

# Expansions on Second Samuel

## Introduction

This document is somewhat overdue. That is to say, I had composed **Expansions on First Samuel** several years earlier but for some reason or another, didn't continue with Second Samuel. Perhaps having plowed through an unremitting account of murders, intrigue and infidelity to the Lord had something to do with it. Surely Second Samuel promised to be a continuation of these dreadful yet boring themes. Nevertheless, such details pertaining to human frailty, disloyalty and deception are just as relevant today as then. This is both depressing and encouraging, the two going on simultaneously: depressing in that there's nothing new under the sun, and encouraging in that despite human nature being the same now as it was then, always there is room for divine intervention. Sometimes you don't realize this until you've slogged through a text in its entirety. From that vantage point, the action of God stares you in the face.

Virtually any Introduction from other "expansion" documents as the one at hand has the same message. That is to say, all are tied in with reading the biblical text from the vantage point of *lectio divina*. That phrase has been expounded sufficiently in other places on this homepage, so no need to delve into it here. However, a brief reminder might be in order. Anyone can garner useful as well as inspiring information about Second Samuel from reliable sources. This includes anything from historical material (especially helpful for a document as the one at hand) to those aimed at extracting spiritual inspiration. At the same time this historical element proves to be a challenge in an attempt to unearth elements of a spiritual nature, especially true when murder and all sorts of conniving are involved. After wrestling with accounts of how human frailty relates with God, you come off with a better appreciation of the drama involved.

And so the approach taken here as with all the others biblical "expansion" documents is within the context of *lectio divina* or reading the biblical text in a slow, deliberate manner. Not only that, this cultivated slowness is aimed at disposing oneself to being in the presence of the Lord. *Lectio divina* involves a rather extended period of time where you alternate between savoring one word or one phrase. You put down the text to rest in it and then taking up the same one word or one phrase again. The same, of course, can apply when a historical incident is involved as with Second Samuel. If this isn't your intent, don't bother going further with the material presented here.

A note with regard to the word “expansions” in the title which as said above applies to many other documents on this homepage. In order to enhance the story line, some freedom is taken as to how it’s presented. One such example occurs at the beginning where King David questions a survivor of the battle when the Philistines had killed King Saul. It’s embellished deliberately which is obvious to the reader. The purpose, however, is evident: to shed more insight into the mind of this survivor and how he tries to pull a fast one over King David. In the meanwhile, we’re interested especially at how it ties in with the Lord.

The English translation of the Bible is **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha or Revised Standard Version** (New York, 1973). At the end of each chapter are transliterated Hebrew words that have been commented upon. This enables a quick search backward and forward for occurrences of the same word. Preferably those from Second Samuel are given followed by First Samuel because the two books are connected. Since Hebrew verbs often have different meanings, usually the one closest in meaning to the verb at hand is posted even if the same verb occurs in the next verse, that is, in another form.

## Chapter One

Essentially First and Second Samuel form a single book, the two being connected by the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated. If it weren’t for the way we designate biblical books, the difference between the two would be indistinguishable. However, the traumatic event which brings First Samuel to a climax forms its own conclusion. At the same time it begs for a resolution. The main event, of course, centers around King’s Saul death at the hand of the Philistines. More than that is involved. At the heart of this tragedy is the transfer of power from Israel’s first king Saul to David and the trials and tribulations that follow. Even more basic to this is the ever present awareness that the Lord had been miffed by Israel rejecting him and wanting a human to be king instead (cf 1Sam 8.4+). This will be noted in the text from time to time because it’s so important.

Generally the conjunctive *v-* beginning this chapter as well as a new book is translated as “and.” On some occasions it isn’t translated at all. For example, the conjunctive isn’t translated in the opening verse though prefaced to “after.” That means we’re bound to keep in mind the concluding verse of First Samuel which recounts what happened after the death of Saul and his sons at the hands of

Philistines. The last verse of that book runs (it begins with the conjunctive as well), “And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted seven days.” Now the stage is set for David to come into his own but before that he has to make a public display of mourning in order to unify Israel. After all, Saul was the very first king the people had elected against strong objections through the prophet Samuel from the Lord.

Because the importance of the conjunctive *v-* can be overlooked so easily, frequent mention of it in various forms will be made. In that way its various renderings will remain before our eyes as it serves to whisk the reader along from one incident to another. In a nutshell, it stitches events together to form a whole. That means you have to insert your own pauses. So in a certain sense the fast-paced flow of the text helped along by the conjunctive goes contrary to reading the text in the spirit of *lectio divina*. However, the overall text flows naturally, so this turns out to be no real problem. Quickly you’ll discover that the text (and that refers to the original Hebrew, not a translation) has most verses beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” or otherwise or simply left untranslated. It’s inescapable, so we might as well make sure of its role before proceeding.

As noted above, the untranslated conjunctive *v-* is prefaced to “after,” thereby enhancing the distinction between First and Second Samuel. This makes the distinction between the two books clear and simple: Second Samuel comes after First Samuel. As for the prophet Samuel himself, he’d be horrified to have his name attached to these two books. Early on he railed against Israel choosing a king, let alone the miserable fate in store for having made this choice. As it turned out, King David became not only a good successor but a model for all Israel’s monarchs. It was too late to return to having the Lord be king through the mediation of judges, for he had sanctioned the people’s choice even if it was against his own will. To grasp this ability of the Lord to comply, even against his better judgment, is one of the most under-appreciated elements in the Bible.

Despite Saul’s fate at the hands of the Philistines, David had success against another enemy of Israel, the Amalekites, for it’s called a slaughter or *nakah*. This is a verb which suggests more a striking. “For then the Lord has gone out before you to smite the army of the Philistines” [5.24]. By no means does this signal an end to any threat against Israel. The Philistines would prove themselves a formidable enemy from time to time.

David remains in Ziklag for two days possibly in order to rest, assess the still incomplete news of Saul's death or both. Then in vs. 2 (it begins with the conjunctive 'and' as if to get us going immediately and allowing David the briefest rest) an unidentified man arrived from Saul's camp. He was totally disheveled after the ignominious defeat at the hand of Israel's worst enemy, the Philistines. Approaching King David, he flung himself at his feet, doing obeisance, *shachah* fundamentally as to worship or to venerate. "And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, came to David and fell on his face and did obeisance" [9.6]. Without going further, one gets the impression that this man, most likely a soldier, took great delight at being the first to announce Saul's death to David. Despite having been through a fierce battle, he ran with full determination and vigor all the way to Ziklag, his mind filled with thoughts of everlasting fame and especially a reward.

Actually a commoner wouldn't be able to approach the king unless cleared by subordinates. Chances are that royal officials felt there wasn't something quite right about this fellow but decided he was credible enough to enter the king's presence. At this time news of the recent battle was sketchy, so any information would help. For this reason they warned the king, cautioning him to go along with playing ignorant. David knew full well he was dealing with someone who was trying to make the best of a bad situation. Besides, his disheveled appearance seemed contrived even though he had survived the battle and ran quite a distance. Although accurate about Saul being killed, he decided to exaggerate at every opportunity in order to enhance his position. The more dramatic, the better.

David wisely took up advice from his courtiers and so asked where the man had come from. His question is as direct as it can be, "Where?" He intended to put the man on the spot, to detect any wavering beneath his exaggerated demeanor. This sets the stage for a series of questions going back and forth which runs quite a long time, that is, through vs. 16.

In vs. 4 David asks a question which in English sounds a bit casual, "How did it go?" However, the Hebrew runs something like "What is the matter?" *Davar* is the noun here which is the verbal root (same spelling) meaning to speak in the sense of to give utterance. The survivor knew right away he was on the spot by reason of this question's simplicity and directness. You could almost see him coming apart, at last knowing he wasn't going to survive the current cross examination.

To make the first question worse, David adds "Tell me." Now this fellow whose only motive was fame and fortune decided the best exit strategy was to go ahead and

give a full account, doctoring it if so desired. After all, he was the sole survivor or so he hoped. If anyone else who had escaped should come on the scene, he'd be in real trouble. Seeing right through him, King David knew that soon enough he would extract the truth. And so the fellow blabbed on about soldiers having either fled or were slain, throwing in almost casually that Saul and his son Jonathan had been killed. By associating the two-soldiers along with Saul and Jonathan—the real fate of the latter just might be glossed over.

Obviously David decided to press the matter home upon hearing of the death of the two. He asked how this man knew about the actual death of Saul and Jonathan, the giveaway being the apparent confusion suggested by “many of the people also have fallen and are dead” [vs. 4]. In vs. 5 the survivor is designated as a “young man” (*nahar*), a term used again in vs. 6 who claimed to have been on Mount Gilboa by chance, this rendered by double use of the common verb *qara'* (to call, to summon), “happening happened.” Behold, he found King Saul all alone, surrounded by the Philistines who were closing in on him.” As for Jonathan, there's no mention of him as if he met his fate there or elsewhere.

According to the survivor, Saul pleaded that the young man, now identified as an Amalekite, slay him which he was reluctant to do because he was in such distress: “anguish has seized me,” the noun being *shavats* which means a coat of mail used for battle, the only occurrence in the Bible. It's an apt description, Saul standing there alone and pressed in by the ever tightening circle of Philistines who were girded with their armor. At the same time Saul still “had soul” left in him, the word being *nephesh* also used of life. So we could say that this *shavats* was not only pressing from without (i.e., the Philistines) but pressing from within (*nephesh*).

The young man complied to Saul's request but with mixed motives. Although he was reluctant to kill Saul, he did so. If he didn't, the Philistines would have done the job. Not only that, they'd make sport of him before dealing the death blow. On the other hand, the young man entertained thoughts of receiving some renown provided he could make good his escape. Upon hearing this, David might have left it at that. The clincher, however, was that the man took Saul's crown and armlet. He intended to bring to the king not so much as proof of Saul's death but in order to receive a reward. Still, it remains questionable how the young man managed to escape from such a tightening noose of hostile troops. Did he surrender? If so, how did he get away with the booty unnoticed? Did the Philistines consent to allow him to return with the booty as proof of Saul's death? Such questions ran through David's mind who had been skeptical from the outset.

In vs. 11 King David and his entourage rent their garments, mourned, wept and fasted until evening over the death of Saul and Jonathan as well as for the Israelites lost in battle. This was a formal gesture where everyone had to comply...or else. Certainly some harbored thoughts of relief that their arch enemy was dead. Others wished the opposite and now found themselves stuck with a new king who might do them in. As for David putting on a public display of mourning, he could afford it since his grasp on power was pretty much assured.

At the end of this display of mourning, he asked where the young man had come from. The answer? An Amalekite, son of a sojourner or *ger* which also means a stranger, a non-Israelite, and the only use of this word in Second Samuel. Note the irony. In vs. 8 he identifies himself as such to Saul and does the same now to David. As for Saul, recall his sparing of Agag the Amalekite king, which had brought disaster upon his own head. "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king" [1Sam 15.23]. These words uttered by Samuel must have haunted him for the rest of his life. Now surrounded by the Philistines Saul must have recalled that incident before being put to the sword at the hand of the young Amalekite.

As vs. 11 puts it, the lamentation over Saul lasted until evening while the young man was forced to stand there and take it all in. Finally—and this must have been at evening by torch light—David asks him a question impossible to answer. He lambasted him for not being afraid to destroy the Lord's anointed (*shachat*, cf. vs. 2). Without further ado, David orders one of his bodyguards to slay the young man. While life was ebbing from him, the king leaned over, saying that his very mouth had born testimony against himself for having slain Saul. Chances are—and this goes unrecorded—that King David regretted such an impulsive action. After all, the Amalekite had carried out Saul's wishes. Not only that, he returned his crown and armlet without keeping it for himself. And so David rationalized the incident by keeping up appearances, if you will. All during Saul's persecution of him David maintained respect. To cave in on this now, especially publically, would have put him in danger from those in his court.

Vs. 17 continues with King David lamenting over Saul and Jonathan. Although vs. 12 mentions the slain Israelites, he seems more concerned with these two which could have miffed some bystanders who had lost loved ones. Again, it was part of a show, despising Saul under his breath while loving his son as a brother. Although vs. 11 says that this mourning lasted only until evening, probably the verse at hand has in mind

an extended period of national mourning which was not uncommon. The verb *qun* is used as to lament with the noun *qynah* derived from it (only reference in Second Samuel). As for the verb, cf. 3.33: “And the king lamented for Abner.”

The lamentation at hand runs through the rest of Chapter One which David commands to be taught (*lamad*). Instead of the expected *qynah*, the Hebrew the text has *qasheth*, the two being found in 22.35: “He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.” A footnote in the NIV says that “Perhaps David taught his men to sing this lament while they practiced with the bow (Israel’s most common weapon) as a motivation to master the weapon thoroughly so they would not experience a similar defeat.” As for this “bow,” it’s contained in the Book of Jashar, a collection of poems from various sources (cf. Jos 10.13).

Vs. 19 is the actual beginning of David’s lament. Nevertheless, it makes you wonder if he is sincere as noted above. Also it should be kept in mind that as king, David had to think first of the people after having been defeated by their arch enemy, the Philistines. David calls Saul “Israel’s glory,” addressing the nation directly. The noun is *tsevy* which also means beauty as well as a gazelle: “Now Asahel was a swift of foot as a wild gazelle” [2.18]. And so this gazelle, if you will, had been slain after which David exclaims how the mighty have fallen, *gibor* found next in vs. 21.

The calamity isn’t to be recounted in the Philistine cities of Gath or Ashkelon though in all likelihood it was. Should this happen, the Philistines women described as daughters would rejoice and exult not unlike those of Israel at David’s earlier victory: “When David returned from slaying the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing” [1Sam 18.6]. Most likely such young women played that role regardless of which culture they belonged.

In vs. 21 David utters a curse of sorts on the mountains of Gilboa or where Saul and Jonathan had been slain (note the plural ‘mountains’ as if to make it more memorable), that no dew or rain fall upon them as well as upsurgings of the deep which in Hebrew reads literally “fields of offerings.” *Terumah* is the noun for the latter, also as a gift and found first in Ex 25.2: “From every man whose heart makes him willing you shall receive the offering for me.” Also upon Gilboa the shield of the mighty had been defiled, that is, Saul’s, *gahal* meaning to loathe, to cast away. “And my soul will abhor you” [Lev 26.30]. David points out that this shield hadn’t been anointed with oil, that is, prepared properly for battle so as to better repel any spears or the like cast at it.

Despite the desperate situation in which Jonathan and Saul found themselves, both managed to have slain a sufficient amount of Philistines before they too fell. This information may have come from the young survivor or from others who later trickled in and gave their reports. Following this, David broke into an exclamation as to how beloved and lovely were the two (cf. vs. 23). Two verbs are used, *'ahav* and *nahym*: the former is the common verb to love whereas the latter connoting pleasantness, both being found in Sg 7.6: “How fair and pleasant are you, O loved one, delectable maiden!” Also for the latter, cf. 23.1. While these words seem to come from the heart, more likely they pertain to Jonathan to whom David was very close.

When David says that father and son had been close to each other—perhaps true early on but later no so—obviously he knows that such was not the case but maintains it for the sake of political stability. Nevertheless, he likens them in vs. 23 to being swifter than eagles and stronger than lions. Most likely David also saw that to tear down Israel’s first king would be doing the nation a disservice. The people chose him over the Lord’s strong objection, a choice that would remain indelible forever.

In vs. 24 David bids the daughters of Israel to weep over (the preposition *'el-* or literally ‘to’) Saul, perhaps the same who had rejoiced over David as noted with regard to vs. 19 concerning the quote coming from 1Sam 18.6. He reminds them that King Saul had clothed them with rich garments, etc., most likely signifying that he had taken them into his royal court as concubines or the like.

In vs. 25 David utters an exclamation about Jonathan with whom he was especially close despite him being son of Saul. If it were otherwise, he would have done in Saul a long time ago and not calling Saul the Lord’s anointed...true objectively but not the way he comported himself. David uses the plural of *gibor* (cf. vs. 19) out of respect not so much for Saul but for Jonathan. He goes on to express his distress, calling Jonathan a brother, *tsarar* being the verb which connotes a squeezing under pressure. “I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great” [24.14]. As a brother, Jonathan had shown himself to be exceptional pleasant, *naham* (cf. vs. 22) with the adverb *me’od* which connotes excessiveness. In fact, Jonathan’s love and devotion surpassed that of any woman, the preposition *min* or “from” being used.

And so this lament intended for public consumption comes to a close in vs. 27 with David again expressing how the mighty have fallen along with weapons used for battle. As for those listening, there’s no response. No one at court or elsewhere would question their king even if they had doubts as to his sincerity.

1) nakah, 2) shachah, 4) davar, 6) nahar, qara', 9) shavats, nephesh, 13) ger, 14) shachat, 17) qun, qynah, 18) lamad, qesheth, 19) tsevy, gibor, 21) terumah, gahal, 22) 'ahav, nahym, 25) gibor, 26) tsarar, naham, me'od

## Chapter Two

Like the previous chapter, this new one begins “after this” with the untranslated conjunctive *v-* prefaced to *'achar* (after). It serves to reveal the fast-paced action at hand after David had just completed his paeon with regard to Saul, Jonathan and of course, the Israelites who had been slain on Mount Gilboa. In light of the tragic life and demise of Israel's first king, of primary importance for David is consolidating his own authority. David knew that he'd have to deal with Saul's supporters, no mean feat, for they viewed David as some kind of usurper using his friendship with Jonathan to take control. Now David would see if his praise of Saul and Jonathan might have any effect on the people as a whole. As we see later, it didn't even register with the former king's supporters who turned a deaf ear.

David now inquired of the Lord, the common verb *sha'al* (to ask) with the preposition *b-*, literally “ask in the Lord.” Nothing is said of how this is done though a footnote in the **RSV** refers to using the Urim and Thummim noted in 1Sam 14.3 & 41 and 30.7-8. Another way of putting this is the ephod or a garment as used by the priest and described in some detail in Exodus. By so clothing himself in a special garment, David was more disposed to *sha'al*. As for this *sha'al*, however, overtly it's a political one (whether or not to go into any of the cities of Judah), the situation being ripe for becoming a separate kingdom.

The Lord responds positively and without hesitation as indicated by the conjunctive *v-* translated now as “and.” After asking more specifically which city, the Lord mentions Hebron where Abram (as he was known then) had built an altar and later the place of Sarah's death (cf. Gn 13.18 & 23.2). Obviously David was acquainted with the historical significance of Hebron, an indication that indeed his *sha'al* “in” the Lord was genuine. In addition to his three wives, David brought his entire entourage after which the inhabitants of Judah anointed David their king. As for how this was done, we have no details, but it seemed to have taken place right away.

In vs. 4 David was told that the inhabitants of a town called Jabesh-gilead had buried Saul, the gallant men of that place having performed the deed (cf. 1Sam 31.12). The phrase “gallant men” reads literally “all man (of) strength,” *chyl* being found in 2.7 as

a way of describing Saul. Upon hearing this, David sent messengers praising their good deed, still maintaining his public affection for Saul. This would have to continue for some time in order to keep their good graces. He called their burial of Saul a form of loyalty or *chesed*, a well-known word difficult to translate which is not unlike the Greek *agape*. It's found in the next verse and then in 3.8 with a different sense: "This day I keep showing loyalty to the house of Saul your father." In return for this generosity in vs. 6 again David wishes them *chesed* along with faithfulness or *'emeth* also as truth. "And now, O Lord God, you are God and your words are true (i.e., truth) [7.28]."

In addition to wishing the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead both *chesed* and *'emeth*, David now throws in his support by doing good, the common adjective *tov*. I.e., it's a direct, personal response for their *davar* which here is translated as "thing" (cf. 1.4) and fundamentally means word-as-expression, akin to *logos*. After expressing his sentiment, David comes right out and says that although Saul was their lord, the house of Judah has anointed him as successor.

David faces his first real trial with Abner who had been commander of Saul's army. Apparently he wasn't with Saul on Mount Gilboa, so had escaped the slaughter there. Upon hearing of David's ascent to the throne, he snatched one of Saul's surviving sons named Ish-bosheth and brought him to a town in Gilead where he proclaimed him as king. The name itself is revealing in light of Saul having found displeasure with the Lord, Man of Shame. Ish-bosheth is listed as being forty years old which isn't likely, and began his reign over Israel for two years. Thus during that time the two kings were pretty much at a tense standoff, everyone wondering who would win out. Again, both sides couldn't help but recall when Samuel warned them about the dangers of a human king instead of the Lord. Despite this, nobody could turn back the clock but now must live with the results.

Another character comes on the scene who is allied with King David, Joab. Upon hearing that Abner brought Saul's only surviving son to Gibeon, he went to meet him there by a pool. Nothing is said whether or not David had sent him. Regardless, vs. 12 depicts the situation in pretty dramatic form: both sides are lined up on each side of the pool, a tense face-off, to be sure. In order to resolve this situation with what amounts to one army facing the other, the two leaders, both formidable military men in their own right, decided upon a contest.

Abner is the one who offers this proposal instead of the two sides battling it out which would be an absolute disaster, especially after Saul's defeat. Therefore he proposes that some young men from each opposing army "play before us," the verb

*sachaq* basically as to laugh, usually in contempt as well as to make sport of. For another use of *sachaq*, cf. 6.5: “And David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the Lord with all their might.” Abner and Joab decided upon twelve contestants, if you will, to slug it out. At first the nature of this apparent game isn’t clear nor is there any deciding factor to determine the outcome. The first thing that comes to mind is something akin to a gladiatorial contest.

Each side decided to pick out their best men. Once done, they went at it, again without any real guidelines or rules to follow. However, all knew that much more was at stake. The winner would either be the supports of Saul or of David. It seems that at the very beginning of this *sachaq* quickly it turned into a military style engagement. And the result? An all-out slaughter where it seemed that everyone was killed. One can just imagine the horror experienced by both sides as they watched it devolve so quickly. Then someone came up with the apt description of the place which translated from the Hebrew runs, “field of the sword-edges.”

Even though the precise outcome isn’t given except the words “so they fell down together” [vs. 16], Asahel, son of Zeruiah took to flight, he being known as swift as a wild gazelle, *qal*. “A restive young camel interlacing her tracks” [Jer 2.23]. This fellow is one of three sons of Zeruiah (sister or half-sister of David) who apparently decided to take off at once and inform King David. His sudden departure must have astonished everyone, for no one had given him permission to do this. Without hesitation, Abner decided to pursue Asahel. That meant leaving his soldiers behind and at the mercy of Joab’s forces though thankfully no further conflict came of it.

While both men were running as quickly as they could—Abner knowing full well Asahel’s destination—the former tried to persuade the latter to stop but to no avail. During this pursuit Abner threatened to kill Asahel though he’d prefer not to because it would incite a full scale war with King David. Because Asahel persisted, Abner had no choice but to slay him which is described in graphic detail in vs. 23. Apparently the two armies decided to catch up and came across Asahel’s body on the ground. Note that the text says they “stood still” or *hamad* which simply means to stand but more as they came to a grinding halt.

After having paused for a moment in an attempt to assess what happened and what to do next, both Joab and Abishai (i.e., Solomon’s side) decided to run after Abner. Abner managed to reach the Benjaminites who formed a protective shield around him. From this position of safety upon a hill Abner throws out three rhetorical questions...taunts...as to why the two sides have to engage in such a bloody feud.

Fortunately Abner and Joab came to their senses and decided to stop fighting. However, the bad blood between the two commanders remained, waiting to be resolved another day.

After this limited conflict had ceased, Joab removed the body of Asahel and gave it a proper burial. And so Chapter Two comes to an uneasy conclusion, hinting at more conflict to come between supporters of Saul and David.

1) sha'al, 5) chesed, 6) 'emeth, tov, davar, 7) chyl, 14) sachaq, 18) qal, 23) hamad

### Chapter Three

This new chapter begins with the untranslated conjunctive *v-* to show as it does often the close connection between what had just occurred and what is about to occur. Unfortunately the connection at hand is grim, a protracted war between the house of Saul and the house of David. The verb describing this conflict is *'arukah* which has two other references, Job 11.9 and Jer 29.28, the latter being given here: "Your exile will be long." Note too "house" (*beyth*) implying that everyone associated with both Saul and David had a hand in this drawn-out civil war.

The Philistines who had defeated Saul not long ago took special delight as they watched on, hoping this struggle continue to be *'arukah* so they could move in and take over with minimum fuss. Also note how the contrast between the two houses are expressed through the common verb *halak* (to go, to come). The verb *chazaq* (to be strong) applies to David whereas the adjective *dal* (usually as poor) applies to Saul or more accurately to "the house of Saul" whereas *beyth* isn't used with regard to David. It's almost as though the going-strong of David overtook the going-poor of Saul's house so thoroughly that *beyth* doesn't have to apply to David anymore. Such is the playing out of the *'arukah* just described.

Vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "and," another quick transition from the conflict between the two houses working toward resolution in favor of King David. That is to say, the next few verses mention the birth of his six sons which will provide him with a successor. As we learn later, none turned out to be such. The conjunctive (translated as 'while') beginning vs. 6 serves to make a transition to a continuation of the war at hand. Although Saul's house is described as "going poor" in vs. 1, vs. 6 has Abner becoming strong (*chazaq* again) in Saul's house. More accurately, the verb is in the hithpael, causative action, "making himself strong"

which surely must involve ruthless means to achieve that end. This didn't come as a surprise to David, for Abner had pursued, overtook and killed Asahel in 2.23. In other words, one of the two houses will have to win out over the other.

The next few verses (6-11) relate a conflict between the surviving son of Saul, Ish-bosheth, and Abner over a concubine belonging to his father. The former accused the latter over having had relations with this woman named Rizpah. Such an act was viewed as an attempt to usurp the kingship to which Abner responded angrily at having been accused falsely, *havon* being the noun for fault which also can mean iniquity. "On me be the guilt" [14.9]. In other words, Abner was indignant at having preserved Ish-bosheth from falling into David's hands. To this Ish-bosheth could give no answer.

In vs. 12 Abner sees the protracted conflict between the two houses turning toward David's favor. In light of this plus his recent confrontation with Ish-bosheth, it became clear that he had been on the losing side. Therefore Abner makes overtures to David at Hebron as to whom the land belongs, *'erets* implying the residents who reside there which in this instance is Hebron. Abner's question is more rhetorical as to who will rule over it, he or David. Abner then boldly demands making a covenant with him, the verb *karath* (literally to cut) and the noun *beryth* having religious overtones, both found in the next verse. In essence this covenant seems like it's one way in David's favor, for Abner will bring "all Israel" over to him, the verb being *savav*, also as to turn, to go around. "Go around to their rear and come upon them opposite the balsam trees" [5.23].

Abner must have been overjoyed at David's direct response, *tov* or the simple adjective good, vs. 13 beginning with the conjunctive *v-* where "and" infers his immediate agreement. However, it was tempered quickly by the condition that Abner won't see David's face unless he brings along Saul's daughter Michal whom the king intends to make his wife. In this way he'll solidify his sway over anything and anyone formerly under the deceased king's control. As for the use of face, it occurs a second time which infers (royal) presence, a not-so-subtle hint that David is fully in charge.

As soon as Abner heard this request, he was dismayed, for it put him at a disadvantage, thinking he could pull a quick one over David. David then (*v-* beginning vs. 14) sends messenger to Ish-bosheth asking...rather demanding...Michal. After all, he had betrothed (*'arash*) her for the price of one hundred foreskins of the Philistines. This reference is to when Saul laid down a next-to-impossible condition

of marriage in order to have David killed by the Philistines. Thus a reminder of that incident was quite embarrassing (for a reference to this plot, cf. 1Sam 18.25).

Ish-bosheth complied at once, snatching Michal from her lawful husband who tagged along with Abner and her in custody for some distance but was dismissed summarily by being told to go home. Chances are he joined any remaining anti-David elements to seek revenge. As for Michal herself, nothing is said of how she felt. Some of it is intimated later on when she sees David virtually naked while he was leaping for joy when the ark of the Lord was being brought to Jerusalem. As a result of this uneasy marriage which prompted Michal to belittle David, she was unable to bear children (cf. 6.20-23).

And so in vs. 17 Abner realizes he has backed himself into a corner and decides to consult the elders of Israel, the noun *davar* being used along with the preposition *him-* or with. This renders the text literally as “word Abner with elders,” quite appropriate for the desperate situation at hand. It’s as though this *davar* has a life of its own, governing the proceedings of the meeting. With regard to “for some time,” literally it runs “also yesterday also three (days),” keeping in mind that the number three can be taken as the day before yesterday. In other words, Abner realized that the Israelites were in touch with representatives of David if not David himself concerning the issue of him being their king. The verb *baqash* implies touching, as if the seeking were a kind of groping about though not necessarily in a blind fashion. “Behold, my own son seeks my life” [16.11].

In vs. 18 “now” prefaced with the untranslated conjunctive *v-* serves to introduce Abner’s impatience with the Israelites. He wants them to bring an end to their *baqash* recognizing that the Lord himself has promised it to him, the common verb *hasah* (to do, to make) being used. Abner admits and does so essentially to save his own skin that the Lord will save his people through David, the verb being *yashah* (verbal root of the proper name Jesus). Note use of “hand” with regard to David and Philistines which implies a control which is both firm and direct. He inserts this image within what appears to be a quote from the Lord himself though it hasn’t been used earlier. This could be a ploy Abner uses to exaggerate a sentiment felt among the people to put greater distance between him and his former master, Saul. As for David becoming king, it’s recorded later in Chapter Five. Vs. 2 intimates the Lord’s preference for David by saying that while under Saul, he’s destined to be shepherd of his people.

In vs. 19 Abner continues his self-saving action next by consulting with the Benjaminites, Saul's tribe, this followed by David. Although we have no account of their response, we can infer that it won't turn out well for Abner.

Vs. 20 shifts from Abner consulting the Israelites and Benjaminites to actually meeting David at Hebron. He doesn't come alone but in the company of some twenty men, a kind of bodyguard. Though Abner still was wary, to their delight King David offers a feast or *mishtah* which implies a drinking party. "(Nabal) was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king" [1Sam 25.36]. Abner took the initiative (most likely after having had some wine) by offering to gather all Israel for David. The verb is *qavats* found in 2.30 but not noted there and fundamentally means to lead by the hand. A result of this *qavats* is the cutting of a covenant, *karath* and *beryth* as in vs. 12, not simply an agreement but a solemn pledge that can't be broken. This appealed to David, pleasing to his heart, the noun *nephesh* (cf. 1.9, alternately as soul) and the verb '*avah* "And David said longingly" [23.15]. No details are given except the seemingly cordial "Abner went in peace" (*shalom*; cf. vs. 22).

As soon as this meeting broke up (again, a *mishtah*, an implied drinking bout; cf. vs. 20), Joab returned from a raid with some troops, having obtained a considerable amount of booty. Keep in mind that the last contact between Joab and Abner was at the pool of Gideon (cf. 2.13, etc). In fact, Joab may have gotten word that his old nemesis was in town and rushed back to confront him. Vs. 22 as well as vs. 23 stress that he had gone in *shalom*, that setting the stage for a confrontation between the two men. As soon as Joab heard about the meeting, at once he approached David, vs. 24 beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then." This anticipates the blunt question, "What have done?" Joab claimed that Abner had deceived David, calling him "son of Ner" for added insult, the verb being *patah* fundamentally as to spread out as well as to persuade. "But they flattered him with their mouths" [Ps 78.36]. In other words, his supposed intent was to get as much information (*yadah*) he could about David and his plans, this verb implying intimate knowledge (cf. 2.26 but noted there).

We have no indication of what transpired between the two men though Joab's presence with "all the army" noted in vs. 23 remained a kind of veiled threat waiting in the wings just in case things didn't go his way. David, of course, picked up on this. As soon as Joab left, he sent messengers to Abner, telling him to come to a certain place without David's knowledge. Finally the two met in the middle (*tok*) of the city gate at Hebron. This implies a small, concealed spot within a fortified wall slightly away from the flow of traffic in and out. In other words, it was a perfect place to

commit a murder since there was plenty of commotion in the semi-darkness from people, wagons and animals. It was here that Joab spoke with Abner in private, *shely* being the only noun in the Bible.

Now was the perfect opportunity for Joab to take vengeance upon Abner whom he struck down, vs. 27 saying it is for “the blood of Asahel his brother.” David got word of this and took pains to exclaim his innocence before the Lord, careful to include his kingdom, *naqy* being the adjective as in 14.9: “Let the king and his throne be guiltless.” This provided an opportunity to eliminate Joab who posed a genuine threat, far more than Abner, of usurping his power. He really lays it on thick, cursing Joab’s entire house in vs. 29 with a slew of colorful details.

Joab slew Abner within the city gate of Hebron which is why in vs. 31 David spoke with Joab right away, telling him to put on sackcloth and mourn for his crime, *saphad* (cf. 1.12 but not noted there), this verb fundamentally as to beat the breast. David confronted Joab not alone but with others who formed a funeral procession. Here you can’t help but notice the frequent use of the conjunctive *v-*, indicative of the fast-paced action describing what essentially was a murder. David put on quite a public show, following the bier and mourning with the people.

In vss. 33-34 David offers a brief lament, *qun* being the verb as in vs. 33. It begins as a kind of rhetorical lament, of why Abner had died as a fool dies, *nabal* being an adjective also meaning foolish. “And as for you, you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel” [13.13]. In the second part of the same lamentation David exclaims that Abner’s limbs weren’t bound and has fallen as one does before someone who is wicked. The noun *havlah* is used, literally as “children of iniquity.” “And violent men shall afflict them no more as formerly” [7.10]. No question that this didn’t go unnoticed by Joab. However, revenge wouldn’t be for some time in the future, King David’s son Solomon following through on it (cf. 1Kg 3.34). The reason for such a long delay? Joab was far too powerful and could be put to use for now or until he was no longer needed.

Apparently David hadn’t eaten or was fasting, so much so that “all the people” came to persuade him to take nourishment, the verb being *barah* fundamentally as to cut asunder, to choose. “Pray let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand” [13.6]. Despite this heartfelt plea from the entire nation, David declines, having taken an oath. He wishes that God will do such and such a thing until sunset. This impressed everyone, the verb *nakar* also as to recognize in this form. “And Saul knew David’s voice” [1Sam 26.17], this leading to

pleasing them, the verb *yataw* also as to find favor. “Whatever seems best to you I will do” [18.4].

As a result of David’s public showing of grief for Abner, everyone (note: ‘all the people and Israel’) concur (*yadah*, cf. vs. 25) that he spoke from the heart. This compelled him to tell his servants around him that a great prince (*sar*: also a commander; cf. 2.8 but not noted there) and man had fallen, putting this as a rhetorical question. It was important for those close to the king to see his sincerity because they’re with him every day. If they detected any hint of feigning, it would leak out at once.

What really puts to rest any doubt about King David is the last verse of this chapter. There he claims himself to be weak or *rak* which also means to be tender, genuine term of endearment. “Solomon, my son, is young and tender” [1Chron 22.5]. Rarely do you hear such an admission from a king, something Saul never would have done. Then he claims that the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for him, *qasheh* (cf. 2.17 but not noted there) being the opposite of *rak*. Reference is to Joab and his associates, a way dropping a strong hint as to who is at fault with regard to the death of Abner.

The second sentence of vs. 38 ends with an exclamation which must have echoed in Joab’s ears though he wasn’t present. That is to say, David invokes the Lord to requite the evildoer in accord with his wickedness. However, that will have to wait until his son Solomon is on the throne. The immediate question for David is how to use Joab while containing his power. Note the singular here compared with the plural “sons of Zeruiah.” The two words used together (*hasah* (cf. vs. 18) and *raha*) equals evildoer or the one who does *raha*, the noun derived from the verbal root at hand.

1) ‘arukah, beyth, halak, chazaq, dal, 6) chazaq, 8) havon, 12) ‘erets, karath, beryth, savav, 13) tov, 14) ‘arash, 17) davar, baqash, 18) hasah, yashah, 20) mishtah, 21) qavats, nephesh, ‘avah, shalom, 25) patah, yadah, 27) tok, shely, 28) naqy, 31) saphad, 33) qun, nabal, 34) havlah, 35) barah, 36) nakar, yataw, 37) yadah, sar, 38) rak, hasah, raha

## Chapter Four

This is a rather short chapter of twelve verses dealing with the murder of Ishbosheth beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “when.” In other words, we have another instance of the close connection between events and the quick-paced

action at hand. What makes this all the more poignant is the clear identification of Ish-bosheth as “Saul’s son,” the ill-fated first king of Israel. It seems anyone associated with him signals a less than desirable end. Ish-bosheth got word that Abner, his sole protector, was dead which melted his courage, the text reading literally “(their) hand fell slack” or *raphah* which also means to weaken. “It is enough; now stay your hand” [24.16].

If that weren’t bad enough, “all Israel” joined with him in this universal dismay, *bahel* also as to be terrified. “And the woman came to Saul, and when she saw that he was terrified” [1Sam 28.21]. The reason for such dread? An impending civil war would engulf everyone with no one ending up being leader. Furthermore, it would give a green light to the Philistines to step in and take advantage of such internal discord.

The next few verses give details about two military men named Baanah and Rechab who apparently were associates and formed a bodyguard of sorts for Ish-bosheth. As for Jonathan who had perished with his father on Mount Gilboa (i.e., brother of Ish-bosheth), his son Mephibosheth bears a name not unlike Ish-bosheth (Man of Shame), from the Mouth of Shame. Surely these two names don’t bode well for each man or for anyone associated with them. As for the former, when five years of age he was dropped by his nurse upon hearing of Saul’s death. As a result of that accident, he had to hobble around most likely on crutches or with a cane or two while dependent on others for some of his needs.

It got into the minds of Baanah and Rechab to slay the last living son of Saul whom they deemed was a continuous threat to David. If they could pull it off, they’d be rewarded or so they thought. Unfortunately they failed to learn from the fate of the young man who was with King Saul on Mount Gilboa. Anyway, both conspired to slay Ish-bosheth at a time when most people were asleep, the heat of the day. It was preferable to night when things were a little too quiet. Thus high noon or thereabouts was ideal. Besides, there was sufficient ambient noise and activity so as not to draw attention.

The two managed to work their way into the bedroom and behead Ish-bosheth, after which they rushed off to King David to show it as a trophy. Like that young man who survived on Mount Gilboa, they are in for a surprise. Quickly their eagerness and greed got the better of them. David lashed out as soon as they presented the head which they identify as Saul’s son and David’s enemy who had been seeking his life (*nepshesh*, also as soul; cf. 3.21). If this weren’t bad enough, Baanah and Rechab dared

to say that the Lord himself has avenged David, literally “has given avengements to” him, the noun being *neqamah*. The two rub it in by adding that it happened “this day” with regard to Saul and his sons. “The God who gave me vengeance and brought down peoples under me” [22.48].

One gets a clear sense that Baanah and Rechab regretted their words to King David before they finished speaking. It became evident almost at once in vs. 9 with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but,” David’s response to the two supposed heroes. In vs. 9 he told them of how the Lord redeemed his *nephesh* (cf. vs. 8), *padah* also as to set loose, to set free. “Israel whom God went to redeem to be his people” [7.23]. This personal example David uses to throw back on the two supposed heroes, recounting the incident just noted about the survivor from Mount Gilboa expecting a reward.

A bit later in vs. 10 David continues with telling how upon hearing of Saul’s death, he slew the messenger without delay. In fact, David is particularly outraged at Baanah and Rechab having sneaked into the bedroom of Ish-bosheth at high noon when he was most vulnerable. Such persons (and David refrains from even mentioning their names) are wicked and responsible for having slain a righteous man. In other words, he presents a contrast between *rashah* and *tsadyq*. References: “But the wicked shall be cut off in darkness” 1Sam 2.9. “When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God” [23.3]. Next David recounts how the two slew Ish-bosheth alone in his bed, the details of which must have astounded them. In other words, David knew plenty about their nefarious action almost the same time it was happening.

David concludes his lengthy rhetorical question to Baanah and Rechab with the intent not just to destroy them but to do so “from the earth.” The verb is *bahar*, fundamentally as to consume with fire. “Glowing coals flamed forth from him” [22.9]. Next David carried out this *bahar* first by killing them and then by cutting off their hands and feet, hanging them for public display by the pool at Hebron. Finally he buried the head of Ish-bosheth in Abner’s tomb. Obviously this was a very public and dramatic way of dealing with anyone who dared violate the memory of Saul.

Many people must have been impressed by such devotion to Saul who so ruthlessly sought David’s life. Others, however, thought it a political stunt of sorts. By feigning loyalty to his predecessor, Israel’s first king, David despised Saul but acted the way he did in order to secure his more immediate succession as well as to provide for the future. Also as noted earlier, memory of the Lord’s sharp rebuke to the prophet

Samuel continued to echo in the ears of everyone: “for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them” [1Sam 8.7].

1) raphah, bahel, 8) nephesh, neqamah, padah, 11) rashah, tsadyq, 11) bahar

## Chapter Five

This chapter begins predictably with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which whisks us along from David’s revenge on the two men who slew Ish-bosheth to his consolidation of rule over Israel and Judah. Although David never would admit it publically, he must have been glad Ish-bosheth is now off the scene, the last remaining threat from former supporters of Saul.

Note that vs. 1 has all the tribes of Israel coming to David at Hebron to present their submission to his rule. It seems they did so voluntarily, realizing at last that they have no other choice. They presented themselves almost as a bride to her bridegroom, bone and flesh being the image to demonstrate their unity. As for Saul whose memory still lingers on after his tragic (yet fortunate for David) death in battle, the tribes or rather their representatives acknowledged that David had led Israel to victory under Saul’s command. For example, “David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; so that Saul set him over the men of war” [1Sam 18.5]. In other words, David had a proven track record and was well qualified for the job.

“All Israel” or all their representatives next acknowledge that the Lord chose David to be their shepherd as well as prince, *nagyd* for the latter which is a general term for any position of leadership. “To appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord” [6.21]. Reference is to when the Lord spoke to Samuel: “Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided for myself a king among his sons” [1Sam 16.1]. Samuel obeys and anoints David as king, albeit secretly, while Saul is still on the throne. Again, awareness that the Lord was strongly against the people’s demand for a king must have been on the minds of everyone even though he conceded reluctantly. The people chose to be on a slippery slope and knew it, Saul obviously being the first example right out of the gate.

In vs. 3 we have the elders of Israel assembling at Hebron, this having taken place after “all Israel” was there. The gathering took place almost at once as indicated by the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so.” Everyone wanted to get the matter at hand

settled because they faced the very real threat of invasion by the Philistines who must have been watching these events very closely. Chances are they had plenty of spies on the ground who, in turn, informed their handlers. The elders decided upon cutting a covenant, *karath* and *beryth* (cf. 3.12), the details not given but most importantly, before the Lord. And so at Hebron the elders anointed David king. Compare this public anointing with the “private” one of the previous chapter while Saul was still in charge.

This section concludes with David reigning over both Hebron and from Jerusalem a total of forty years which a footnote in the **RSV** calls almost humorously “a reasonably long time.” Also forty years implies a kind of perfection as well as completion, something for which David’s successors can aim even if their reigns don’t come up to that exact number.

Without missing a beat, David took some of his armed men to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, this indicated by the conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 6 translated as “and.” As for the Jebusites, they’re mentioned as occupying Jerusalem and even at the time of Joshua are considered a formidable foe not being able to be removed easily. “But the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the people of Judah could not drive out” [Jos 16.63]. Their strength continued from that time until the present when they felt confident enough to taunt David about capturing their city. However, this confidence proved empty, for vs. 7 says that David took it fairly quickly and renamed Jerusalem after himself.

Actually David held out a challenge. Anyone who managed to enter the city through a water shaft would smite what he called disparagingly the lame and the blind. And so the account of this important victory ends with David “becoming greater and greater” which reads literally as “he is going to go great.” The common verb *halak* (cf. 3.1) used twice conveys not so much a sudden but a steady rise in power. However, vs. 12 is clear to say that this double *halak*, if you will, rests in the fact that the Lord God of hosts or *tsava’* (cf. 3.23 but not noted there) was with him implying divine armies, most likely angels.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 11 translated as “and” suggests as it usually does a quick transition from one event to another. After having secured Jerusalem, King Hiram of Tyre took the initiative to be on good terms with David because Israel controlled inland trade routes to his seaside kingdom. Actually friendship between the two nations will continue after David’s death and the ascension of his son Solomon to the throne when it was solidified. Although all this sounds fine, Hiram

was looking out for his personal interests. Both David and Solomon knew this and if things went south, they could put the screws to Tyre.

Although David has been anointed king twice (Samuel and the elders being the first) as noted earlier, vs. 12 recounts that he perceived clearly it was done at the hands of the Lord, the verb being *yadah* (cf. 3.37) usually associated with intimate knowledge. An important part of this *yadah*—actually that which made him so beloved—was that he exalted his kingdom (the common verb *nasa'*, to raise up) for the benefit of his people, not for personal gain. Saul doesn't seem to have conducted himself in that way, so to have David put his people first won him permanent endearment in the hearts of all.

Vs. 13 similarly begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and,” leading to David at once taking more wives and concubines, a way of consolidating his power and increasing his prestige, not uncommon at the time. From these wives David had an additional eleven children, Solomon being the only one who will end up inheriting the throne, and his mother was Bathsheba. Perhaps behind this idea of having concubines and multiple wives was that a number of heirs would be available in an age when infant mortality was high. Although lust may have had a part, it isn't presented as such. Later Solomon would prove to be the exception, outdoing his father with countless women surrounding him.

Vs. 17 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “when” to show that the dreaded Philistines who had defeated King Saul on Mount Gilboa remained a deadly threat. Since that tragedy until now they were biding their time, watching and waiting to see how David would conduct himself in comparison with his predecessor. Obviously Israel's defeat continued to haunt David, for at any time he could suffer the same fate as Saul. Note the use of *shamah*, the common verb to hear or to listen. That is to say, the Philistines must have had spies planted within Israel keeping tabs on what was going on. Upon *shamah* that David had been anointed king (that is, the public one noted above), not some but “all the Philistines” engaged in a search (*baqash*, cf. 3.17) for David. This phrase gives the impression that the Philistines flooded in for a frantic search. However, David *shamah* of it, *shamah* being similar to that of the Philistines in that he too must have planted agents to keep a tab on them. David made good his escape to a stronghold or *matsodah* (cf. vs. 9) which isn't identified. One gets the impression that it must have been close by, a refuge for emergencies like the one at hand. Another way of depicting the invading Philistines is that they spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim, *natash* (cf. vs. 22) also as to let go, this place being just southwest of Jerusalem. Now King David inquired of

the Lord, *sha'al* (cf. 2.1) used with the preposition *b-*, literally as “inquired in the Lord.” His *sha'al* consists of two questions. The first is top on the list, whether or not to go up against the Philistines. The second is whether or not the Lord will give them into his hands. The response is immediate and certainly brief enough through the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.”

Right afterwards we have another conjunctive beginning vs. 20, David’s defeat of the Philistines. Those in his service couldn’t help but marvel at the confidence their king manifested through his *sha'al*. It must have reminded them of the familiarity Moses had enjoyed with the Lord. Although there’s no record of David informing his troops, we can say that he let them in on what the Lord had said in order to bolster their confidence. A brief mention of the Philistines’ defeat is given after which David named the place of his stunning victory Baal-perazim. This translates as Lord of Breaking Through from the verb *paras* meaning to break through or to disperse. “And David was angry because the Lord had broken forth upon Uzzah” [6.8]. Rightly so does he liken this *paras* to a flood which burst through, destroying everything in its path.

An added boon to this victory is that the Philistines had abandoned their idols on the battlefield either in haste or perhaps even in disgust for not having given them victory. *Hatsav* is the noun whose verbal root means to toil in the sense of to suffer. “And they cut off his (Saul) head...to carry the good news to their idols and to the people” [1Sam 31.9]. Note the similar sound of *hatsav* with the verb *hazav*, to abandon. “And the king left ten concubines to keep the house” [15.16]. Interestingly David did not destroy these idols then and there but allowed his men to carry them home, possibly to put on display. This was a big mistake, for it perked undue curiosity in them, a fact which will plague Israel throughout her history.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 22 translated as “and” is indicative of a problem that will trouble not only David but his successor for a long time to come. That is to say, the Philistines regrouped after their defeat and as in the case of vs. 18, spread themselves out (*natash*) in the same valley of Rephaim. It’s as though their earlier defeat never had happened, swelling in like water to fill the valley. With a repeat of this threat, David is compelled to make another *sha'al* (cf. vs. 19) or request “in (*b-*) the Lord.” Instead of a frontal assault, the Lord advises an attack from the rear. A give-away as to bestirring themselves is the sound of marching from the balsam trees, *tshadah* also as a going in the sense of making steps. It has two other references, 1Chron 14.15 and Is 20, the former being quoted here, similar to the one at hand: “And

when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then go out to battle.” This, of course, proved to be successful.

Although David had two consecutive victories, he was worried about the resiliency of the Philistines, knowing that they would return time and time again. Everyone shared the same fear and were holding their collective breath. At this point all David could hope for is to keep them at bay until his grip on power was consolidated. As we know, that proved to be a tenuous situation for later kings as well.

2) nagyd, 3) karath, beryth, 10) halak, tsava’, 12) yadah, nasa’, 17) shamah, baqash, 18) natash, 19) matsodah, 18) natash, 19) sha’al, 20) paras, 21) hatsav, hazav, 22) natash, 23) sha’al, 24) tshadah

## Chapter Six

A new chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “again” and intensified, if you will, by the verb *yasaph* (cf. 5.22 but not noted there) translated here as to gather. This verb implies continuous movement in the sense of increasing as well as repetition, the occasion being right after David defeated the Philistines. Now he assembles a massive contingent of not just thirty thousand troops but those which have been chosen or *bachar*. “He (Joab) chose some of the picked men of Israel and arrayed them against the Syrians” [10.9]. Note that *bachar* is used here twice. This means something serious is afoot. It’s conveyed by the words *qum* and *halak* (cf. 3,21 but not noted there and 5.10), to arise and to go.

Judging by the display of military might, at first glance you’d think that David was about to engage the Philistines once more. However, they are assembled in order to bring up the ark of the Lord from a place called Baale-judah, another name for Kiriath-jearim where the ark had been placed for safe keeping. For reference to this, cf. 1Sam 6.21+. Note that earlier the Philistines had captured the ark and kept it until they were afflicted with tumors which compelled them to return it to the Israelites. Now with Jerusalem as David’s city, it was only proper for this central figure of Israel’s worship to be brought there. Again, the constant threat of attack from the Philistines necessitated a large force. Nobody was going to take the chance of the ark falling into enemy hands once again.

As for the ark or ‘*aron*, this is the first time it’s mentioned in Second Samuel, the last being 1Sam 14.18. Vs. 2 says the ark is called by the name of the Lord of hosts (*tsava’*,

cf. 5.3) enthroned upon the cherubim, the verb *yashav* (cf. 5.6 but not noted there) meaning to sit or to remain. As for cherubim (*cheruv*), the only other reference in this book is 22.11: “He rode on a cherub and flew.” The first mention of this heavenly being is Gn 3.24 who guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden.

In vs. 3 “they” (whether or not this refers to priests isn’t specified) carried the ark from the house of Abinadab who is mentioned for the first time. Perhaps he had been a Levite, for it’s likely that the ark would have been entrusted to a member of this priestly tribe. While it was in his possession, one wonders what Abinadab was doing with it; the impression is that the ark was stored almost as we’d put something in a garage and forget about it. Then some twenty years later, King Saul removed the ark before doing battle with the Philistines but failed to consult it prior to battle. Despite his victory, it contributed to the Lord rejecting Saul. From there the ark disappeared from the biblical account until King David’s time. In other words, this interval is filled with some mystery as to exactly what had been going on and who knew about it apart from any immediate guardians.

Now the Israelites made a new cart for transporting the ark in a new cart or *hagalah*, the same noun used by the Philistines to transport it along with the golden mice and tumors. Abinadab had two sons who assisted in transporting the new cart, their choice showing how much David respected their roles in protecting this most holy object. However, it must have been somewhat difficult for them and their father to see the ark leave their protection. The transport—keep in mind the formidable number thirty-thousand choice troops—made its way to Jerusalem celebrating along the way. As vs. 5 says, King David and the Israelites were doing this (*sachaq*, cf. 2.14) “with all their might,” these words lacking in the Hebrew text. Instead, it reads literally “in all the wood of firs.” The same text includes several musical instruments which must have caught the Philistines’ attention who at the point were powerless to intervene. They didn’t want a repeat of being afflicted with tumors (or worse) as noted above.

Transporting the ark was no easy matter despite the huge amount of people involved. Vs. 6 has them coming to Nacon’s threshing floor along the way at which point Uzzah stretched out to stead the ark because the oxen had stumbled, a natural reflex on his part. This verse, as well as several related to it, begin with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” Here it’s especially important to show the quick-paced action and impact of Uzzah’s death upon everyone. For example, as soon as the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out, the Lord’s anger was kindled against him, the preposition *b-* being used, almost for emphasis, literally as “in him.” ‘*Aph* or wrath

also means nose, implying heavy breathing through it, often used with *charah* also as to burn. Both are found in 12.5: “Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man.”

Vs. 7 has two other conjunctives (‘and’), again highlighting the high drama unfolding. The first pertains to God striking down (*nakah*, cf. 1.1) Uzzah, the adjective *shalev* being used which means careless or at ease and noted by the RSV as “uncertain.” The second conjunctive introduces the fact that this gesture resulted in Uzzah’s immediate death. *Sham* or “there” is found twice: “smote him there” and “he died there” for further emphasis, that the Lord acted too severely. This prompted David to anger, the verb *charah* as in the last verse, as if to counter the Lord’s anger toward unfortunate Uzzah. He calls this sudden outburst a breaking forth or *perets* which forms part of the name Baal-perazim in vs. 21, Lord of Breaking Through. The same applies to Perez-uzzah, name of where this incident occurred. Note too that the preposition *b-* or “in” is used with regard to *perets*, literally as “breach in Uzzah.” The place is named such “to this day,” a kind of lasting rebuke to the Lord which shows that David enjoyed a familial relationship as did Moses, that being noted in the previous chapter.

Despite such familiarity, in vs. 9 (the conjunctive *v-*), David expresses misgiving of his sudden outburst, namely, from “that day” he feared the Lord, the common verb *yare’*. Then he uttered a rhetorical question, more an exclamation, as to how the ark of the Lord can come to him. As for the procession, it was still at Nacon’s threshing floor meaning that the large contingent had some distance to travel. At this juncture everyone was wondering what would happen if the ark should slip and fall. Should they just leave it on the ground? Would the Lord himself raise it back on the cart? Two questions best to leave unanswered after Uzzah’s death.

In light of this swift alteration between familiarity and dread, David stood back for a moment, and wondered how the Lord would treat the people once the ark is in the city. Note that Jerusalem is called “city of David” which made him consider at least to himself that his identification with it might alienate the Lord even further. So by way of precaution he brought the ark to the house of Obed-edom. Nothing is said of this man, but he must have been trusted by the king, for the ark was parked there for three months during which the Lord had blessed his house.

Obed-edom and his family must have been terrified to have the ark in their midst after the incident with Uzzah. Most likely they kept it as far away as possible from their living quarters and under lock and key lest anyone might happen upon it. So

during this three month interval which must have caused a lot of people to wonder what was going on, David experienced some doubt whether this was the right move or not. In fact, he was waiting almost like the prophet Jonah outside Nineveh for the Lord to blast Obed-edom and his family off the face of the earth. If not, he could bring the ark to Jerusalem.

In vs. 12 a messenger informs David that the Lord had blessed the house of Obed-edom as a result of keeping the ark of the Lord. Without a doubt, David kept a close eye on the situation—we can assume on a daily basis—and received information as to its condition, this for three long months. Nothing, however, is said about the blessings received. One blessing we can be sure about is indirect, that no one of Obed-edom’s household met the same fate as Uzzah.

And so David himself went to bring the ark of God to his city with rejoicing, *simcah*. “The women came out of all the cities of Israel to meet King Saul with timbrels, with songs of joy and with instruments of music” [1Sam 18.6]. Those bearing the ark stopped apparently a mere six paces outside the house of Obed-edom. It was there that David made a sacrificial offering, most likely to appease the Lord, that he refrain from pulling off another temper tantrum as he had done with Uzzah. Once at the designated place, David danced with all his might, the verb being *karar* which has one other biblical reference in vs. 16. *Hoz* is the noun as in 1Sam 2.10: “He will give strength to his king.” The only clothing David had on at the time was a linen *ephod* described in 1Sam 2.18 as a light ceremonial garment, basically a kind of underwear. “Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy girded with a linen ephod.”

This outburst of spontaneous joy continues for the rest of what essentially is a ceremonial journey, advancing with shouting and sound of the horn, *teruhah* and *shophar*. As for the former, cf. 1Sam4.5: “When the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout so that the earth resounded.” As for the latter, cf. 2.28 but not noted there. Only one *shophar* is recorded as being used in the situation at hand which enhanced the voices of people singing. Obviously walking and singing can be difficult to pull off and in this instance, it would put the ark in jeopardy of falling and creating another tragedy. However, the situation now is different. Everyone is more focused to get the ark in its designated resting place which was so close. Then and only then could they breathe a sigh of relief, Uzzah being on the top of everyone’s mind.

Finally the procession reached Jerusalem. But before it’s final destination, the procession attracted plenty of attention some distance from the city. After all, vs. 1

says that it consists of thirty thousand “chosen men of Israel” plus others who must have joined in en route. Although Jerusalem was the final destination, most participants had a mixture of sadness and joy. Sadness because despite the dangers involved, the ark would be stashed away out of sight, even more so on a permanent basis once David builds a temple. Joy, of course, that the Lord could now extend his blessings on everyone involved in this massive undertaking.

Saul’s daughter Michal was among the crowd who saw David leaping and dancing before the Lord, *pazaz* and *karar*, which he must have been doing ever since leaving the house of Obed-edom. However, this time he was in such a state of ecstasy that he was unaware of the distance traveled nor what people thought of him. As for the verb *pazaz*, it’s noted in vs. 14 whereas *harar* has one other biblical reference, Gn 49:24: “his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Michal’s immediate response was one of disgust tinged most likely with anger fueled by the death of her father Saul. Surely she recalled David’s triumphal entrance after having slain Goliath with the words of women echoing in her ears: “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands” [1Sam 18.7]. Quickly this memory coupled with David virtually naked before everyone made her despise him all the more, *bazah*. If this weren’t enough, it was in her heart or *lev*. As for the verb, cf. 12.9: “Why have you despised the word of the Lord to do what is evil in his sight?” As for the noun, cf. 7.21: “Because of your promise and according to your own heart.”

Vs. 17 has the procession approaching its final resting place, a tent which David had pre-arranged. Note the preposition *b-* (in) which is used twice: “in its place” or *maqom* and “in the midst (*tok*, cf. 3.27) of the tent” or *ohel*, the two being synonymous. The preposition *b-* thus gives the sense of stability and permanence. As for the tent, no description is given except that it symbolizes a temporary, almost make-shift arrangement while awaiting construction of a temple. Nevertheless, the tent is an apt symbol for the ark having accompanied Israel throughout the Sinai wilderness for some forty years as well as throughout the vicissitudes of subduing Canaan.

The next step is for David to make burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord, *holah* and *shelem* (cf. vs. 18 for both). The last time for this was an offering of an ox and fatling in vs. 13 or just outside the house of Obed-edom. It’s only fitting that David should bless (*barak*, cf. vs. 12 but not noted there) the people in the name of the Lord of hosts or *tsava’* (cf. vs. 2), this term significant insofar as he had in mind the thirty thousand “chosen men of Israel” who mirror this heavenly *tsava’* on earth. To

top it all off, David distributes a memorial of sorts consisting of food for the sacrifices he had performed. In this way they could bring home more than a memento; the food was a kind of sacrament meant to be consumed.

Vs. 20 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and,” this being one among many here to show the fast-paced action involving transfer of the ark of the Lord. After having done all this, King David blesses his own household, *beyth* (cf. 3.1) including not his relatives but courtiers and all the rest associated with keeping things in smooth running order. At this point Michal arrived shortly after having looked out the window at David, these two “outs” indicative of what she thought of the situation without having to add anything further. She had a chance now, barely able to control her anger, to speak with David. Michal blurts out sarcastically that the king honored himself before his servants’ maids, *kavad* (cf. vs. 22) also meaning to glorify. She then angrily said that he was no better than a vulgar person disrobing himself without shame.

David responds at once in a cool, collected way that Michal indeed is correct about having exposed himself before the Lord and who had chosen him over her father Saul. Indeed, David has a perfect right to act accordingly, *sachaq* (cf. vs. 5) or to make merry before the Lord. Not only does he take pride in having exposed himself, he will make himself even more contemptible, *qalal* also as to curse. “And as he (Shimei) came he cursed continually” [16.5]. Furthermore, David says that although Michal will hold him in disdain, he’ll be held in honor by his maids. Note two verbs opposite in meaning, *shaphal* and *kavad* (cf. vs. 20), to fall down and to be honored. As for the former, cf. 22.28: “But your eyes are upon the haughty to bring them down.”

Having uttered these harsh words, Chapter Six concludes with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” For Michal’s presumption, she’s condemned not to have children for the rest of her life. Nothing is said of divine intervention in this regard, but it’s a benefit for David that she remain barren so as not to beget a son who later might challenge his rule or that of his successor.

1) yasaph, bachar, qum, halak, 2) ‘aron, tsava’, yashav, cheruv, 3) hagalah, 5) sachaq, 7) ‘aph, charah, nakah, shalev, 8) charah, perets, 9) yare’, 12) simchah, 14) karar, hoz, ephod, 15) teruhah, shophar, 16) pazaz, karar, bazah, lev, 17) maqom, tok, ‘ohel, holah, shelem, 18) barak, tsava’, 20) beyth, 20) kavad, 21) sachaq, 22) qalal, shaphal, kavad

## Chapter Seven

A new chapter beginning with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as “when.” We find David dwelling in his house some time after having installed the ark of the Lord in what he hopes will be a temporary setting. So here he was, not just living better off than his subjects but with the ark in a tent. The contrast couldn’t be greater. Actually, it should be the other way around. This weighed upon David, especially since vs. 1 says that the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies, *nuach* also as to set down. This is repeated in vs. 11: “And I will give you rest from all your enemies.”

After gazing somewhat furtively at the ark of the Lord from his house day after day, David decides to take action, especially in gratitude for this *nuach* which applies chiefly to the Philistines. Wisely he consults Nathan the prophet who comes out of nowhere and shortly is destined to have a profound impact upon David. His summoning intimates some connection between the two or if not, David had heard of his good reputation. David says with some guilt that he’s living in a house of cedar most likely provided by King Hiram (cf. 5.11). Nearby is the tent under which is the ark, the two staring at each other day and night. Nathan agrees at once that David should follow his heart’s (*lev*, cf. 6.16) inclination because the Lord is with him.

From vs. 4 (the conjunctive here translates as ‘but’) through vs. 16 the Lord speaks with Nathan at considerable length concerning David’s situation. The Lord is pleased with David feeling guilty, for the same night the *davar* (cf. 3.17) of the Lord came to Nathan and gives him a mouthful. Nathan is to inform David of this *davar*, prefacing his remarks with a rhetorical question tinged with an air of sharpness. The gist of it is to question David’s intent, to see if he’s serious about building a house.

In vs. 6 the Lord lays it out on the line. He hasn’t dwelt in a house since he brought Israel from Egypt, these words suggesting that earlier he did live in a house. Not true, of course, but is a way of provoking David. As for an ark or ‘*aron* (cf 6.2), the first mention is Gn 25.10+ or on Mount Sinai. Before that the Lord had manifested himself in a pillar and cloud; prior to that, nothing concrete. He simply had no earthly residence. Furthermore, the Lord had to put up with moving from place to place for forty years during which time he never spoke a *davar* (cf. vs. 4) but kept quiet.

The *davar* here is directed to what the **RSV** has as “judges” but in actuality are tribes (*shevet*, cf. 5.1 but not noted there) consisting of twelve. Such *shevet* (judges) are designated to shepherd Israel, *rahah*. Interestingly this is the only instance of the

verb in Second Samuel; you'd think it would be more frequent with David commonly viewed as shepherd of Israel. "Now your shepherds have been with us" [1Sam 26.7]. The Lord isn't exactly complaining about moving from place to place. Actually he's more concerned with Israel's constant tendency to disobey him such as worshiping false gods, etc. So after having vented himself, the Lord asks pointedly as to why David hadn't built him a house of cedar. That's hitting home because David himself had made this observation. The Lord simply is corroborating it.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated and serves to move the conversation along quickly. The Lord bids Nathan to speak to David whom he calls his servant or *heved* as in 3.18 (not noted there). Nathan is to convey what the Lord had done for him and for Israel, this continuing through vs. 16. It's a kind of recap, if you will, starting with the Lord taking David from tending sheep to being prince literally "upon (*hal-*) his people," *nagyd* (cf. 5.2). Next the Lord speaks of how he had been with him wherever he went, this including the trials endured under King Saul. While not noted, it's implied by reference to having cut off (*karath*, cf. 5.3) enemies which, of course, include the dreaded Philistines.

In vs. 9 (the conjunctive *v-* as 'and') the Lord continues with promising David a great name like those of the earth. He must be saying this tongue-in-cheek, remembering Israel's rejection of him as king, these words echoing 1Sam 8.5: "Now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations." This incident has been referred to several times thus far, perhaps Israel's most fateful decision in her history. One wonders what would have happened if the people remained with its judges who were more accessible.

In vs. 10, again the conjunctive *v-* as "and," the Lord informing Nathan of words that will thrill David. That is to say, he will appoint a place (*sum* and *maqom*, cf. 8.14 and 6.17) not just for Israel but for "my people Israel." Synonymous with this *sum* is *natah* or planting them which implies stability and permanence. "The vineyard which your right hand has planted" [Ps 80.15].

The goal of both *sum* and *natah*? That Israel may dwell in its own place, *shakan* with the preposition *tachat*, literally "under him." Here *tachat* is not unlike the two verbs *sum* and *natah* (to appoint and to plant) by reason of their rootedness. For a reference to the former with a similar sentiment: "And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst" [Ex 25.8]. Once this has been accomplished, Israel won't suffer being disturbed, *ragaz* also as to tremble. "And the king (David) was deeply moved" [18.33].

Vs. 10 concludes with two key words David was looking for: *hod* and *ri'shon*, “no more” and “as formerly,” literally as “in the beginning.” *Hod* pertains to *ragaz*...that Israel won't be shaken...and *ri'shon*...that Israel won't be afflicted by violent men. The literal reading runs as “sons of iniquity to its (Israel's) humiliation,” the two word being the noun *havlah* (cf. 3.34) and the verb *hanah* which has multiply renditions as in 1.16 (to testify but not noted there). This is a welcome contrast to the earlier days when Israel's grip on the land was more tenuous chiefly due to their perennial foe, the Philistines.

Vs. 11 continues as an extended sentence from the previous verse joined by the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” forming a full sentence. In the first part the Lord refers back to the good old days before Israel demanded a king or when judges governed the people, *shaphat* being a verb. “Oh that I (Absalom) were judge in the land” [15.4]! Nevertheless, the Lord promises rest from Israel's enemies, *nuach* (cf. vs. 1).

The second sentence in vs. 11 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “moreover” and says simply that the Lord will make a house for David. This can be taken two ways, literally as a temple and as an established line of succession.

A further boon for King David—one can imagine Nathan hearing all this, actually dying to tell him—is that when David passes away, the Lord will raise up offspring whose kingdom he will establish, *kun* also as to prepare. “And the house of your servant David will be established before you” [vs. 26]. As for the offspring at hand, the impression is that David will beget more children although 5.14-15 speaks of them, including Solomon, who turned out to be the next king.

Vs. 13 speaks of David's son who will succeed him but at this juncture isn't named. However, it's clear that he will build a house (compare with the double meaning of house in vs. 15) for the Lord. Not only that, the Lord will establish his throne, the second use of *kun*, the first with regard to kingdom in the previous verse. Next the Lord claims that he will be his father and he his son, something he hadn't said to David before. Note the use of the preposition *l-* (to) showing the intimacy of this relationship: “to him,” “to father” and literally “to me to son.” Essential here is that the Lord will discipline his son which echos Prov 13.24: “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”

Compare the verb *yakach* or to chasten with the noun *mosar* of Proverbs. The former also means to convict, to rebuke whereas the latter deals with correction as well as admonition. For an example of *yakach*, cf. Prov 19.25: “Reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.” Such *yakach* applies to the son when he commits iniquity, *havah* also as to act perversely. “Let not my lord...remember how your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem” [19.19]. In the verse at hand, such chastening is done with the rod and stripes, the latter being *negah* which also means a plague. The plague of his own heart” [1Kg 8.38].

Vs. 15 is a continuation of the previous verse with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but” which shows that despite discipline shown toward the son, the Lord won’t remove his love or *chesed* (cf. 2.5). He had done this before—not with David—but with Saul, Israel’s first king. Although *chesed* isn’t mentioned, the exact point of it’s removal is 1Sam 15 9 when Saul (note that the people are thrown in as well) spared Agag, king of the Amalekites as well as possessions belonging to them. In a sense, this is a reminder that no matter how willing the Lord is to support David and his successors, it all comes back to Israel’s request for a king. Saul is the prime example and in a way, an exemplar for future kings. In the verse at hand, note the two uses of the same verb, *sur* for to take from and put away.

The lengthy address of the Lord to the prophet Nathan concludes in vs. 16 with the promise that both David’s house and kingdom...his private and public heritage...will be made sure before the Lord, the verb ‘*aman* fundamentally as to believe, to be faithful. Note it’s reference is 4.4 as another meaning, nurse. What makes this “forever” so appealing is that it’s “before me.” And so Nathan spoke (*davar*) all these *davar* (cf. vs. 4) to David which is in accord with the vision just experienced, *chazon* clearly applying to something that has been seen. This is pretty much repeated in 1Chron 17.15: “In accordance with all these words and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.” As for the manner of how this *chazon* took place, chances are it had been through the medium of a dream because vs. 4 says that the *davar* of the Lord came to Nathan at night.

Vs. 18 has no account of the prophet Nathan communicating the *davar* of the Lord to David, it beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then.” Obviously Nathan couldn’t sleep after this and sought out the king at first light when they shared a few excited words about his *davar*. However, David’s first response is telling. He went in and sat before the Lord. As for this going in and sitting, it’s that tent to shelter the ark of the Lord. In other words, essentially it was outdoors so any passerby could see him. While in there and perhaps visible to many in the general vicinity, David

exclaimed his unworthiness before the Lord for bringing him to where he is now. The rest of Chapter Seven deals with what amounts to a prayer. David continues by saying that all the Lord had done thus far is insignificant. Also the Lord has spoken (*davar*) of David's house as continuing for the future. David puts this divine solicitude literally as "this is the law (*torah*) for man." the only reference to *torah* in both First and Second Samuel.

In vs. 20 David contrasts his *davar* to the Lord for knowledge of his condition, *yadah* (cf. 5.12). In other words, the two can't be compared. Nevertheless, David as the Lord's servant knows (*yadah*) what had been promised (*davar*, noun; cf. vs. 17) and done according to this divine heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 3). David continues by lavishly extolling the Lord, going on about how the Lord had been solicitous for Israel up until now. Perhaps Nathan got curious, entered the tent discreetly and saw David praying so fervently, in his own way joining in. After all, this was a feather in his cap as prophet and ensured future royal favor.

In vs. 25 David shifts gears, imploring the Lord to continue with his favor. Here we have three instances of *davar*; two as verb and one as noun (i.e., promise). Afterwards David continues extolling the Lord for having given him such a revelation which is expressed through the noun 'ozen and the verb *galah*, literally as "revealed an ear." For another sense of *galah*, cf. 6.20: "Uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids."

As for *galah*, it pertains to the Lord's promise of building a house for David which, of course, is tied in with ensuring his successors to be on the throne. Then he acknowledges that he as the Lord's servant has found courage (*lev*, cf. vs. 20) to have offered this prayer, *palal* implying to intercede. "As she (Hannah) continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth" [1Sam 1.12].

In vs. 28 David winds down his prayer begun in vs. 18 in response to Nathan's prophecy. He recognizes that the Lord's *davar* are true and has *davar* (promised) all that he had said. Finally, he implores the Lord to bless the house to continue forever before him. Note that all this emphasis upon a house is taking place not within a house but within a tent. David continues to realize that he has a physical house and is bothered by the fact that the Lord doesn't. However, that will have to wait until his son Solomon is on the throne. More pressing matters are at hand, namely, dealing with the Philistines.

1) nuach, 3) lev, 4) davar, 6) 'aron (not mentioned here), 7) davar, shevet, rahah, 8) heved, nagyd, 9) karath, 10) sum, maqom, natah, shakan, tachat, ragaz, havlah, hanah, 11) shaphat, nuach, 12) kun, 13) kun, 14) yakach, negah, 15) chesed, sur, 16) 'aman, 17) davar, chazon, 19) torah, 20) yadah, davar, lev, 25) davar, 27) galah, lev, palal, 28) davar

## Chapter Eight

The conjunctive *v-* translated as “after” immediately launches us into a summary of King David’s wars with the Philistines followed by another, albeit brief, concerning the administration of his kingdom. As noted earlier, the Philistines are a recurring problem not just for David but before him coming to the throne as well as long afterwards. In sum they were a constant menace to Israel’s stability. With this in mind, the two similar sounding verbs *nakah* and *kanah* (to defeat and to subdue) are used deliberately and hopefully, that is to say, in the hope that this threat is eliminated once and for all. For the former, cf. 6.7; the latter fundamentally means to submit, to bow the knee and is found in a similar reference, 1Chron 18.1. Nothing, however, reported as to David’s response.

Basically vss. 3-14 recount David’s success over Moab, the king of Zobah and the Syrians. When king Toi of Hamath got wind of all this, wisely he took the initiative to make peace by sending his son Joram to David loaded with gifts. To honor such generosity is to David’s credit, for he could have wiped out these people as he had done with others.

In vs. 13 King David continues waging war against any and all threats, this time the Edomites. This victory is singled out by having won himself a name, the verb *hasah* (cf. 3.38) and *shem* reading literally to make a name.” This victory over eighteen thousand seems to have cemented David as a military leader, the last conflict mentioned in this chapter...and by no means the last, period.

From vs. 15 to the end of this relatively short, uninteresting chapter, we have King David turning attention to governing Israel. To us it may be uninteresting but for David and Israel it was significant in that without such military victories, the kingdom of Israel would have perished quickly. Note that vs. 15 is careful to point out that David administered justice and equity to all his people. The verb *malak* or to reign is used with the two nouns *mishpat* and *tsadaqah* (cf. 15.2 and 19.28). Both

demonstrate the even-handedness David showed which was to be a model for all succeeding monarchs.

1) nakah, kanah, 13) hasah, shem, 15), malak, mishpat, tsadaqah

## Chapter Nine

A new chapter which for the most part means another conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” as it introduces the shortest one of Second Samuel, thirteen verses. It’s a continuation of the *mishpat* and *tsadaqah* of 8.15, justice and equity which David shows to all the people, this including any surviving members of Saul’s family. He asks if anyone from that family is still alive in order to show kindness or *chesed* (cf. 7.15) not so much for the sake of Saul but his dear friend, Jonathan.

It turns out that Saul had a servant named Ziba who got wind of this request and presented himself to David as a servant or *heved* (cf. 7.7), having done this on his own initiative with a view of looking out for himself. In other words, Ziba heard about David extending *mishpat* and *tsadaqah* which signaled it was safe to reveal himself as Saul’s *heved*. And so David asks this man whether or not Saul had any surviving family member to which he responded that in actuality there is one...Jonathan’s son...who isn’t named until vs. 6.

This seems to come as a surprise to David; you’d think his experience with Saul and especially Jonathan would have made his name known. Then Ziba discloses the reason why this mystery child has remained unknown. He is crippled in his feet. Actually the identity of this child is mentioned in 4.4 plus the circumstances which had made him crippled from a young age. From then until the present he hasn’t been mentioned but now his name comes to the fore, Mephibosheth who apparently had been living in fear of his life. He believed that if David discovered his identity, he’d slay him on the spot.

After Ziba informs David of Mephibosheth’s whereabouts, without hesitation the king sends for him and does obeisance (*shachah*, cf. 1.2) by falling on his face. Apparently David didn’t inform him through Ziba that he’d be welcomed. That meant Mephibosheth could have thought that he’d be put to death on the spot, so better to show obeisance in the hope that David would spare him. It would come as no surprise that Mephibosheth exaggerated his crippled condition so as to gain David’s sympathy, especially as he made his entrance into the court.

Right away David said Mephibosheth's name in a loud voice, a way of reassuring him that he had nothing to fear. Actually, David extends *chesed* in accord with his promise in vs. 1. This takes on the concrete form of restoring Saul's lands and for Mephibosheth to eat at the king's table. While being a grand gesture of *chesed*, it had the intent of keeping an eye on him each day so as to avoid a conspiracy. The response, of course, is inevitable. Mephibosheth is profoundly grateful, abasing himself further as a dead dog. Surely both he and David knew they were sincere yet at the same time playing a game.

In vs. 9 King David takes Ziba aside, promising him safety but with the condition (already stated) that Mephibosheth shall eat at the royal table. Thus the two would have a far less a chance to engage in a conspiracy. And so this incident ends on a happy note for both Ziba and Mephibosheth as well as a son called Mica born to the latter. Chapter Nine concludes with the fact that Mephibosheth was lame in both feet, something already known, and can be a way of saying that he knows his place. Both he and Ziba will appear later in this book which makes it all the more interesting. For now enough has been said.

1) *chesed*, 2) *heved*, 6) *shachah*, 7) *chesed*

## Chapter Ten

The conjunctive *v-* begins this new chapter translated as "and" which points to a whole series of battles waged by King David against surrounding enemies intent upon both his and Israel's destruction. The opening words "after this" backs this up, showing the unrelenting pressure of native tribes, some of who summon help from afar such as the Syrians. Apparently the relationship between David and Nahash, king of the Ammoties, was on a stable basis like the one with King Hiram of Tyre but deteriorated after the latter's death. For a parallel account, refer to Chapter Nineteen of First Chronicles. The **RSV** has a footnote saying "There is no record of the covenant or agreement between David and Nahash." Initially David thought he could continue the same cordial relationship with his son Hanun by dealing loyally with him, *chesed* (cf. 9.7) showing his tender side. *Chesed* also is applied to Nahash's relationship with David.

Judging by the tone of vs 3, Hanun might have been open to share the same *chesed* as his father. However, some Ammonite princes (*sar*, cf. 3.37) thought otherwise and

approached their lord when a delegation from Israel was making its way to him. They describe them disparagingly as comforters, *nacham* also meaning to repent as well as to take vengeance. “Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba” [12.24]. Thus in the eyes of the princes the Israelites are pretending to honor the memory of Nahash, *kavad* (cf. 6.22) obviously presented in an obsequious way. The real intent is for King David to use his delegation to assess the current situation which is put in terms of searching out their city as well as spying on it with a view to its overthrow. The three verbs are *chaqar*, *ragal* and *haphak* all found in 1Chron 19.3. The first alternatively means to explore; the second implies going up and down or treading with one’s feet, the noun *regel* or foot being derived from it; the third implies a turning.

And so Hanun took the advise of his princes and humiliated the Israelites after which he sent them home. The delegation returned, wondering among themselves how to present this rejection to King David who was expecting a favorable response on the basis of his relationship with Nahash. David didn’t meet them personally but sent messengers who found them greatly ashamed, *kalam* with the adverb *me’od* (cf. 1.26) implying excessiveness. “And the people stole into the city that day as people steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle” [19.3]. Then David bade the delegation to remain at Jericho until their beards, a symbol of honor, grew back after Hanun had cut them off. Apparently he said no more, but the men knew that their king wouldn’t treat this insult lightly.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated and is indicative of the decisive action taken by David. Word quickly got back to the Ammonites about having insulted the delegation of Israelites. Nothing further is said of Hanun, as though he passed off the scene, implying that his fate had been sealed. Not unsurprisingly, the Ammonites became odious to David, the verb *ba’sh* being perfect to describe the situation, for it means to stink. Actually they didn’t have to send spies to check out David’s response; the stink of his anger, if you will, was so strong it wafted over to them, thus ensuring their utter destruction.

The Ammonites took action out of fear as soon as the *ba’ash* had reached them, actually striking fear into their hearts. Since they weren’t strong enough to go up against the Israelites under David’s leadership, they hired some Syrians and others totaling over thirty-thousand troops. David obviously kept a sharp eye on these developments, being informed by a network of spies. He put Joab in charge of his army who soon was surrounded both in front and behind. Knowing that the Syrians were the most formidable as well as largest of the combined forces, he chose the best

of his soldiers to array against them. Then he made arrangements for a quick deployment of troops to safeguard against the shifting strength of enemy forces.

Once so drawn up, like any good commander, Joab encouraged his men to be of good courage which is rendered literally as “be steadfast and we shall encourage ourselves,” two uses of the verb *chazaq* (cf. 3.6). Next Joab urged them to “play the man for our people” or literally “for the sake of our people and for the sake of our cities.” Then he throws in the Lord whom he hope will do what is good in his own eyes. Armed with these words, Joab made good his attack and won a victory. David remained in Jerusalem keeping the closest eye possible on developments, for the very fate of Israel hung in the balance.

Despite the victory, the Syrians proved to be tougher than expected. The re-gathered, summoned more men. This prompted David to take action by assembling “all Israel” after which they won a resounding defeat causing the enemy to sue for peace, *shalam* (verbal root for *shalom*) as in 3.39 but not noted there. This, of course, made the Syrians wary of having made an alliance with the Ammonites which forebode well for Israel that two of her major foes were divided.

2) *chesed*, 3) *sar*, *nacham*, *kavad*, *chaqar*, *ragal*, *haphak*, 5) *kalam*, *me’od*, 6) *ba’ash*, 12) *chazaq*, 19) *shalam*

## Chapter Eleven

Another new chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated. Here we have a temporal gap between David’s defeat of the Syrians in the pay of the Ammonites and the spring. Although the time of year isn’t mentioned in the last chapter, perhaps it was the spring before the one at hand. *Teshuvah* is the noun for this season which fundamentally means a return, implying the time after winter and the planting of crops. “Then he (Samuel) would come back to Ramah, for his home was there” [1Sam 7.17]. The way *teshuvah* is presented in the verse at hand has a poetic air about it, heralding a yearly ritual of going to war familiar to any and all monarchs. In other words, doing battle was an activity as regular as planting crops. Kings go out for war, intentional or otherwise, after the winter while during the interim they are busy preparing for it.

This spring David sends Joab and “all Israel” against the Ammonites a second time and ravage them, *shachat* (cf. 1.14) also as to act wickedly as well as besieging Rabbah.

A footnote in the NIV identifies this as the capitol of the Ammonites inferred in 10.14, “entered the city.” Although the verse at hand says that David sent Joab on this expedition, vs. 1 concludes ominously with the sentence, “But (the conjunctive *v-*) David remained at Jerusalem.” This sets the stage for his murder of Uriah and taking his wife Bathsheba.

Vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *v-*, “It happened” literally as “he is becoming” or “he is.” Such wording introduces a series of unfortunate events which will change King David’s life forever and have ramifications for the entire nation of Israel. Also use of the conjunctive stands out during this sordid episode as it whisks us along through events, one cascading upon the other. Note the time, late afternoon or “time of evening.” Apparently in this cool of the evening David was in the habit of walking on the roof of his house, a time when it’s difficult to see but light enough to discern the outlines of people and objects.

During one of these walks David saw a woman bathing described as “very beautiful” rendered literally as “exceedingly good appearance,” the adverb *me’od* (cf. 10.5) with the common adjective *tov* (good, cf. 3.13) modifying *mar’eh* as in 14.27: “One daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.” *Mar’eh* is important here, for the semi-darkness served both to conceal as well to highlight this woman’s form made all the more seductive by candlelight. Judging by the above mentioned “it happened” it seems this was the first time David noticed her.

Vs. 3 consists of two sentences, the first setting in motion the tragedy: David made inquires about the woman, the verb *darash* fundamentally (and aptly applied here) as to rub, to tread. “Seek out for me (Saul) who is a medium that I may go to her and inquire of her” [1Sam 28.7]. David takes the initiative of sending a messenger with strict instructions not to speak directly with the woman but with members of her household “about the woman.” This man was instructed to put his questions indirectly and delicately so as not to rouse suspicion. After all, he was a representative of the king and had to be listened to. Because she was the wife of a valiant officer named Uriah, chances are he inquired about him more as a pretense. It’s interesting that being such close neighbors she and David haven’t met. We can surmise that since David’s house was so close, he watched from the roof to keep an eye on what was transpiring.

The messenger returns with his report which he put to David as a rhetorical question. Her name is Bathsheba, wife of Uriah. As soon as David heard the word “wife” he was dismayed. That meant he had to devise some kind of plot to get her to

leave her husband...or take some other action. Throughout all this there's no mention of the Lord until the very last verse. In other words, passion has pushed him out of the scene altogether. In that verse the Lord is displeased, all the while keeping close watch over David and surely pondering the time when Israel demanded a king back in 1Sam 8.7, this having been noted several times to date: "But they have rejected me from being king over them."

In vs. 4 David sends not one but multiple messengers after the first one brings back his report. This time their task was not to *darash* or to inquire of Bathsheba as in the previous verse but simply to take her. There's no mention of her resisting; how could she say no to Israel's king? As soon as she came to the royal household, David had intercourse with her, not waiting a second. Perhaps Bathsheba thought of this as an honor, hence she put up no resistance. In this same verse the **RSV** has in parentheses that she was purifying herself from her uncleanness and adds the footnote that "the parenthesis probably was added by an editor who wished to indicate moral uncleanness by a physical symbol."

After both had sexual relations, Bathsheba returned to her own home across the street, as it were. Some nine months she had given birth to a child during which time there seems to have been no contact with King David. When Bathsheba's pregnancy became more evident, she attributed it to her husband Uriah. Her apparent consent to lay with David followed by this cover-up doesn't speak well of her character. Then again, was she under a threat from David and forced to act accordingly? Finally Bathsheba told David that she was with child. Most likely she communicated this directly to him which means they must have met secretly so nobody else would get wind of their illicit affair.

Now things start to deteriorate quickly with David hatching a plot to get rid of Bathsheba's husband. He didn't want to do this but was forced into it by circumstances of his own making. Therefore he takes the indirect route by summoning Uriah through Joab. If he were to do this directly, it could arouse Uriah's suspicion. David use this meeting to ask how the war was going, etc. No mention of Uriah's rank is given, but he must have been fairly high up in the command structure to have been summoned to the king. So throughout the interview David looked at Uriah both with murderous eyes and with regret, trying desperately to balance the two. Since Uriah is identified as a Hittite, not an Israelite, in David's eyes this would be a lame excuse to go ahead with his plan to have him killed.

After this meeting, David bids Uriah to return home and wash his feet, a customary gesture after one has been on a journey. We get the clear impression that this man was very upright, a good husband, loyal soldier who never doubted his master. Such a character made him easy to persuade, and Bathsheba realized it. She was able to dupe him into believing that she had become pregnant by him. As for Uriah's noble character, this became evident in vs. 10 when he refuses to return home. David asked why which you'd think would prompt Uriah to suspect David was overly anxious to conceal some indiscretion.

Uriah's objection puts David on the spot, vs. 11 concluding with a rhetorical question quite embarrassing to the king. Before that Uriah informs David that the ark as well as Israel and Judah are dwelling in booths or *sukah* implying a shelter made of interwoven leaves and branches. *Sukah* is notable for a feast held at the autumn harvest (cf. Lev 23.33-26) although Uriah doesn't mean it this way; instead, Israel is involved in an ongoing military campaign. He then adds that Joab and David's servants are camping out in the open, reason enough for him to remain with them instead of going to the comfort of his home and wife.

After Uriah puts this bluntly, David bids him to remain with him. What else could he say? Clearly he was put on the spot, stuck with an upright, devoted soldier about to be murdered. So David has Uriah get drunk in the hope that he'd go home but refuses. So without Uriah knowing what's going on behind the scene, indirectly he is digging the ditch deeper for David who in vs. 14 finds no other option but to do away with him.

Vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *v-* (as with all verses thus far as noted earlier) and the foreboding "in the morning" or after David had gotten Uriah drunk and who had refused to return home, this annoying him to no end. Now more than ever the king is prompted to write a letter to Joab and sent by Uriah himself, so he had in hand his own death warrant. One can only imagine what David thought as he sent him off, wishing to recall him but unable to do so.

As for the letter, it instructed Joab to place Uriah in a place where most likely he'd be struck down, withdrawing the troops around him so this could happen. And so it was. Tied in with this is a ready-made excuse to counter David should he become angry about the troops drawing so close to the enemy's city wall. That is to say, a messenger is to tell King David about another person under Joab's command who was killed, pretty much a pretense to saying that Uriah suffered the same fate.

After the messenger relayed all this to David, he responded lamely that such are the misfortunes of war. Nevertheless, the attack on the city is to be renewed. Such feigned sadness went against the grain of David's personality which means he must have suffered greatly and in silence for having dug himself so deep into a bed of lies and deception. Eventually word reached Bathsheba that her husband had died and lamented him in a formal manner, the verb being *saphad* (cf. 3.31) fundamentally as to beat the breast.

After the period of mourning during which David as well as Joab had to feign their way through, without further hesitation David took Bathsheba as his wife. Actually he couldn't wait, counting down the days. Such was the culmination of David's devious planning. As for Bathsheba, it's a bit more problematic. Earlier she seemed to go willingly with David and does so yet again. Most likely there was no communication between the two both for formal and personal reasons.

Finally in vs. 37 we have the kicker. As noted earlier, mention of the Lord appears for the very first time, he being left in the background by the murderous deception just recounted. However, all along the Lord had been watching events unfold, not intervening by reason of that rejection of him as king by Israel. In the verse at hand, the divine displeasure is expressed by the verb *rahah* also as to do wickedly. "And this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now" [19.72.25]. As for the subject matter at hand or "the thing," *davar* is used. As noted earlier, *davar* is word as expression which here means that all David's thoughts and actions are summed upon in it which soon he will find is inescapable.

1) teshuvah, shachat, 2) me'od, tov, mar'eh, 3) darash, 11) sukah, 26) saphad, 27) rahah, davar

## Chapter Twelve

The conjunctive *v-* translated as "and" beginning this new chapter introduces an ominous sentence...ominous by reason of its brevity and simplicity: "And the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to David." For Nathan to go means he must have had a communication to do so. Almost always such communications are simply given; they aren't spelled out which leads us to ponder how they come about. Is it in a dream (often true), a voice from on high (seldom if ever) or something like that "still small voice" [1Kg 19.12] Elijah heard? Such questions can't be answered directly and

never will be. The incidents to which they pertain are more along the line of being suggestive, laid before us not to figure out but to ponder.

As for the situation at hand, it's so grave that Nathan felt an invisible push out the door, this time with no *davar* from the Lord. In fact, there's no indication of a message to deliver, just to get a move-on as quickly as possible. Obviously everyone knew about the death of Uriah. Since Nathan had connections with the royal court, most likely he heard rumors here and there that somebody somehow had brought about this tragedy. Some even reached as high as the king. Therefore he came to the royal household on what seems to be his own initiative. By reason of his status and familiarity with David, Nathan was no stranger. Being a prophet he must have felt the same as Samuel when Israel had rejected the Lord as king and preferred to go the way of other nations. Now he's faced with the results of that decision which continue to reverberate.

Nathan makes a bold entrance, almost unannounced, but David is willing to receive him apparently not having a clue as to what his visit is about. And so between vs. 1 and vs. 4 the prophet launches into a story which, although not stated explicitly, comes from the Lord. David is unaware of words to be uttered that will shake him to the core. Nathan speaks of two unidentified men from an equally unidentified city, one rich and the other poor, *hashyr* (also in vss. 2 and 4) and *rush* (also in vss. 3 and 4). The latter is singled out in endearing terms as living in extreme poverty but in possession of one little ewe lamb. The rich man raided the house of the poor one finding him with his wife, children and the lamb, a member of the family described in vs. 3 as kind of surrogate daughter. One can just imagine this family gathered together with the lamb as the center of attention. And so the cuteness of the scene turns out to be essential for setting the stage for something terrible about to happen.

Vs. 4 has the rich man snatching the lamb not just from the poor man but from his family to prepare a meal for a visitor. One can imagine the children losing what has become a member of their family. Some thugs come to their door unannounced, pick up the lamb and leave as quickly as they arrived. Having heard this, David was outraged as indicated by the verb *charah* (cf. 6.8) with the noun '*aph*. As pointed out in 6.7, fundamentally it means the nose and thus heavy breathing. Thrown in with the two is the adverb *me'od* (cf. 11.2) implying excessiveness. Then David exclaims that the person who had done this injustice is worthy of death and deserving of no pity, *chamal* also as to spare. "But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan" [21.7].

While telling this story, Nathan threw his whole heart and soul into it because so much depended upon how David would react, and he did so according to his desire to bring about justice. Then in vs. 7 comes the punch line in one simple, direct sentence, ‘*Atah ha’ysh* or “You are the man.”

Now from vs. 7 through vs. 12 Nathan lets King David have it full blast. He begins with the customary words of a prophet as well as to protect himself against any knee-jerk response from David, that is, “Thus says the Lord.” He...rather, the Lord...begins by telling David how he had anointed him and delivered him from Saul, *natsal* fundamentally as to pull or to draw out. “The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies” [19.9].

In vs. 8 Nathan continues to recount how the Lord showed favor toward David by giving him Saul’s house and wives, a common practice at the time along with much more. Given the circumstances, that doesn’t have to be spelled out. However, David certainly was aware of all these benefits, said and unsaid. This leads to a pointed question more rhetorical in nature as to why David had despised the *davar* (cf. 11.27) of the Lord. The verb is *bazah* (cf. 6.16) from which the noun spoil or plunder is derived. It’s mentioned a second time with the same force in vs. 10.

Because David had arranged that Uriah be slain by the sword of the Ammonites, this very same sword will never depart from his house, the verb *sur* (cf. 7.15) also as to turn aside. It’s as though the image of Uriah being slain always will be present to David and his successors, an indelible sign for Israel having rejected the Lord from being king noted several times earlier.

If the sword within David’s house isn’t bad enough, vs. 11 has the Lord raising evil up against him from within it as well, *qum* and *rahah* (cf. 6.1 and 11.27) where *qum* suggests a continual ascension impossible to stop. Also the Lord will take David’s wives and give them to someone else who will lay with them in the open for all to behold. This will counter what David had done in secret or *seter*, from the verbal root to hide. “Stay in a secret place and hide yourself” [1Sam 19.2]. In contrast to this *seter*, the Lord will do “this thing” or *davar* (cf. vs. 8) before all Israel and before the sun just like the man who will lay with David’s wives under the sun. As for *davar* in the sense of a word being uttered, its use here suggests that it will be talked about by everyone. That’s just as bad as the sword never leaving David’s house.

David responds at once and humbly, vs. 13 beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated. He says simply and without fanfare that he has sinned against the

Lord, *chata'* with the preposition *l-* or literally “to the Lord.” “For your servant knows that I (Shimei) have sinned” [19.20]. Within the same verse Nathan responds just as quickly (the conjunctive translated as ‘and’). Fortunately the Lord decides upon putting away David’s sin, *havar* fundamentally as to pass over. “And made them toil at (pass through) the brick kilns” [vs. 31]. So instead of suffering the consequences of *chata'*, David will not die but the child which Bathsheba begets will suffer death. Such is the punishment for having scorned the Lord which reads literally as “enemies of the Lord.” The NIV reads “you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt.” The way “the child that is born to you shall die” is rendered as “the son born to you to die he shall die.” This is a frank, actually brutal way of telling David that there’s no hope, of pushing him to the edge.

Vs. 15 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” followed simply with David returning to his house. In other words, he didn’t attempt to argue with Nathan...the Lord...and seems to have accepted the decision. Not only that, he was reeling with the news that his murder of Uriah had been discovered and soon will be broadcast throughout the kingdom. In this same verse, note again the conjunctive indicating the fast-paced action at hand. The Lord strikes down the unnamed child, *nagaph* (cf. 2.17 but not noted there) indicative of afflicting with some kind of plague or disease which could in be true.

Obviously King David was distraught and beseeched the Lord in vs. 16 that the child be spared, *baqash* being the verb (cf. 5.17) most likely in the tent-like structure housing the ark of the Lord. Furthermore, he fasted and lay all night long upon the ground. So after seven long tortuous days the child died which accounts for his lack of circumcision and having no name and thus having no share in the nation of Israel. Because of his profound grief, the king’s servants were afraid to inform him of this, recalling that when the child was alive, he didn’t communicate with them. The servants were more fearful of David causing harm (*rahah*, cf. 11) vs. to himself than their personal safety.

And so on the seventh day David discovered his servants whispering among each other, *lachash* having two other biblical references, Ps 58.5 and Ps 41.7, the former being quoted here because it reveals the essential nature of this verb: “So that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.” Then David approached them and asked what he could see written on their faces, that the child had died. Without further ado, he ceased beseeching the Lord, changed clothes and went to the house (i.e., tent) of the Lord and changed his *baqash* to *shachah* (cf. 9.6) or beseeching to worship after which he returned home and resumed eating as he normally had

done. This astonished everyone, thinking that David lacked heart for his child despite the very public display of grief. Actually it shows his true nature, his ability to pick up and move on, so essential for a king, for it was this quality that despite his recent crime, contributed to his greatness.

In vs. 21 we find the servants completely perplexed, asking their master as to what thing or *davar* (cf. vs. 12) he has done. This seems rather bold on their part, but it's indicative of a certain familiarity of the royal household demonstrated throughout this tragic episode. Also right now these servants are the only friends David has. He responds in a way of fully accepting reality. Surely the unalterable fact of having murdered Uriah had a lot to do with it. Now he must move on and see if the severity of Nathan's prophecy will continue, hoping that what he had suffered was sufficient to appease the Lord. This must have impressed his servants who now were more than willing to remain in his service. However, such would not be the case. It's only the beginning of David's woes. Chances are later when dealing with them he recalled this attitude of acceptance, hoping it would get him through.

In vs. 24 David comforts his wife (*nacham*, cf. 10.3) by having marital relations, the result being a son they named Solomon. As for Bathsheba, there's no record of her response to the loss of her child. Since all this occurred outside wedlock, she'd rather keep it quiet and move on. When Solomon was born, David thought paying the penalty for Uriah's death was over. The reason? Vs. 24 has another sentence which simply says "The Lord loved him," *ahav* (cf. 1.22). This prompted David to summon the prophet Nathan, the same person who had confronted him earlier and spoke of the trials he would have to face which might be for the rest of his life. Nathan gave the name Jedidiah which has a resemblance to "David" and means "beloved of the Lord." Note that it's Nathan who bestows this name which he didn't have to do. It seems that David was so overwhelmed with joy that he wished the same person who had announced the death of his first born to do the exact opposite. In this way the curse hanging over David's head might be relieved. However, the words of vs. 10 continued to haunt the king: "the sword shall never depart from your house," house of course meaning David's descendants.

Vs. 26 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now," signaling an almost casual way of returning to the business of conducting war. It seems the murder of Uriah and death of David's child were a kind of interlude which in the larger scheme of things it was since David was engaged in a constant struggle to establish Israel in the face of her foes. He wages war against Rabbah of the Ammonites who is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Now with the capture of his city under Joab's

command, Joab demonstrates his cunningness by asking David to come with the rest of the Israelites and encamp against the city after which they will take it. Joab had been in a position to do this but demonstrated his subservience to David lest it be called by his name. To name the captured city “Joab” would set him up for almost immediate ruin. Such a threat is to be put off...at least for now.

David complied, took the city and placed Rabbah’s crown on his own head, symbolic of having achieved victory. He then despoils the city yet wisely puts to work the inhabitants to rebuild it. Chapter Twelve concludes by saying that David had done the same with other Ammonite cities. If the native inhabitants are allowed to rebuild though under Israelite rule, chances are they’d be more submissive. In other words, exercise of local rule is intended to forestall future conflict. Satisfaction with this policy is intimated by the very last verse of this chapter, “Then (conjunctive *v-*) David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.”

2) hashyr, rush, 4) charah, ‘aph, me’od, 6) chamal, 7) natsal, 8) davar, bazah, 11) qum, rahah, 12) seter, davar, 13) chata’, havar, 15) nagaph, 16) baqash, 18) rahah, 19) lachash, 20) shachah, 21) davar, 24) nacham, ‘ahav