

2 SAMUEL

Introduction

The division of the one book of Samuel in two parts is completely artificial; it seems that its purpose was to dedicate to David an entire book.

For the Israelites, David is the greatest king, a figure that places behind Moses and Elijah. Historically, David is a very important king: he receives a nation in disarray and in a few years he makes it the main kingdom on the strip shore; he receives a divided kingdom, and he established a unified monarchy. He gives his kingdom an administrative and religious capital of great influence and attraction; he begins a stable dynasty.

Theologically, he is the beneficiary of a new election and a promise. His election becomes a new article in the Israelite faith; together with his election is Jerusalem, as dwelling place of God; another foundational religious article. As beneficiary of the promise is almost a new patriarch, father of a dynasty, as Abraham was of a numerous people.

Through this promise David pierces the future. On this axle the messianic hope develops and grows. David was an apex, and what followed, even the salomonic splendor, resembles decadence.

David cries over the death of Saul and Jonathan

1 ¹⁷David sang a song of lamentation for Saul and his son Jonathan.

David, anointed king at Hebron

2 ¹After this, David consulted Yahweh:

—Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?

Yahweh answered him:

—Go!

Then David asked:

—Where shall I go?

He answered:

—To Hebron.

²So David went up to Hebron with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel. ³David also brought up his men with their families and they settled in the towns of Hebron.

⁴Then the men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the nation of Judah.

David learned that the men of Jabesh-Gilead had buried Saul, ⁵so he sent messengers to them with these words:

—May Yahweh bless you for you have dealt kindly with Saul, your master, and have buried him. ⁶May Yahweh show his love and fidelity to you! I, in turn, will be kind to you for having done this. ⁷Now be brave and strong for although your master Saul is dead, the people of Judah have anointed me their king.

Abner and Joab

¹¹David was their king in Hebron and he ruled over them for seven years and six months.

¹²Abner, son of Ner, and the menservants of Ishbaal, Saul's son, left Mahanaim for Gibeon.

3 ¹There was a long war between Saul's party and that of David, but David grew stronger while Saul's party grew weaker.

David, king of Israel

5 ¹All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said:

—We are your bone and flesh. ²In the past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led Israel. And Yahweh said to you, 'You shall be the shepherd of my people Israel and you shall be commander over Israel.'

Conquest of Jerusalem

⁶The king and his men set out for Jerusalem to fight the Jebusites who lived there. They said to David:

—If you try to break in here, the blind and the lame will drive you away.

(Which meant that David could not get in).

⁷Yet David captured the fortress of Zion that became the "city of David."

⁹David lived in the fortress, calling it the City of David, and proceeded to build the city around it, from the Millo and inside as well.

¹⁰And David grew more powerful, for Yahweh, the God of hosts, was with him. ¹¹Hiram, king of Tyre, sent messengers to David with cedar trees, carpenters and masons to build a house for David. ¹²David then understood that Yahweh had made him king over Israel and had exalted his reign for the sake of his people Israel.

The ark, carried to Jerusalem

6 ¹David gathered together once more all the picked men of Israel, numbering thirty thousand in all. ²Then he and all the people with him in Baala-Judah set forth to bring up from there the ark of God on which Yahweh of hosts pronounced and put his Name, he who rests on the cherubim.

¹⁴David whirled round dancing with all his heart before Yahweh, ¹⁵shouting joyfully and sounding the horn.

¹⁶As the ark of Yahweh entered the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out of the window; and when she saw King David leaping and whirling round before Yahweh, she despised him in her heart. ¹⁷They brought in the ark of Yahweh and laid it in its place in the tent which David had pitched for it. Then David offered burnt and peace offerings before Yahweh. ¹⁸Once the offerings had been made, David blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of hosts.

²⁰When David returned to bless his household, Michal, Saul's daughter, met him and said:

—How the king of Israel honored himself today, exposing himself before his servants' maids as uncouth men do! ²¹But David said to Michal:

—I did that before Yahweh who chose me instead of your father and his family, making me commander over Israel, Yahweh's people. By Yahweh's life I swear that I will dance and whirl again before him. ²²I will humble myself still more and you may look at me, but I will not be rejected by the maids you spoke about.

PROMISE AND SIN

Dynastic promise and prayer of David

7 ¹When the king had settled in his palace and Yahweh had rid him of all his surrounding enemies, ²he said to Nathan the prophet:

—Look, I live in a house of cedar but the ark of God is housed in a tent.

³Nathan replied:

—Do as it seems fit to you for Yahweh is with you.

⁴But that very night, Yahweh's word came to Nathan:

⁸Now you will tell my servant David, this is what Yahweh of hosts says:

—I took you from the pasture, from tending the sheep, to make you commander of my people Israel. ⁹I have been with you wherever you went, cutting down all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great as the name of the great ones on earth. ¹⁰I will provide a place for my people Israel and plant them that they may live there in peace. They shall no longer be harassed, nor shall wicked men oppress them as before. ¹¹From the time when I appointed judges over my people Israel it is only to you that I have given rest from all your enemies. Yahweh also tells you that he will build you a house.

¹²When the time comes for you to rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your son after you, the one born of you and I will make his reign secure. ¹³He shall build a house for my name and I will firmly establish his kingship forever. ¹⁴I will be a father to him and he shall be my son. If he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod, as men do. ¹⁵But I will not withdraw my kindness from him as I did from Saul when I removed him out of your way. ¹⁶Your house and your reign shall last forever before me, and your throne shall be forever firm.

Mepibaal, received by David

9 ¹David asked:

—Is there anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for the sake of Jonathan?

²So they called a servant of Saul, named Ziba, and brought him to David who asked:

—So you are Ziba?

He replied:

—I am your servant.

³Then the king asked him:

—Is there still someone of the house of Saul to whom I can give God's favor?

Ziba answered the king:

—A son of Jonathan whose feet are crippled still lives. ⁴The king asked him:

—Where is he?

And Ziba replied:

—He is in the house of Machir, son of Ammiel, at Lodebar. ⁵So King David sent for him and had him brought from the house of Machir, son of Ammiel, at Lodebar.

⁶When Mepibaal, son of Jonathan, son of Saul arrived, he fell on the ground and paid homage to David who said:

—Mepibaal!

He replied:

—Your servant listens.

⁷David then told him:

—Do not be afraid. I will do you a favor for the sake of your father Jonathan and give you back all the land of Saul your father. Besides, you shall always eat at my table. ⁸He bowed down and said:

—What is your servant that you should show concern for a dead dog like myself?

⁹The king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him:

—I have turned over to your master's son everything that Saul and his family possessed. ¹⁰You yourself, your sons and servants shall till the land for him and carry in the harvest so that your master's family may have food, although your master's son Mepibaal shall always eat at my table.

Ziba, who had fifteen sons and twenty servants ¹¹said to the king:

—Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands. Yet Mepibaal ate at my table like a king's son.

¹²Mepibaal had a young son named Mica; and all who lived in Ziba's house became Mepibaal's servants. ¹³But Mepibaal lived in Jerusalem for he always ate at the king's table. He was lame in both feet.

David and Bathsheba

11 ¹In the spring of that year, when kings usually set out to fight, David sent out Joab, his officers and all the Israelite troops. They slaughtered the Ammonites and attacked Rabbah, while David remained in Jerusalem.

²One afternoon, David got up from his siesta and took a walk on the roof of the royal house. From the rooftop, he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful. ³David sent to inquire about the woman, and was told:

—She is Bathsheba, daughter of Eliam and wife of Uriah, the Hittite.

⁴So David sent messengers to have her brought to him; and he had intercourse with her after she had cleansed herself after her monthly period. Then she returned to her house.

⁵As the woman saw she was with child, she sent word to David:

—I am with child.

⁶David then sent a message to Joab:

—Send me Uriah the Hittite.

So Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came, David asked him about Joab, how the people were and how the war was proceeding; ⁸then he told Uriah:

—Go down to your house and wash your feet.

Uriah left the palace and the king had a portion from his table sent to him. ⁹Uriah, however, did not go down to his house but slept by the door of the king's palace with all the servants of his lord. ¹⁰David was told that Uriah did not go down to his house, and he said to him:

—Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?

¹¹Uriah replied:

—The ark, the men of Israel and Judah are housed in tents while my lord Joab and his servants are encamped in the open country. Shall I go to my house to eat and drink there and sleep with my wife? As you live, I will not do this!

¹²So David said to Uriah:

—Remain here today also and I will dismiss you tomorrow.

Uriah therefore stayed in Jerusalem that day and the day after. ¹³David invited him to table and he ate and drank until he was drunk. When evening fell, however, he went to lie down on his couch with the guards of his lord instead of going down to his house.

¹⁴The next morning, David wrote Joab a letter to be taken by hand by Uriah, ¹⁵in which he said, "Place Uriah in the front row where the fighting is very fierce and then withdraw from him so that he may be struck down and die." ¹⁶When Joab was attacking the city, he assigned Uriah to a place which he knew was being defended by strong warriors. ¹⁷And the defenders attacked the men of Joab. Some of David's soldiers and officers were killed; Uriah the Hittite also died.

¹⁸Then Joab sent a messenger to tell David everything that had happened during the battle. ¹⁹And he said to him:

—When you have finished recounting the outcome of the battle to the king, ²⁰perhaps he will get angry and ask you, 'Why did you go so near the city to fight? Did you not know they would shoot from the wall?' ²¹Who killed Abimelech, son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who dropped a millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so close to the wall?'; then you shall say: Your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.

²²So the messenger went to tell David all that Joab instructed him. ²³So he answered the king and explained:

—These men had overcome us and pushed us in the field; then we drove them back to the entrance gate. ²⁴But the archers aimed at your guard from the top of the wall, killing some of them. Your servant Uriah the Hittite has also been killed.

²⁵David said to the messenger:

—Try to encourage Joab with this message: Do not let this thing disturb you, for the sword devours one this time and another at another time. Intensify your attacks against the city and overthrow it.

²⁶When Uriah's wife heard of the death of her husband, she mourned for him. ²⁷After her mourning was over, David had her brought to his house. She became his wife and bore him a son. But Yahweh was displeased with what David had done.

David's penance

12 ¹So Yahweh sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan went to the king and said to him:

—There were two men in a city: one was rich; the other, poor. ²The rich man had many sheep and cattle, ³but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb he had bought. He himself fed it and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and slept on his lap. It was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now a traveler came to the rich man, but he would not take from his

own flock or herd to prepare food for the traveler. Instead, he took the poor man's lamb and prepared that for his visitor.

⁵David was furious because of this man and told Nathan:

—As Yahweh lives, the man who has done this deserves death! ⁶He must return the lamb fourfold for acting like this and showing no compassion.

⁷Nathan said to David:

—You are this man! It is Yahweh, God of Israel, who speaks: 'I anointed you king over Israel and saved you from Saul's hands; ⁸I gave you your master's house and your master's wives; I also gave you the nation of Israel and Judah. But if this were not enough, I would have given you even more. ⁹Why did you despise Yahweh by doing what displeases him? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife for yourself. Yes, you killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰Now the sword will never be far from your family because you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite for yourself.

¹³David said to Nathan:

—I have sinned against Yahweh.

Nathan answered him:

—Yahweh has forgiven your sin; you shall not die.

You can read:

The repentance of King David will be portrayed in Psalm 51, attributed to David himself.

In Israel there were other Psalms composed in the style of Psalm 51, to express repentance, for example Psalm 32.