to Absalom. A number of things support that alternative reading. For one thing, the verb is feminine, not masculine, and so it would not naturally go with the name “David,” but would go with “spirit,” a reading that is found in the Dead Sea Scroll of Samuel (found in Cave 4), and in the Septuagint. Also, it seems like the context supports this alternative reading better, because when Absalom did return to Jerusalem, David flatly refused to see him, saying, “Let him return to his own house [in Jerusalem], but he is not to see my face” (2 Sam. 14:24). So although David agreed to have Absalom back in Jerusalem, he was still so upset about what Absalom had done that he refused to see him, which makes the reading, “and David longed to go out to Absalom” a bit of a contradiction.[[15]](#footnote-27044)

**2 Samuel Chapter 14**

2Sm 14:2

**“wise woman.”** The Hebrew word translated “wise” is translated “shrewd” in 2 Sam. 13:3.

2Sm 14:3

**“put the words in her mouth.”** This idiom means “told her what to say.” God puts words in the mouths of His prophets (cf. Deut. 18:18).

2Sm 14:4

**“paid homage.”** The Hebrew word *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), refers to bowing down, falling prostrate, giving honor, and also worshiping.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 14:5

**“What is your trouble.”** The Hebrew is an idiom: more literally, “What to you?” The “you” is second-person feminine, so “your trouble” is a good translation.

**“I am a widow and my husband is dead.”** This explains why the woman, and not her husband, is before David with the request.

2Sm 14:7

**“and so we will eliminate the heir also.”** The Syriac Targum says “they will eliminate” instead of “we will eliminate,” and some English versions adopt that reading (cf. CJB, ESV, RSV). But there is no need to amend the Hebrew text. The woman wants to make her pretend case to protect her son as strong as possible, so she includes that the avengers of blood knew that her only remaining son was the family’s only heir, which adds the possibility of greed to distant family members wanting the man killed, because then they could take the family land. She was hoping that added information would help get David’s support for her cause.

**“so that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he killed.”** The ancient world had no police force, so it fell on the family of a person who was killed to find and kill the killer. The person who found the killer and killed him was called “the avenger of blood.”

[For more on the avenger of blood, see commentary on Num. 35:19.]

2Sm 14:9

**“Then the woman of Tekoa said to the king.”** There is a valuable lesson here about getting the right person to do the job you want done. Joab told the woman what to say, but at some point, Joab’s coaching did not work anymore because David did not make an immediate decision. At that point, the woman had to make up the story as she spoke, but being a wise woman was up to the task. She wanted an immediate commitment from David as to what he would do, and she pressed until she got it. If the woman was less wise or less confident, she would have gone back to Joab with no commitment from David and Joab would have had to wait and come up with another plan.

**“and the king and his throne are clear *of blame*.”** The Bible does not say why David would not make an immediate decision to help the woman out, but it may have been related to the fact that as the king and judge he had to make sure that justice was done in the case of a killing, and he may have felt that if he did not judge the case properly that he would be to blame and his authority would be questioned. It seems likely from what the woman said that that was the case, because she told David that she and her house would bear the guilt if her story did not properly represent the truth, and that thus the king and throne would be clear of blame.

2Sm 14:11

**“invoke Yahweh.”** Although there are other words for invoking God, the Hebrew text can mean “invoke” (cf. ESV, NET, NIV). The wise woman wanted a commitment on David’s part and invoking the name of Yahweh would be such a commitment, and she pressed David until he did invoke God, using the oath formula, “As Yahweh lives.” Once she got David to make the oath, then she changed her story and it became clear she was actually talking about David’s son Absalom.

**“avenger of blood.”** A member of one’s family or clan that would kill anyone who killed someone in the family (see commentary on Num. 35:19).

**“increase the loss.”** Literally, “from the multiplying of,” which is difficult to understand and translate. The meaning seems to be that death has already robbed the woman, and she does not want the loss multiplied (cf. HCSB).

**“not one hair of your son will fall to the ground.”** In its historical context, this is ironic. David says of this make-believe person that not one hair of his head would fall to the ground when the real story and ruse was about Absalom, who had beautiful, abundant hair (2 Sam. 14:25-26), which got stuck in a tree and who died without a hair touching the earth (2 Sam. 18:9-17).

2Sm 14:13

**“against the people of God.”** It is not specifically stated how David’s relationship with Absalom was “against the people of God,” but there are some possibilities. One likely one is that it was important for the stability of the kingdom that the king had many healthy sons who could be king if the king suddenly died. By this time in his life, David had almost certainly lost three sons, his eldest, his second eldest, and his son by Bathsheba. Some may have considered it a sin against the kingdom and God’s people that Absalom was banished when what he did was kill a rapist, which many would argue was his right as an avenger of blood anyway. In any case, David understood what the woman meant and seems to have agreed with it, at least up to a point, and he allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem.

**“the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring back his banished one.”** The woman says that by making the judgment he made, David made himself to be guilty, because he did not bring Absalom home. But that David was convinced by this woman’s argument once again shows his blindness toward his own sons and his misplaced love for them. The case the woman brought to the king and what happened between Absalom and Amnon are totally different. According to the woman, her two sons got into a fight in a field and one killed the other in the fight. She never said the fight started as a plot on the part of one son to kill the other, so the killing could well have been unintended, especially at the start of the fight, in which case the law of manslaughter, not murder would apply (Exod. 21:12-13). David apparently never bothered to ask about the situation. In any case, what Absalom did to Amnon was clearly premeditated murder. Furthermore, beyond that, in the woman’s story, she had no other sons to carry on her heritage, and that was part of her argument that her son not be executed for killing his brother. But David’s situation was different. David had many sons, and if Absalom had been executed for the premeditated murder of Amnon, which according to the Law of Moses, he should have been, David would have still had sons to carry on his heritage and take over his throne when he died. David’s lack of justice toward Absalom nearly cost him his life and kingdom, because once Absalom’s murder was ignored and he was allowed back into the palace, he rebelled against David and tried to kill him and take the kingdom (2 Sam. 15).

2Sm 14:14

**“die, yes, die.”** This is the figure of speech polyptoton, which in this case repeats the same word twice but with different aspects: tense, gender, number, etc. Although it could be translated as “surely die,” or something similar, the repetition of “die” catches our attention and brings emphasis to the text. This is the same phrase as God used in Genesis 2:17, except the verb is singular in Genesis because God was speaking directly to Adam, whereas here it is plural.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16, “eat, yes, eat.”]

**“thinks of ways.”** The Hebrew uses a noun and a verb for emphasis, more literally, “thinks thoughts.” Young’s Literal Translation has, “hath devised devices.”

2Sm 14:15

**“servant...servant.”** The Hebrew uses two different words for “servant” here that are difficult to represent in English because generally both are used of slaves or servants. The first is *shiphchah* (#08198 שִׁפְחָה), which refers to a slave or servant, and the second is *amah* (#0519 אָמָה), which refers to a woman who is not free in one sense or another, generally a female slave, but perhaps, for example, a concubine. Usually, the difference between them is so subtle that they are both brought into English as “slave” or “servant” depending on the context. Also, women would sometimes use these terms as an act of self-abasement to portray a humble attitude (cf. 2 Sam. 20:17).

However, the fact the woman of Tekoa uses them both here in the same sentence suggests that she is deliberately playing them off against one another. Although it may be the case that the sentence composition is just for style, as some scholars suggest, the [NET text note](https://classic.net.bible.org/verse.php?book=2Sa&chapter=14&verse=15&tab=commentaries) is more likely correct in suggesting that a lord might have some level of obligation to the *amah* servant. This would explain why the woman used *amah* in the context of the king acting on her request. In the latter chapters of 2 Samuel, *amah* only occurs in 2 Sam. 14:15, 16; 20:17).

2Sm 14:16

**“servant.”** The Hebrew word is *amah* (#0519 אָמָה), which refers to a woman who is not free in one sense or another, generally a female slave, but perhaps, for example, a concubine.

**“the inheritance of God.”** That is, the land that her family inherited when the land was divided by lot (Josh. 14-19, esp. Josh. 14:1-2). Thus, the land her family got was recognized as the family’s inheritance from God. If a family died out without anyone to inherit its allotment, then the land went back to other members of the tribe.

2Sm 14:17

**“for like an angel of God, so is my lord the king.”** The woman knew that angels were messengers who represented God, and she sees David “like an angel” here, in the sense that what he says and does are representing God.

**“good and bad.”** The woman was almost certainly using “good and bad” to indicate the whole spectrum of life, “good and bad and everything in between.” Technically, that is the figure of speech polarmerismos.

[For more on polarmerismos, see commentary on Josh. 14:11.]

2Sm 14:19

**“Is the hand of Joab with you.”** That David immediately suspects Joab in this plot shows us that there is a significant backstory that is not in the Bible. David and Joab were close, and Joab certainly must have on occasion shown his desire for the royal family to be united. That would explain why David only asked about Joab and no one else; after all, Absalom had a number of friends and followers who must have wanted Absalom back, why suspect just Joab? He must have let David know he wanted Absalom back. “The hand of Joab” is a Semitism, and means “Did Joab tell you to do this?”

On her part, the woman would not have had much knowledge of the backstory. She had to be a woman David did not know or he would have known her tale of two sons was a lie. This explains why when David immediately suspected Joab, she said David had wisdom like an angel of God (2 Sam. 14:20), basically saying that because of his close relationship with God, David had access to secret knowledge such as the angels have.

2Sm 14:20

**“to change the face of the situation.”** This phraseology is more literal although more obscure in meaning. But the phrase is obscure. Some scholars suggest the idea is, “the appearance of the situation,” but others say, the “course” or “direction” of the situation. Both ideas are likely correct, and although the idea of changing the course of things was clearly Joab’s intent, the appearance of the situation needed to be changed too so that people would easily accept that King David changed his mind. No doubt there were many “offstage discussions” about King David’s decision that occurred throughout the kingdom that are not recorded in Scripture.

2Sm 14:21

**“I will do this thing.”** The Hebrew is the prophetic perfect, literally, “I have done this thing,” meaning that it is as good as done.

[For more on the prophetic perfect idiom, see the commentary on Eph. 2:6.]

2Sm 14:22

**“Joab fell to the ground.”** Joab was a very practical man; he did what he thought would be best for the king and the kingdom, and at this time he felt that Absalom showed the best promise of being a strong leader for the kingdom, so he supported Absalom. Later, when Absalom turned against David, Joab himself killed Absalom and reproved David for overly mourning his death.

**“paid homage.”** The Hebrew word *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), refers to bowing down, falling prostrate, giving honor, and also worshiping.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 14:26

**“200 shekels.”** Although scholars differ about the weight, most agree it is roughly 5 pounds (2.26 kg). This seems like an exaggeration, thus the addition of “according to the king’s *weighing* stone,” which speaks to the accuracy of the weight.

**“according to the king’s *weighing* stone.”** God wanted fair business dealings in buying and selling (Lev. 19:35; Deut. 25:13-16), and this required that weights and measures be standardized. It was the job of the Levites to maintain accurate weights and measures throughout the Israelite kingdom, but due to weights and measures being hand-produced and affected by use, accurate measures were hard to maintain throughout the kingdom. But the “king’s *weighing* stone” would be accurate, and the phrase was added to assure people that the weight of Absalom’s hair was not an exaggeration.

That addition of the information about Absalom’s hair is important because it adds to the credibility that Absalom could get caught in a tree by his hair when fighting David (2 Sam. 18:9).

2Sm 14:27

**“three sons.”** They apparently all died young (see commentary on 2 Sam. 18:18).

**“Tamar.”** A name in David’s family with a long history (see commentary on 2 Samuel 13:1). It is most likely that Tamar was also called “Maacah” (1 Kings 15:2; 2 Chron. 11:20), and she married Rehoboam the son of Solomon and gave birth to Abijah, the second king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. 11:20-22). It would not have been uncommon for someone in the royal family to have a second name, and especially so since her living aunt was also named Tamar. The Septuagint translators thought so, and added this to the Hebrew text: “And she became a wife to Rehoboam the son of Solomon and to him she gave birth to him Abia [Abijah].” Thus Absalom, who so badly wanted to be king, never was, but his grandson became king of Judah (see commentary on 1 Kings 15:10).

It has been suggested, but it is much less likely, that the Maacah that Rehoboam married was the daughter of a different Absalom, but there is no other Absalom in the Bible and no reason another would be introduced into the narrative at this point without some kind of clarification.

**“a woman *who was* beautiful in appearance.”** Abraham used the same phrase when speaking of his wife Sarah (Gen. 12:11). Absalom’s sister Tamar was beautiful (2 Sam. 13:1), and his daughter, whom he named Tamar, was also beautiful. David himself was handsome (1 Sam. 16:12), and since royal wives were usually beautiful (cf. Esther 2:2-4), it makes sense that the women in royal families were usually beautiful.

2Sm 14:29

**“he would not come.”** That is, Joab would not come to see Absalom, which is surprising since it was Joab who wanted Absalom back in Jerusalem. He no doubt knew what Absalom wanted, and perhaps did not want to get involved.

2Sm 14:32

**“and if there is iniquity in me, let him put me to death.”** This can also be understood as, “If there is any guilt in me,” because the Hebrew word translated “iniquity” is *avon* (#05771 עָוֹן), and it can mean iniquity, perversity, depravity, or guilt, or it can refer to the consequence or punishment for iniquity. Although it does mean “guilt” in this context, it also includes the wider meaning of iniquity.

Absalom was so blind to his sin and avarice that he did not think he had any guilt or iniquity, even though he murdered his brother and in a few short verses would attempt to dethrone his father David and thus likely have to kill him. It is because many criminals are like Absalom that righteous people have to be hard on crime. It is naïve to think that criminals will see their own faults, feel badly, and correct them. A few do, but most do not and just continue from crime to crime until stopped by an outside force. Being soft on crime only allows criminals to hurt more and more innocent people. When Christ is king on earth, he will not be soft on crime and ungodliness, he will rule with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

Absalom was not serious when he said what he did about being put to death. Not only was he blind to his own sin, he knew that his father had done nothing to him for murdering Amnon, and had even brought him back from Geshur to Jerusalem. He was confident (overconfident, but correct!) that David would not do anything to him now. On their parts, David and Joab were both naïve, and Joab himself ended up having to kill Absalom to save David’s throne (2 Sam. 18:14-15).

2Sm 14:33

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth, as we see in this verse. The word translated “bowed down” is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

**“and the king kissed Absalom.”** A sign of forgiveness and acceptance.

**2 Samuel Chapter 15**

2Sm 15:2

**“dispute.”** The Hebrew is *rib* (#07379 רִיב), and it has a wide semantic range including strife, controversy, dispute, quarrel, accusation, lawsuit, etc., depending on the context. In this case, “dispute” or “legal dispute” would be good translations because if a person was coming all the way to Jerusalem to the king to get his dispute settled, then it could not be settled by the elders in his hometown, which was usually an easier and quicker way to go.

[For more on *rib*, see commentary on Hos. 4:1.]

**“the road leading to the gate.”** The Hebrew is “the road of the gate.”

**“one of the tribes of Israel.”** In an actual conversation, the person would name the tribe, but this was just an example to show how Absalom was acting. The person may have been saying, “I am from a tribe in Israel and I am still not getting justice.”

2Sm 15:3

**“but there is no one *appointed* by the king to listen to you.”** It seems that for Absalom to make this claim it was likely true. One possibility for that may have been that earlier, when the United Kingdom was less organized and more tribal, David may have been able to hear the cases that came to Jerusalem himself, but as the United Kingdom became more organized and grew in its centralized power, that became more difficult. Or, David may have been able to hear many of the cases but Absalom quietly intervened. There are some other possibilities as well.

We have to wonder why David did not seem to know what Absalom was doing. It may be that, especially as Absalom gained popularity and strength, no one wanted to get involved and tell king David. If someone had informed about Absalom and David did nothing about it, Absalom would have been a formidable enemy. It is also possible that David did hear that Absalom was judging some cases, but he did not see any danger in it. David had a weakness for not seeing trouble when it came to his sons.

It is also worth asking how Absalom could tell someone their grievance was good and right without having witnesses and representatives of both sides present. It is possible that 2 Samuel 15:3 is just giving a kind of summary and there were times when Absalom adjudicated over complicated cases. Another possibility is that Absalom may have only really gotten involved with certain cases—those involving the state—and being able to subtly speak about the failures of the state would have undermined David while increasing his own popularity. The United Kingdom of Israel was brand new, and no doubt there were a number of unpopular moves being made on the state level: state incursions into what had formerly been tribal matters, issues with taxes, problems with recruiting manpower for state projects, conflicts about who got appointed to which positions in the kingdom, and much more. David’s attention had to be focused on building and defending the kingdom, changes that were necessary but that would have offended many people. The various changes affected the whole kingdom and in part explains how Absalom could have followers throughout all the tribes of Israel (2 Sam. 15:10). In contrast to David, Absalom did not actually have to make any of the hard choices and changes in the kingdom. He could simply propagandize and tell people that if he were king then things would be different; and over the four years he quietly undermined David, he stole the hearts of the people of Israel (2 Sam. 15:6-7).

2Sm 15:5

**“and kissed him.”** A kiss is the greeting of a friend, it does not mean love, but friendship.

2Sm 15:7

**“four years.”** The standard Masoretic Hebrew text has “forty,” but this has to be a scribal error for “four” because David’s entire reign was only 40 years, and this was the preparation time for Absalom’s rebellion. Some Hebrew texts read “four years,” and there are texts that say “forty days,” but the Lucianic Greek recension, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Latin have “four years.” Most modern English versions have “four years.”

**“fulfill my vow.”** This would be done by offering a sacrifice, in this case, a large sacrifice with lots of animals and thus lots of food to eat, which explains the invited guests in 2 Samuel 15:11. But how could he do that away from Jerusalem? That question is not answered. This was a ruse, there was no such vow, and the fact that it had supposedly gone so many years without fulfillment should have aroused David’s suspicion, but David would not doubt his sons, something that was the cause of much trouble. In this case, his naïveté nearly cost him his kingdom and his life.

**“to Yahweh.”** Absalom makes his lie more convincing by adding the name Yahweh.

**“Yahweh in Hebron.”** The text might be better translated “Yahweh-in-Hebron.”[[16]](#footnote-30812) It seems like Absalom had made a vow to Yahweh as He was known and worshiped in Hebron, Absalom’s hometown, and he had to go there to fulfill his vow. Although some versions move “in Hebron” away from Yahweh, it appears as Yahweh in Hebron in the Hebrew text and seems to go there.

Hebron was a long day’s journey south of Jerusalem. Absalom may have chosen Hebron for a number of reasons, but also there may have still been people there who were upset that David moved his capital city away from Hebron to Jerusalem.

2Sm 15:8

**“If Yahweh will bring, yes, bring me back again to Jerusalem, then I will serve Yahweh.”** This is such a godly-sounding vow! “I will serve Yahweh!” But Absalom had no intention of serving Yahweh, at least not as far as keeping God’s commands was concerned. So Absalom joins the hordes of people who throughout the centuries have used religious-sounding statements to fool people. Jesus taught us to not be fooled by what people say, but to look to what they did—their fruit—if we wanted to know who they really were (Matt. 7:15-20). If David had paid attention to Absalom’s fruit and to what he was doing, then David would have seen the trouble ahead. Christians should not be fooled like David was; we must obey Christ and look closely at people’s fruit so that we can mostly avoid being fooled by what people say.

The phrase “bring, yes, bring” is the figure polyptoton, where the vowel “bring” is repeated twice for emphasis, with the verb “bring” being in different conjugations. Absalom’s pretend desire is emphasized by the doubling of the vowel “bring.”

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

[See Word Study: “Polyptoton.”]

2Sm 15:9

**“Go in peace.”** We are not told why no one told David of Absalom’s behavior, and thus his potential threat to David. Also, it seems that David should have been suspicious of Absalom’s request, after all, Absalom had now been in Jerusalem for six years (four at least, if the four years of 2 Sam. 15:7 included the two years Absalom lived in his house in Jerusalem), which was plenty of time to pay a vow in Hebron, a day’s journey away.

**“So he arose and went to Hebron.”** The ancient city of Hebron was a good place for Absalom to start his rebellion. It is first mentioned in Genesis 13:18, when Abraham lived there and worshiped Yahweh there. David lived there and was even crowned king there, first over Judah and then over all Israel (2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3). Absalom himself had been born there, and given the fact that he started his rebellion there, it is likely that he had kept up with his contacts there through the years.

It is also very likely that at least some of the people of Hebron were unhappy with the fact that once David became king over all Israel he moved his capital city to Jerusalem. After all, Hebron was a city in the tribal area of Judah, and David was a Judean from Bethlehem. Furthermore, it was the Judeans who supported David in his rebellion against the house of Saul the Benjamite and anointed him king over Judah. Thus it is very likely they felt that David was ungrateful and had abandoned them when he moved his capital city from Hebron to Jerusalem, a city in the tribal area of Benjamin. Between Hebron’s ancient roots as a city of Yahweh, Absalom’s contacts in Hebron, and a likely dissatisfaction among some of the Hebronites with David, the city of Hebron was the perfect place for Absalom to start a rebellion, and Absalom’s rebellion almost succeeded.

2Sm 15:10

**“secret messengers.”** The Hebrew word is *ragal* (#07270 רָגַל), a word that describes a lot. It can mean to go on foot or walk about on foot; to be a slanderer or gossip; to go as a spy or scout. This range of meanings is the reason for the many different translations in the English versions: “watchers” (BBE); “spies” (CJB, JPS, KJV, NASB); “messengers” (HCSB); “secret messengers” (ESV, NIV, NLT, RSV); “couriers” (NJB); “agents” (TNK ); “spy-runners” (Schocken Bible).

Given the fact that these agents of Absalom were not “spies” in the traditional sense but were actually his agents who in this context were to deliver a message to Absalom’s contacts around Israel, “secret messengers” seemed to be a good translation, although the Tanakh’s translation “agents” is also very good.

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet. The shofar can be heard for a mile or more, but for the sound to cover all Israel, Absalom would have had to have had a network of shofar blowers.

**“Absalom reigns as king in Hebron.”** One thing that is conspicuously missing from Absalom’s claim to the throne is that David’s second son, Chileab (2 Sam. 3:3 but called “Daniel” in 1 Chron. 3:1), would have the claim to the throne over Absalom. This is quite certain evidence that Chileab had died since he is not mentioned in any of the records. In fact, Chileab likely died very young since nothing is ever said about him other than he was David’s second son (2 Sam. 3:3).

Absalom was killed in battle and never got to become king. However, his grandson Abijah did become king of Judah. Absalom’s wife gave birth to Maacah, who married Rehoboam the son of Solomon, and then the son of Maacah and Rehoboam was Abijah, who became the king of Judah (2 Chron. 11:20; 1 Kings 11:43; 14:31-15:1).

2Sm 15:12

**“sent for Ahithophel.”** Ahithophel had been David’s counselor, but apparently, he had become angry and bitter against David after David had sex with his granddaughter Bathsheba and arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed. Ahithophel was the father of Eliam (2 Sam. 23:34), and Eliam was the father of Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:3), making Ahithophel the grandfather of Bathsheba. Absalom would have noticed that the relationship between Ahithophel and David had cooled, and likely had spoken with Ahithophel while they were both at the palace, and that is why he was confident enough to send for Ahithophel even though in the past Ahithophel had been very close to David. Now that David had a rival, Ahithophel sided with him. His anger and bitterness were his undoing, because when Absalom rejected his advice and took instead the advice of Hushai the Arkite (2 Sam. 17:1-14) he felt so rejected and dishonored that he took his own life (2 Sam. 17:23).

[For more on Ahithopehl see commentary on 2 Sam. 16:21 and 2 Sam. 17:1.]

**“from Giloh.”** Giloh was close to Bethlehem, to the west of it, and is mentioned in Joshua 15:51.

**“and the people increased continually with Absalom.”** We are not told why so many people chose to side with Absalom against David. No doubt some thought Absalom would make a better king than David. But it is also possible that some of the people who sided with Absalom at this point thought that David, who was getting older, must have appointed Absalom to be king. After all, Absalom was David’s third son and the first two were dead, making Absalom the crown prince.

2Sm 15:14

**“the mouth of the sword.”** Used to show great destruction, as if the sword was eating its victims.

[See commentary on Joshua 6:21.]

**“and strikes the city with the mouth of the sword.”** The city was very defensible, so the fact that David leaves it so quickly likely indicates that there were enemies in the city.

2Sm 15:15

**“my lord the king.”** The servants spoke with one voice, hence the word “my” and not “our.”

2Sm 15:16

**“ten women who were concubines.”** Although we tend to idealize David and hold him up as the model believer, when we really look deeply into his life we see things that are not good and some things that are even sinful. This should encourage us and help us realize that even the best of God’s people are still human, and God loves and works with sinners. The accounts of David’s wives and concubines are not David at his best. We learn from 2 Samuel 15:16 that David had quite a few wives and concubines (a concubine was a wife of lesser status, such as a slave girl who is given as a present to the king to curry his favor). The text does not say David left all his concubines, but that he left ten of his concubines, implying that David had more than ten. We also know that he had a number of wives. Early in his rule, while he was still in Hebron, he had six wives: Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah (2 Sam. 3:2-5). Then, when David moved to Jerusalem he took more wives and concubines (2 Sam. 5:13), but the Bible does not say how many more wives and concubines he took. Also, none of those later wives and concubines are named except Bathsheba, so it seems that neither they nor their children played a major role in the Davidic dynasty. In taking all these wives and concubines it seems that David was flirting with breaking the command of Deuteronomy 17:17, that the king of Israel was not to have many wives.

Also, we may well wonder why David left behind any concubines at all in Jerusalem, seeing that they would almost surely become Absalom’s sexual property, which they did. That they were left to care for the palace is an empty excuse; if Absalom took the palace, which with all the guards gone was a foregone conclusion, the women would not be allowed to take care of anything, certainly not the palace and perhaps not even themselves. Why leave the women behind when Nathan the prophet had foretold that David’s wives would be sexually violated by another man in public, which happened when Absalom had sex with David’s wives (concubines) on the palace roof before all Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 12:8, 11-12; 16:21-22)? David’s action in leaving the women behind seems quite uncaring for the fate of those women, who disappear from history after Absalom had sex with them. Given the Old Testament culture, we can be sure that after Absalom had sex with them that David would not have sex with them again, nor would those women have been allowed to marry anyone else since they had had sex with the king. If any of them had a child it would be a potential rival for the throne, and so they would have remained isolated as an unwanted concubine of the king for the remainder of their lives.

2Sm 15:17

**“the Last House.”** David had not yet crossed the Kidron Valley, and apparently, there was a house referred to as the “Last House” or “Far House” that was either just inside the east gate of Jerusalem, or just outside the gate. David stopped there, but if he had not crossed the Kidron yet he could only have gone a few hundred yards after leaving the palace before he stopped. He did not stop to spend the night, and perhaps he stopped there to let his group gather or to get an idea of who was with him and following him and who might have stayed and sided with Absalom.

2Sm 15:18

**“Cherethites and all the Pelethites and all the Gittites.”** All these are non-Israelites. Most are of Philistine stock, but the Cherethites are from Crete. The scholars are divided as to whether the “and” before “all the Cherethites” is a “that is,” or an “also.” However, given the fact that the record indicates that some Israelites did go with David, it seems that “also” is the correct meaning.

**“the Gittites.”** The inhabitants of Gath were referred to as “Gittites.” Here in 2 Samuel 15:18, we see the Gittites were from Gath (see commentary on Josh. 13:3).

2Sm 15:19

**“the king.”** David here speaks of Absalom as “the king,” but the text does not explain why. It has been suggested that Ittai was new enough to Jerusalem that Absalom would not think he was overly connected to David. David may have been trying to keep Ittai out of the fight between David and Absalom.

2Sm 15:20

**“yesterday.”** This could be literal or used idiomatically like we sometimes use it to mean a short time ago.

**“and have your brothers return with you.”** So when Ittai came, he brought people from his family or tribe with him; “brothers” may mean people from the same family or tribe in this context. There were quite a few people with Ittai (2 Sam. 15:22).

**“faithfulness and truth be with you.”** This could also be “faithfulness and truth are with you,” meaning that David would not hold Ittai responsible for feigning loyalty to Absalom.

2Sm 15:22

**“cross over.”** Although the statement may be general, the most immediate place to cross over is the Kidron Valley.

2Sm 15:23

**“all the land.”** Seemingly a hyperbole for all the people who were in the country who were aware of David and his followers leaving Jerusalem.

2Sm 15:24

**“and Abiathar came up.”** The apparent meaning, which is disputed by scholars, is that Abiathar came up to where the ark had been set down.

2Sm 15:25

**“he will bring me back.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “cause me to return,” but that is awkward in English. David told the priests to “return” the ark of God to Jerusalem, and said that if he found favor in God’s eyes then God would cause David to return also.

2Sm 15:26

**“let him do to me as is good in his eyes.”** David is not making an arrogant statement in disguise as a humble statement, he is speaking from his heart. David had good reason to believe that God might not be pleased with him, and so might not deliver him. Things certainly had not gone well for David since he committed adultery with Bathsheba and engineered the murder of her husband Uriah. His son raped his daughter and he did nothing about it (2 Sam. 13:1-21). His third son murdered his first son, the crown prince (2 Sam. 13:23-29), and then went to live with David’s father-in-law, Talmai, the king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3; 13:37). David was also somehow blind to the subterfuge that his son Absalom was doing in his kingdom that went on for years, and now in 2 Samuel 15 his son Absalom was in open rebellion against him. So David’s blindness led to war between the factions along with all the death and destruction that war brings. Also, David had left ten of his concubines in Jerusalem even though Nathan the prophet had foretold that an enemy would arise from his own household and publicly have sex with his wives (2 Sam. 12:11). So now, leaving Jerusalem and fleeing east toward the Jordan River, David had no assurance that God would give him victory against Absalom.

If there is comfort at all in this record for believers, it is that God did support David and did not abandon him because of his sin, even though some of it was grievous. David had many weaknesses, but at no time is there a record of his life where he made excuses for them. Like all of us, he needed God’s grace and forgiveness, and despite his sin, God forgave him and blessed him.

2Sm 15:27

**“Are you a seer?”** It is not clear what David is saying. Two good possibilities are that Zadok was a “seer,” a prophet, and could therefore navigate being in the city with Absalom. But it seems that the better possibility is that David meant more like, “Are you able to see” what is happening and then report to David. That is what David says in the next verse, 2 Sam. 15:28.

**“your sons with you.”** Both the “your” and the “you” are plural in the Hebrew.

2Sm 15:28

**“fords.”** The Hebrew text also has the reading “plains,” but “fords” fits the record better (cf. 2 Sam. 17:16).

2Sm 15:30

**“David went up by the Ascent of the *Mount of* Olives, weeping as he went up.”** King David wept on the Mount of Olives as he climbed it to leave Jerusalem in the hands of his ungodly son Absalom. About 1,000 years later Jesus wept when he saw the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives because he knew they rejected him, which would mean his death and Jerusalem’s doom (Luke 19:41).

**“Ascent of the *Mount of* Olives.”** Apparently the name of a well-traveled path up the west slope of the Mount of Olives.

2Sm 15:31

**“the conspirators.”** The Hebrew text is more concrete: “those banding together” with Absalom.

2Sm 15:32

**“where they worshiped God.”** The Hebrew reads, “where he worshiped God,” but the singular form is often used generically, and would mean “they” or “people” here. Scholars are divided on this point, some saying that David did worship God at this spot.

The Hebrew verb translated “worshiped” is *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), and it is the same Hebrew word as “bow down.” The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth. *Shachah* is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship” and the REV commentary on 1 Chron. 29:20.]

2Sm 15:37

**“Hushai, David’s friend, came into the city.”** It is likely that Hushai, coming from the east, entered Jerusalem through a different gate than Absalom, who was coming from the south.

**2 Samuel Chapter 16**

2Sm 16:1

**“had crossed a little beyond the summit.”** That is, a little beyond the summit of the Mount of Olives on his way east.

**“loaded.”** The Hebrew word means “bound up; tied up, or tied on.” The word does not mean “saddle,” and there were no saddles at this time in history; any “saddle” was simply a blanket that was tied on. They were a couple of donkeys that were bound up, and tied on them was all the food and wine, and once that was unloaded the donkeys had blankets on them which were tied on them.

**“200 *loaves of* bread.”** In the biblical culture, a “loaf” of bread was flatbread much like a modern pancake, but the Hebrew text simply says, “200 bread,” where “bread” is a collective plural.

**“100 summer *fruits.*”** The Hebrew omits the word “fruit” and just has “100 summer,” so the text does not tell us what Ziba brought other than that it grew in the summer, but the text does not tell us if the summer produce was fresh or, like the raisins, was dried. If it was dried, then what Ziba likely brought was 100 cakes of pressed fruit.

**“skin-bottle.”** A “bottle” or container made from animal skin. Ziba had enough food for quite a few people, and the skin-bottle could have been quite large in keeping with the rest of the food.

[For more on skin-bottles, which were usually made from the skins of goats, see commentary on 1 Sam. 10:3.]

2Sm 16:2

**“household.”** The Hebrew is simply “house,” but it means “household.”

2Sm 16:3

**“your lord’s son.”** The word “lord” is a grammatical plural, literally “lords” but meaning “lord.”

**“for he said.”** Ziba is lying, but supposedly quoting Mephibosheth saying that the kingdom would be restored to the house of Saul, in the person of Mephibosheth.” David should have figured out that this was a lie. Absalom did not, and never did, have any affinity for the house of Saul, and certainly would not have given up his kingship for Saul’s son, the crippled Mephibosheth. Ziba’s lie is so audacious that we are led to think that Ziba likely thought that Absalom would see Mephibosheth as a potential rival and kill him, and the truth would never become known. But Absalom did not kill Mephibosheth, who told David the truth, but even so, David did not punish Ziba for his lie and did not look deeply into the matter.

2Sm 16:4

**“bow down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth, as we see in this verse. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 16:5

**“Bahurim.”** On a shoulder on the east side of the Mount of Olives.

2Sm 16:7

**“man of Belial.”** This is a designation of sons of the Devil.

[For more on sons of Belial, see commentary on 1 Sam. 2:12. For more on the unforgivable sin and children of the Devil, see commentary on Matt. 12:31.]

2Sm 16:8

**“all the blood of the house of Saul.”** This is a false accusation. David never touched Saul, much less killed him. The Philistines did that.

**“your evil *situation*.”** The Hebrew is simply “in your evil,” meaning in your evil situation, where “evil” is put by metonymy for an “evil situation.”

2Sm 16:12

**“look on my affliction.”** The NET note explains the variant English translations well: “The Hebrew text is difficult here. It is probably preferable to read with the LXX, the Syriac Peshitta, and Vulgate…(‘on my affliction’( rather than the *Kethib* of the MT…(‘on my wrongdoing’(. While this *Kethib* reading is understandable as an objective genitive (i.e., ‘the wrong perpetrated upon me’), it does not conform to normal Hebrew idiom for this idea. The *Qere* of the MT…(‘on my eyes’(, usually taken as synecdoche to mean ‘my tears,’ does not commend itself as a likely meaning.”

2Sm 16:13

**“on the ridge of the hill close to him.”** The geography is more “above” him, but he was close.

**“throwing stones close to him.”** Shimei likely knew that if he hit David with a stone he would be quickly killed, and so threw the stones close to him. The casting dust was symbolic and to make a scene.

2Sm 16:14

**“arrived weary.”** The LXX adds that they arrived at the Jordan River, and while that may be true, it is not in the Hebrew text. In 2 Samuel 17:22 David and the people crossed the Jordan, but that may be later.

2Sm 16:16

**“May the king live! May the king live!”** Hushai might well have been thinking of David here, not Absalom, but people would not think that.

2Sm 16:20

**“both of you.”** In the phrase “give advice, both of you” the “you” is plural, referring to Hushai and Ahithophel.

2Sm 16:21

**“go in to your father’s concubines.”** Ahithophel advised Absalom to have sex with David’s concubines. Culturally, this would make an absolute break between Absalom and David, and show that Absalom was taking David’s place as king. However, Ahithophel’s advice may have had another motivation: Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba, whom David basically raped, got pregnant, arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed, and then married. Ahithophel may have thought of Absalom having sex with David’s wives as a kind of revenge. (See commentary on 2 Sam. 15:12). The phrase “go in to” is clear enough, meaning to go in to where the concubines were and have sex with them. Ahithophel was not as graphic as saying, “go into” your father’s wives. The women were concubines, but for the purpose of humiliating David, they were his wives.

2Sm 16:22

**“Absalom went in to his father’s concubines before the eyes all Israel.”** This act of Absalom fulfilled Nathan’s prophecy that because David had taken another man’s wife and slept with her secretly (i.e., with Bathsheba), his wives would be taken by another man, who would sleep with them publicly (2 Sam. 12:11). The phrase “all Israel” tells us that many of the leaders of Israel were following Absalom at this time. The phrase “before the eyes of” is actually quite literal for the City of David. It was quite small, and people could see the palace roof quite clearly from most of the city.

**2 Samuel Chapter 17**

2Sm 17:1

**“I will.”** The three-verse speech of Ahithophel drips with personal animosity. Ahithophel is not a warrior, yet he speaks like one. He will choose the army himself, chase after David, come upon him while he is tired and weak, make him afraid, and kill him. Then he will bring the people back, and there will be peace. The energy for this speech is no doubt the personal animosity that Ahithophel has for David because David had sex with his granddaughter Bathsheba and arranged for her husband, Uriah, to be killed. See commentary on 2 Samuel 15:12.

2Sm 17:2

**“exhausted.”** The literal Hebrew is “weak (or slack) of hands” but here the idiom most likely means “exhausted.”

2Sm 17:5

**“what he too says.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “let us hear what is in his mouth too.”

2Sm 17:7

**“advice that Ahithophel has given.”** The Hebrew uses the noun and verb of “advice”: “The advice that Ahithophel has advised this time is not good.”

2Sm 17:10

**“melt, yes, melt.”** Hushai repeats the verb “melt” twice in different conjugations, thus using the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

2Sm 17:11

**“and that you go to battle in your own person.”** Hushai advised Absalom to go in person to the battle, while Ahithophel advised that Absalom remain in Jerusalem while Ahithophel himself pursues David (2 Sam. 17:1, 3). Hushai likely rightly thought that if Absalom went into battle he would die there, which he did, and Absalom’s death would put an end to the rebellion.

2Sm 17:12

**“there will not be left to him … even one.”** Ahithophel’s advice included bringing the people back to Absalom, whereas Hushai’s advice was kill all the people who followed David. Since Absalom likely did not trust the people who followed David, getting rid of them all in one battle would seem appealing.

2Sm 17:14

**“Yahweh had commanded to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel.”** Yahweh was actively participating in the defeat of Absalom and the victory of David.

**“bring evil on Absalom.”** That is, bring disaster on Absalom.

2Sm 17:16

**“fords of the wilderness.”** These fords would be somewhere in the vicinity of Jericho.

2Sm 17:17

**“by En-rogel.”** The spring of En-rogel is 300 yards south of the Gihon Spring.

2Sm 17:18

**“young man.”** The Hebrew word refers to a young man, but can in certain contexts refer to a servant. This young man could have been one of Absalom’s servants.

2Sm 17:20

**“They have gone over the brook of water.”** This woman lied to the men who came from Absalom, and in so doing may well have saved David’s life. God allows people to act in self-defense and in the defense of others, and sometimes that requires telling untruths to evil people.

[For more on lying and civil disobedience, see commentary Exod. 1:19.]

2Sm 17:23

**“he saddled his donkey.”** The “saddle” that we have today, complete with stirrups, was a late invention, after the time of Christ. People rode donkeys and horses on blankets like the American Indians did.

2Sm 17:27

**“And when David had come to Mahanaim.”** David was driven out of Jerusalem but was well received in the Transjordan, and in a similar way, the Jews of Jerusalem rejected Christ but accepted him in the Transjordan, where, for example, the feeding of the 5,000 occurred (John 10:40-42).

2Sm 17:28

**“bedding.”** Likely thick blankets, the normal bed and bedding for the people.

2Sm 17:29

**“cheese of the herd.”** The “herd” is cattle, so this would be cheese made from cows’ milk.

**2 Samuel Chapter 18**

2Sm 18:2

**“the Gittite.”** The inhabitants of Gath were referred to as “Gittites” (see commentary on Josh. 13:3; cf. 2 Sam. 15:18).

2Sm 18:4

**“the people.”** That is, the people who were going out to fight.

2Sm 18:6

**“in the forest of Ephraim.”** In the Transjordan; likely somewhere in the tribal area of Manasseh in Gilead.

2Sm 18:9

**“mule.”** See commentary on 2 Samuel 13:29.

**“the great oak.”** It is likely that after the incident with Absalom, this particular oak became well-known, so here the text refers to it as “the great oak.”

**“his head caught hold of the oak and he was taken up between the sky and earth.”** This is a bizarre record for a number of reasons. One reason is why was Absalom, the supposed new king, riding alone? He was going into battle! He should have had armor-bearers or some kind of guard with him. He was reckless and arrogant in his life, and now that contributes to his undoing. Also, his glorious hair became a fatal liability (cf. 2 Sam. 14:25-26). Ordinarily, Absalom would not have been so careless as to ride through the tangled brush and trees without paying close attention, but unexpectantly running into a group of David’s men when he was alone no doubt distracted him, and in his haste to get out of danger he entrapped himself in the tangled branches. Like so many times in Scripture, behind this incident we see the unseen hand of God, who was fighting behind the scenes to preserve the Davidic dynasty and defeat David’s enemies (cf. 2 Sam. 17:14).

2Sm 18:10

**“I saw Absalom hanging in an oak.”** This seems to be an indication that Absalom was under God’s curse (Deut. 21:22-23). This is the same Hebrew word for “hanging” that occurs in Deuteronomy.

2Sm 18:13

**“his life.”** The written Hebrew text says “his life,” but the Massorites suggested reading it “my life,” but “his life” makes sense.

2Sm 18:14

**“arrows.”** The Hebrew word translated “arrows” usually means “rod, staff, stick” or by extension, “tribe.” This is the only time in Scripture it is used of an arrow or arrow-like weapon. This seems to be an irony. Absalom wanted the “shepherd’s staff,” i.e., the leadership over Judah. He wanted to rule the “tribe.” So he got the “staff,” the “tribe,” right in the heart, but in a way that he did not expect and it killed him.

2Sm 18:16

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

2Sm 18:18

**“the King’s Valley.”** This is most likely the Kidron Valley, on the east side of Jerusalem, or where the Kidron Valley and the Hinnom Valley meet (cf. Gen. 14:17).

**“I have no son.”** According to 2 Samuel 14:27, Absalom had three sons, so apparently by this later time in his life they had passed away. While tragic, that would not have been terribly unusual. Naomi lost both her sons in their teenage years after they were married but before they could have children (Ruth 1:3-5). In the ancient world children often died from various causes that they would not die from today. Not only were things such as appendicitis deadly, but many people died of injuries and infections that are easily treated today.

**“Absalom’s monument.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “Absalom’s hand.” The word “hand” refers to what the person had done and memorialized it. The word “hand” is commonly used for memorials or monuments.

2Sm 18:19

**“Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, “Let me now run.”** The request of Ahimaaz was logical because he had been assigned to take news of Absalom’s rebellion earlier (2 Sam. 15:36).

2Sm 18:20

**“You are not to be the one to proclaim the news this day.”** Although Joab’s refusal to let Ahimaaz take the news of Absalom’s death to David is not explained in the text, it is almost certainly because Joab wanted to protect the young man. Although Ahimaaz thought Absalom’s death was a great victory and blessing, which in a sense it certainly was, Joab knew that to David it would be tragic news, and Joab did not know exactly how David would take it. If Ahimaaz brought that news it would certainly cause David to have a bad memory of him, and might even endanger him. Joab would have well remembered that the last two messengers who brought David news of the death of a supposed enemy, one at the death of Saul and the other at the death of Saul’s son, Ish-bosheth, were both executed. Although Ahimaaz had nothing to do with Absalom’s death, his enthusiastic attitude about it may have enraged David and thus endangered Ahimaaz’s life. So Joab assigned an unnamed and unknown Cushite to tell David the news. We can tell from the record that Joab was not trying to hide things from David, because he instructed the Cushite, go and tell David what you have seen (2 Sam. 18:21).

2Sm 18:21

**“the Cushite.”** This foreigner was unnamed and is not known.

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 18:23

**“the Road of the Plain.”** Apparently a known road through the Jordan plain. This would be a little longer route, but much flatter and therefore faster to run. The word “plain” is more like “disk” or “oval,” and could refer to what would have been an ariel view, or it could refer to the flatness of the area.

**“and outran the Cushite.”** Ahimaaz and the Cushite likely took different routes.

2Sm 18:28

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth, as we see in this verse. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

**“his face to the ground.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “his nose to the ground.”

2Sm 18:29

**“great commotion.”** The Hebrew can also be “a great crowd.”

2Sm 18:32

**“be as that young man is.”** The Cushite uses great tact, not mentioning specifically that Absalom had died, but David got the message.

2Sm 18:33

**“deeply moved.”** The Hebrew can also mean “shaken,” or “trembling.” All likely apply. David was deeply moved, shaken to the core, and trembling.

**“Oh that I had died instead of you.”** David very likely assumes some responsibility for the death of Absalom. The whole downhill slope started with David’s adultery, and also that he did not discipline his sons. In fact, if he had dealt with Amnon when Amnon raped Absalom’s sister Tamar, Absalom might not have harbored such bad feelings about David.

**2 Samuel Chapter 19**

2Sm 19:3

**“stole...steal.”** People who flee from battle steal away from the battle and steal back into their city, and that is how the people were behaving now, sneaking into the city as if they were cowardly retreating there for safety instead of engaging in the battle.

2Sm 19:5

**“and the lives of your concubines.”** David had left ten concubines behind in Jerusalem, but had more, as this verse says.

2Sm 19:7

**“to comfort your servants.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “upon the heart,” but that is an idiom which means to speak kindly or to comfort someone (cf. Isa. 40:2).

2Sm 19:8

**“sat in the gate.”** It was customary for kings and officials to sit in the gate and judge the people of the city and conduct business (e.g., 2 Sam. 19:8; 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Chron. 18:9; Esther 2:21; Jer. 38:7; Dan. 2:49). The fact that David went and sat in the gate meant that he was in control as king and the city would get back to business and be “normal” and safe.

2Sm 19:12

**“Why then are you the last to bring back the king?”** This very likely has Messianic application, because eleven of the twelve apostles were Galileans, not Judeans, although Jesus was from Judah, and it is most likely that Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, was from Judah.

2Sm 19:13

**“And say to Amasa.”** David’s choice of Amasa, who had been the commander of Absalom’s army, over Joab who had been faithful to him, is shocking. It has been suggested that perhaps David thought that the people of Israel who supported Absalom would more readily support David if Amasa was his general, but what about the people who had been faithful to David in fighting Absalom? They would no doubt feel betrayed. This choice is hard to understand.

2Sm 19:14

**“And he turned.”** Who the “he” refers to is not stated in the text. It could be David or Amasa.

2Sm 19:15

**“returned and came to the Jordan.”** Interestingly, this path from north to south on the east side of the Jordan River was the same path Jesus took in his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, crossing at Jericho and then going up to Jerusalem.

2Sm 19:18

**“And they crossed.”** The Hebrew text has “and she crossed,” but that does not make sense in the context, and the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Aramaic Targum have “they,” which is almost certainly correct (cf. ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, RSV).

**“as he was crossing over the Jordan.”** Here it seems that the king and his household were crossing, and it would have been that as soon as David himself got across, and while his household was still crossing, Shimei quickly fell down before David to plead for his life.

2Sm 19:19

**“impute sin...sinfully did.”** The words “sin” and “sinfully” are from the same Hebrew root. Here, in an interesting way, Shimei asks David to not hold his sin against him, but at the same time admits that he sinned against David. Also, the word translated “impute” is more literally to think or consider. Shimei asks David not to consider him a sinner even though he admits he is one.

2Sm 19:21

**“Yahweh’s anointed one.”** In this context, Yahweh’s anointed one is King David (see commentary on 1 Sam. 12:3).

2Sm 19:22

**“adversary.”** This is the Hebrew word “satan” from which we get the name of the Devil: Satan.

2Sm 19:23

**“You will not die.”** David did not kill Shimei, but told Solomon to kill him once David was dead (1 Kings 2:8-9).

2Sm 19:24

**“son of Saul.”** Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul, but Hebrew does not have a word for grandson.

2Sm 19:26

**“saddled.”** The “saddle” that we have today, complete with stirrups, was a late invention, after the time of Christ. People rode donkeys and horses on blankets like the American Indians did.

2Sm 19:27

**“the king is as an angel of God.”** This does not mean, like the American idiom, that David is sweet or nice. It means that David represents God and has wide ranging knowledge, so David would know the truth of what happened.

2Sm 19:29

**“you and Ziba divide the land.”** This record about Mephibosheth and Ziba is one of the enigmatic records in the life of David. It seems clear from the information we are given that Ziba lied, and yet David rewarded Ziba with half of what had belonged to Saul. There is more to this record than appears in the text, and we do not have all the details. It may be that David thought Mephibosheth could have made more of an effort to go with him, or that David felt a little indebted to Ziba for supporting him when he left Jerusalem.

2Sm 19:30

**“Let him take it all.”** Mephibosheth is speaking hyperbolically to honor the king, but will take half the land as David decided. See a similar hyperbole in Genesis 23:11 when Abraham was purchasing the burial cave for his wife Sarah.

2Sm 19:31

**“Rogelim.”** A city in the Transjordan. Here Barzillai shows his loyalty to David again (cf. 2 Sam. 17:27).

**“to send him off at the Jordan.”** Barzillai did not cross the Jordan himself, but sent David home across the Jordan.

2Sm 19:34

**“are the days of the years of my life.”** Barzillai seems to be counting every day.

2Sm 19:35

**“Can I discern between good and bad?”** This is a general statement and is clarified and elucidated in the next statements.

2Sm 19:36

**“Your servant will just go a little way over the Jordan.”** The Hebrew text can also be translated that Barzillai said that he could just barely get over the Jordan River. For example, the translation by Robert Alter is, “Your servant can just barely cross over the Jordan.”[[17]](#footnote-23101) But given that he speaks of getting a reward from the king for what he is doing, the common translation is more likely correct.

2Sm 19:40

**“crossed over to Gilgal.”** So David traveled down the east side of the Jordan until he was across from Gilgal, just as Jesus did before he went up the Jericho Road to Jerusalem in the weeks before he was crucified. The eastern side of the Jordan has more water to drink and is a little flatter than the western side of the Jordan.

**“and also half the people of Israel.”** This is an indication that not all the people of the northern tribes were excited about having David back as king, and sure enough, in the next chapter, 2 Samuel 20, there is another revolt against David among the northern tribes.

2Sm 19:41

**“all the men of Israel.”** That is, all the ones who were there.

2Sm 19:42

**“is a close relative to me.”** The men of Judah are speaking as one man, and saying “me.”

**“eaten, yes, eaten.”** The Hebrew text uses the figure of speech polyptoton, in which the word “eaten” is used twice (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

2Sm 19:43

**“I have ten shares.”** Israel is speaking as one man, saying “I.” not “we.” Also, literally, “ten shares” is “ten hands,” but the meaning is ten shares.

**2 Samuel Chapter 20**

2Sm 20:1

**“There had come there.”** The place is Gilgal (2 Sam. 19:40).

**“son of Belial.”** This is a designation of sons of the Devil.

[For more on sons of Belial, see commentary on 1 Sam. 2:12. For more on the unforgivable sin and children of the Devil, see commentary on Matt. 12:31.]

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

2Sm 20:2

**“went up.”** The people were down at the Jordan by Gilgal, some 1,000 feet below sea level, and now the people of Israel go up out of the Jordan Valley into the hill country of Israel.

2Sm 20:6

**“lord’s.”** The Hebrew “lord’s” is plural, a grammatical plural, a plural of majesty. David is speaking of himself.

2Sm 20:8

**“the great rock that is in Gibeon.”** This is likely a large standing-stone that was set up there. However, the Bible does not say who set it up or when. The Gibeonites were Hivites (Josh. 11:19), and Joshua made a covenant with them to let them live (Josh. 9).

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18.]

2Sm 20:11

**“over him.”** That is, over Amasa.

2Sm 20:14

**“He went through all the tribes of Israel.”** Sheba had gone through Israel trying to garner support but apparently did not get much.

2Sm 20:15

**“They came.”** The subject changes; this is Joab and his army chasing Sheba.

**“rampart.”** The Hebrew seems to be a technical term for part of a defensive wall system. It could be the top part, or the outer part, or an outer wall. In English, the “rampart” was the flat top of an outer wall or wall system with a walkway, but the Hebrew word may not mean that.

2Sm 20:17

**“servant.”** The Hebrew word is *amah* (#0519 אָמָה), which refers to a woman who is not free in one sense or another, generally a female slave, but perhaps, for example, a concubine.

2Sm 20:18

**“ask, yes, ask.”** The figure polyptoton (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

2Sm 20:19

**“mother.”** Here in 2 Samuel 20:19, the “mother” can be either or both the “mother-city” or the wise mothers in Israel. A mother-city is a city that is strong and usually well fortified and supports the smaller villages and towns around it, which are sometimes referred to as “daughters” (see commentary on Josh. 15:45). In this case, the city of Abel was a “mother” in Israel.

2Sm 20:22

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

2Sm 20:26

**“head administrator to David.”** Cf. 2 Samuel 8:18.

**2 Samuel Chapter 21**

2Sm 21:1

**“in the days of David.”** The time of this famine is not given. Many commentators think that this is fairly early in David’s reign.

**“the House of Bloodguilt.”** “The House of Bloodguilt” is set in opposition to the “House of Saul,” and further describes it. Thus, in God’s eyes, “the House of Saul” was also “the House of Bloodguilt,” and Saul’s house certainly had much bloodguilt associated with it. Besides putting Gibeonites to death, something that is not recorded in the Word, Saul put to death an entire village of priests (1 Sam. 22:16-19); tried to kill David; tried to kill his own son and crown prince Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:33), and almost certainly put to death others who are not recorded in the Bible. Then again, when called upon to kill the Amalekite Agag, an enemy of Yahweh, Saul spared him and Samuel had to do it (1 Sam. 15:20, 33).

[For the translation “bloodguilt” see *HALOT Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*; *The Schocken Bible* by E. Fox; and the *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*.]

2Sm 21:2

**“sworn an oath to them.”** The oath and the circumstance of its being sworn between Israel and the people of Gibeon is in Joshua 9:1-15.

**“zeal.”** This is a great example of misplaced zeal which is sin in the eyes of God. There is both godly and ungodly zeal.

2Sm 21:3

**“the inheritance of Yahweh.”** In this context, the “inheritance of Yahweh” is both the land and the people on it.

2Sm 21:4

**“nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel.”** The Gibeonites did not have the right to avenge themselves, but needed David, the king of Israel, to hear and approve their request.

2Sm 21:5

**“destroyed us.”** The Hebrew verb can also be used of an attempt. Saul tried to destroy the Gibeonites.

2Sm 21:6

**“seven men of his sons.”** The seven who were killed were Saul’s grandsons, but in Hebrew, the word “sons” includes all male descendants.

**“Gibeah of Saul.”** Gibeah was Saul’s hometown and capital city.

2Sm 21:8

**“the two sons of Rizpah.”** Rizpah is one of the many sad stories in the Bible and in life. She must have been born a beautiful but lower-class woman, or perhaps even a slave, because she was a concubine of Saul’s. Then when Saul died, Abner took her and slept with her (2 Sam. 3:7), but then Abner was killed also, and what happened to her after that is lost in history. Now her two sons, certainly the light of her life and her support in old age, were executed for something her ungodly husband king Saul had done.

**“Merab the daughter of Saul.”** Merab was the oldest daughter of Saul and was promised to David in marriage, but when it came time for the wedding Saul changed his mind and gave Merab to Adriel (1 Sam. 18:17-19). Now, in a terrible twist of fate, her five sons are sentenced to death for something their grandfather did. The Masoretic Hebrew text has an error in copying and says “Michal” instead of “Merab,” but there are ancient Hebrew texts that read “Merab,” including the Samaritan Pentateuch and an Aramaic Targum. Unless something unfortunate had happened to Merab, she would have been alive at this time and experienced this terrible tragedy.

2Sm 21:9

**“they impaled them.”** Although most English versions say “hanged” instead of “impaled,” this hanging was not like our Western idea of “hung by the neck” but was an act of impaling. We see this with Jesus, who the Bible says was “hung on a tree,” but he was actually nailed to it; thus impaled on it.

It was the general custom in the Old Testament that the person would be killed first, and then the dead body was impaled and hung up for public display. The Assyrians, who were a very cruel people, often impaled people on upright stakes while they were still alive, and the Romans modified the act of impaling such that it became the horrible torture of crucifixion. The translation “impaled” is used in the NRSV, Tanakh, and The Schocken Bible. Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible actually says, “crucified” here, but that is a historical anachronism when compared to Roman crucifixion.

**“fell.”** An idiom for died. Also, this may refer to the way they were killed before they were impaled. If they were stoned, which would have been customary, then they fell down after they were stoned to death.

**“at the beginning of barley harvest.”** So this would be very near the Feast of Passover.

2Sm 21:10

**“until water was poured on them from heaven.”** That is, until the autumn rains came. The barley harvest started in April, often mid-April, and the autumn rains started in late October or early November, and it was getting colder by then too. So Rizpah watched over her dead sons for at least six months. Some scholars believe that the famine was due to no rain and that therefore the rain that came was not the regular autumn rain but was special and ended the famine, but there is no indication of that in the text. There are lots of times famines occur for other reasons than there being no rain. According to the Mosaic Law (Deut. 21:27), dead bodies should be taken down from being impaled before nightfall. It seems these bodies were left on the stake, but we have no explanation as to why.

**“the birds of the air.”** The Hebrew is literally, “the birds of the heavens,” but the Hebrew word “heavens” is always plural, there is no singular word “heaven” in Hebrew.

**“or the animals of the field by night.”** Rizpah kept her vigil day and night, napping on the sackcloth on the rock, and thus she protected the bodies and bones of her beloved sons. This is one of the most profound acts of a mother’s love in the Bible. Eventually, the men’s flesh would decay and mostly waste away, leaving the bones. In the biblical culture, it was very important to protect and properly bury the bones of the deceased, and Rizpah no doubt wanted to see her sons get a proper burial. She had to keep vigil over the bones, which would have been taken by animals if not guarded. Her diligence and love paid off and eventually, her sons got an honorable burial.

2Sm 21:12

**“the public square of Beth-shean.”** This does not contradict 1 Samuel 31:10, which says the Philistines fastened Saul’s body to the wall. The public square was usually near the city gate (2 Chron. 32:6), and even could be outside it (Neh. 8:1). The Philistines would have wanted Saul’s body where everyone could see it, and on the wall near the public square would be the perfect place. The fact that the people would tolerate a rotting body near their public square shows how insensitive people of that time period were to what we today would consider intolerable stench.

2Sm 21:14

**“at Zela.”** This could be a place, or the Hebrew can refer to a side chamber in a tomb.[[18]](#footnote-15113)

**“God allowed Himself to be entreated.”** The verb is in the passive tense. The sense and translation should not be uncomfortable. We know from many Scriptures that sin separates God from people, and God opposes the proud (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5) and turns his ear away from people’s prayers (see commentary on Amos 5:5). So when people repent and make amends for their sin, God then opens his eyes and ears to the people and thus allows Himself to be entreated by them. The same passive tense verb occurs in 2 Samuel 21:14; 24:25 and Isaiah 19:22.

2Sm 21:16

**“Rapha.”** Rapha was one of the Nephilim, the “Fallen Ones.” Rapha is mentioned four times in this chapter: 2 Samuel 21:16, 18, 20, and 21:22 and in other places in the Old Testament as well.

[For more on the Nephilim and the connection between them and Rapha, see commentary on Gen. 6:4.]

**“spear.”** The Hebrew word for “spear” is uncertain, but “spear” is a likely candidate for the word.

**“300 shekels.”** 300 shekels is roughly 7.5 pounds (3.4 kg). A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.” A spear point that heavy would make the spear very slow when used in battle unless the person was incredibly big and strong, which Ishbi-benob was.

**“being armed with a new *sword*,”** The Hebrew does not have an object, and the scholars are divided. Some say “sword,” others “armor,” and others mention other possibilities.

2Sm 21:18

**“Hushathite.”** Hush is a site just to the west of Bethlehem, on the ridge going down to the Valley of Elah.

2Sm 21:19

**“Goliath the Gittite’s *brother*.”** The word “brother” is supplied from the record in Chronicles (1 Chron. 20:5). Goliath was from the Philistine city of Gath (1 Sam. 17:4, 23) and the inhabitants of Gath were referred to as “Gittites” (see commentary on Josh. 13:3; cf. 2 Sam. 15:18).

2Sm 21:22

**“by the hand of David.”** Although David did not kill any of the four descendants of Rapha, he is credited with killing them along with his mighty men because of his leadership and the motivation he provided.

**2 Samuel Chapter 22**

2Sm 22:2

**“even mine.”** This does appear in the Hebrew text but is left out of almost every translation, being considered pleonastic. However, it does add a very personal touch to what David is saying. God is not just “a rock,” He is David’s rock, yes, David’s.

2Sm 22:3

**“refuge...refuge.”** The two Hebrew words are different but they are synonyms, and many translations have “refuge” in both places.

2Sm 22:11

**“He rode on a cherub and flew.”** This is most likely a way of expressing that God rode on His cherubim-powered chariot-throne, as He did when He came to talk to Ezekiel in Ezekiel chapter 1. It is not likely that God rode piggyback style on a cherub.

[For more on God’s cherubim-powered chariot-throne, see commentary on Ezek. 1:26. For a more complete understanding of cherubim, see commentaries on Ezek. 1:5 and 1:10.]

2Sm 22:13

**“the brightness before him.”** The brightness of God’s glory surrounded Him.

2Sm 22:16

**“the sources of the sea appeared.”** At the appearance of Yahweh, everything is laid bare before Him, the sources of the sea and the foundations of the earth. Nothing is hidden from Him, and nothing can resist Him.[[19]](#footnote-11571)

2Sm 22:19

**“confronted me.”** The word means “to get in front of” and it includes confrontation in a harsh way.

2Sm 22:31

**“tested.”** The exact meaning of the word is uncertain, but it seems to have to do with the refining of metals. It could be “tested” in the sense of tested in the fire or it could mean more like the NJB, “refined in the furnace.”

2Sm 22:34

**“sets me on my high places.”** In ancient times, “high places” gave the ones who controlled them a distinct advantage in war. They were generally secure and hard to attack. Cities were built on high places whenever they could be, as were Jerusalem and Samaria, the capital cities of Judah and Israel. For Moses to include in his blessing that Israel would trample on the high places of the enemy was a way of expressing that no enemy would be able to withstand them.

2Sm 22:37

**“You have enlarged my steps.”** Here, “steps” are put by metonymy for the path that the person steps on.

[See Word Study: “Metonymy.”]

**“feet.”** Literally “ankles.” But customarily the ankle was thought of as part of the foot.

2Sm 22:42

**“They cried out for help.”** The Masoretic text reads, “they looked (around for help)” but some ancient manuscripts read “cried out for help” like Psalm 18:41 does, and that is almost certainly the original reading of the text.

2Sm 22:44

**“strife among my people.”** David ruled over divided tribes and divided loyalties, but was saved from being pulled to one side or the other.

**“A people whom I have not known.”** David is thinking wider than just the people of Israel here; he is thinking of his kingship and dynasty being over other nations as well.

2Sm 22:45

**“submit themselves.”** The verb only occurs here in the hithpael form, so the scholars differ somewhat on its meaning.

2Sm 22:46

**“lose courage.”** The translation “fade away” is more literal but harder to understand.

**“strongholds.”** The meaning of the Hebrew is debated, and could even mean “prisons,” which would be that the army of Israel shut up the foreigners in their own strongholds as if they were prisons until the people came trembling out of them.

2Sm 22:51

**“to his anointed one, to David.”** In this context, Yahweh’s anointed one is King David (see commentary on 1 Sam. 12:3).

**2 Samuel Chapter 23**

2Sm 23:1

**“the sweet psalmist of Israel.”** The Hebrew can be translated a few different ways as is represented in the various English translations.

**“the anointed one.”** In this context, Yahweh’s anointed one is King David (see commentary on 1 Sam. 12:3).

2Sm 23:6

**“*sons of* Belial.”** This is a designation of sons of the Devil. The idea here is plural, more than one, because the second stanza says “they” (plural).

[For more on sons of Belial, see commentary on 1 Sam. 2:12. For more on the unforgivable sin and children of the Devil, see commentary on Matt. 12:31.]

2Sm 23:7

**“be armed.”** The Hebrew idiom is “to fill the hand,” which is shortened here in the Hebrew text to “fill” [his hand], that is, be armed.

**“They will be burned, yes, burned.”** God uses the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis, repeating the word “burned” with different inflections. Evil people will be burned up and annihilated (Rev. 20:11-15).

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see Gen. 2:16.]

**“completely.”** Depending on the trilateral root word that is chosen, the Hebrew can be read as “completely” or “to extermination” (cf. NAB, NJB, NLT), or “where they sit” (thus, “on the spot”). But the reading “on the spot” does not make sense, because wicked people will be burned in the Lake of Fire, not “on the spot” or “where they are.” But they will be burned up completely. They will be burned to ashes; completely burned up.

[See Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

2Sm 23:8

**“the mighty men whom David had.”** David did not do his great feats alone, he had help, and as a type of the Messiah, this points to the fact that even the Messiah had help and will have the help of great men and women in the future when he rules the earth.

**“Josheb-basshebeth.”** The name likely means, “the one who sits at the sitting,” which likely means “the one who sits at the judgment.”

**“he wielded his spear.”** Some Septuagint texts and a couple Hebrew manuscripts read this way, and it makes sense because the flow of the text is to give the name of a warrior and then speak of his mighty deeds. The Masoretic text reads more like, “the same was Adino the Eznite,” but that does not really make sense in the context.

2Sm 23:9

**“had withdrawn.”** The Hebrew is literally, “had gone up,” but the Philistines lived on the coast and were “down” from Israel, so for the Israelites to “go up” was to go back some ways into the hill country and thus to withdraw from the battle. They returned later (2 Sam. 23:10).

2Sm 23:11

**“into a troop.”** Some versions have “at Lehi,” transliterating the Hebrew into a place name, but the same word is used in 2 Samuel 23:13 as a troop.

2Sm 23:15

“**David longed and said, ‘Oh that one would give me water to drink.’”** Anyone who had drank the native water from the ground in different places knows that the water in different locations often has its own subtle taste. David grew up in Bethlehem drinking that water, and now the Philistines controlled the area. David did not desire that specific water because he had no water to drink but because the Philistines controlled his town and he had fond memories of it and the water he used to drink there. It never occurred to him that some of his men loved him enough to get him some of that water at the risk of their lives.

**“the well of Bethlehem.”** There is a well in Bethlehem near the Church of the Nativity that is now not used, and that could be the well David spoke of. No wall around Bethlehem has been found, but not much effort has been put into finding one either.

2Sm 23:16

**“broke through the camp.”** That is, broke through the outer perimeter and into the camp, where the well would have been.

**“but he would not drink it, but poured it out to Yahweh.”** The men did what they did in honor of David, but by his action in pouring out the water to Yahweh, he indicated that he was not greater than the men who risked their lives to get him the water he longed for. Had he drank of the water it would have validated that he was somehow worthy of the sacrifice of those men, which he knew he was not.

2Sm 23:39

**“37 in all.”** There are only 36 names in the list. This could be due to Joab being left out as so obvious he should be included in anyone’s mind, or it may be that one of the names in the list taken as a father is another mighty man.

**2 Samuel Chapter 24**

2Sm 24:1

**“Again the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel.”** What may have opened the door for Yahweh’s anger and Satan’s attack is Israel’s revolts against David, by Absalom and Sheba.

**“he incited David against them.”** God did not actively incite David against Israel. This is the Semitic idiom of permission. An idiom is “a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the ordinary meanings of the words in it.” The idiom of permission is the reason why many verses in the Bible seem to attribute evil actions to God.

It is widely recognized by scholars that in Semitic languages the active verb can be used in a passive or “permissive” sense (although no active “permission” is given by God). For example, in *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph B. Rotherham, the phrase often translated as “I will harden his [Pharaoh’s] heart” is translated as “I will let his heart wax bold” (cf. Rotherham, Exod. 4:21). Rotherham translates 2 Samuel 24:1 as: “…so that he suffered [allowed] David to be moved against them.” In other words, God was so angry against Israel that he could not protect them the way He would have liked, and thus allowed Satan to work through David to cause disaster in Israel (cf. 1 Chron. 21:1, which shows that it was actually Satan who moved David to count Israel).

[For a more complete explanation of the idiom of permission, see commentary on Exod. 4:21.]

2Sm 24:5

**“the right side of the city.”** The south side.

**“valley of Gad.”** Most probably the Arnon River Valley.

2Sm 24:10

**“remove.”** The Hebrew is more literally “transfer.”

2Sm 24:11

**“When David rose up in the morning.”** It is likely that David was reflecting about his actions at night and his heart struck him.

2Sm 24:16

**“Yahweh changed his mind concerning the evil.”** The Hebrew word translated “changed his mind” is *nacham* (#05162 נָחַם), and its semantic range includes to be sorry, repent, regret, change one’s mind, have compassion, be comforted, console oneself.[[20]](#footnote-29103) Here in 2 Samuel 24:16, the word *nacham* has the force of both God changing His mind (CJB, NAB), and also backing off of the destruction, “relenting” of it (CSB, ESV, NASB, NET, NLT, NRSV).

2Sm 24:18

**“of Araunah the Jebusite.”** Somehow Araunah managed to not be displaced when David conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem.

2Sm 24:20

**“Then Araunah went out.”** The threshing floor was outside, but it was a defined area, and may have even been surrounded by a small wall.

**“bowed down.”** The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body and face to the earth, as we see in this verse. The word translated “bowed down,” *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is the same Hebrew word as “worship.”

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

2Sm 24:21

**“removed.”** The Hebrew is more literally like “stopped.”

2Sm 24:24

**“buy, yes, buy.”** This is the figure of speech polyptoton for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

**“for 50 shekels of silver.”** 1 Chronicles 21:25 says David paid 600 shekels for “the place,” which seems to be the whole mountaintop on which the Temple was built. That makes sense in light of the fact that Abraham paid 400 shekels of silver for the burial cave in which to bury Sarah (Gen. 23:15-16). 2 Samuel 24:24 says that David paid 50 shekels, but it was for “the threshing floor and the oxen.” The threshing floor would have only been a quite small piece of land, like toward the very top of the mountain. Fifty shekels is roughly 1.25 pounds (567 grams). A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.”

2Sm 24:25

**“God allowed himself to be entreated.”** The verb is in the passive tense. The sense and translation should not be uncomfortable. We know from many Scriptures that sin separates God from people, and God opposes the proud (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5) and turns his ear away from people’s prayers (see commentary on Prov. 28:9). So when people repent and make amends for their sin, God then opens his eyes and ears to the people and thus allows Himself to be entreated by them. This same verb in the passive occurs in 2 Samuel 21:14; 24:25; and Isa. 19:22.

1. Cf. P. Kyle McCarter, *2 Samuel* [AB], 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-15369)
2. Koehler Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. [↑](#footnote-ref-16511)
3. A. Berlin, M. Brettler, M. Fishbane, *Jewish Study Bible: Tanakh Translation*, Jewish Publication Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-19727)
4. See E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 267, “polyptoton.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22487)
5. Andrew Steinmann, *2 Samuel* [ConcC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-28527)
6. Eilat Mazar, “The Undiscovered Palace of King David in Jerusalem,” *Biblical Archaeological Review*, Jan/Feb, 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-30575)
7. Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Digging Up Jerusalem*, 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-15027)
8. See Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT* *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-25645)
9. E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, Appendix 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-10084)
10. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel* [AB], 296. [↑](#footnote-ref-10675)
11. See Holladay, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*; Everett Fox, *The Schocken Bible: The Early Prophets*. [↑](#footnote-ref-21319)
12. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel* [AB], 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-32703)
13. E. Fox, *The Schocken Bible: The Early Prophets*, vol 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-15742)
14. Cf. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel* [AB], 330, 333. [↑](#footnote-ref-25997)
15. Cf. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel* [AB], 344; Everett Fox, *The Shocken Bible: The Early Prophets*, vol. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-27044)
16. See, P. Kyle McCarter, *2 Samuel* [AB], 356. [↑](#footnote-ref-30812)
17. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A translation with commentary*, vol. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-23101)
18. E. Fox, *The Schocken Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-15113)
19. For “sources,” see David Tsumura, *The Second Book of Samuel* [NICOT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-11571)
20. *Strong’s Lexicon*; BDB. [↑](#footnote-ref-29103)