

# Second Samuel

## Lesson 1 – Saul’s Fatal Wound

### I. Preface

As Second Samuel opens, the story continues from the end of First Samuel. David and his six hundred men had followed the King of Gath to the Mount Gilboa area, where they would back up the Philistines in their fight against the Israelites. The other four Philistine kings did not trust David in the rear of the Philistine army and made the King of Gath send David and his men back home. David and his men left the Gilboa area on the morning of the battle against King Saul. David was at least three days from his home, perhaps four. On the first day of his journey home, King Saul was killed by the Philistines. David did not know it had happened.

When David and his men arrived back in their village of Ziklag, they found it plundered, but their wives and children were not dead in the village. Because of that, David and his men knew they had been taken as spoils and had to be alive. Exhausted, David and his men pressed twenty more miles into the Philistine area to the Brook Besor. They had no fears in this journey because all the Philistine warriors were at least eighty miles away at Gilboa. Worn out, two hundred of David’s men were too exhausted to continue, but David and four hundred were ready to push on to find their families. The two hundred stayed behind to guard the baggage of all the men.

Pressing on, David came across an Egyptian who knew the story. He was there with the looting Amalekites but separated from them a few days before. He knew where they were. He told David. David caught up with them and retrieved the families and all their possessions. In addition, they looted the spoils of looters. As Second Samuel opens up, David, his men, and their families arrive back at their hometown of Ziklag and are there for three days before the news comes that King Saul is dead.

First, Samuel told us the life stories of three central characters – Samuel and Saul and introduced us to David. Saul disobeyed the LORD, and David, as a youth, was chosen to be the next king in Saul’s place. With Saul dead for more than a week now, it was time for David to be notified, crowned the new king, and take the throne.

Before we begin, let us remember how this book is recorded from what we learned in First Samuel. This book, as well as First Samuel, is a compilation of the Chronicles of Samuel, Gad, and Nathan. These three recorded the events found in the kingly lines of Israel during their lives. Samuel recorded the first seven chapters of First Samuel. Gad picked up the pen and recorded most of the rule of King Saul until David ran from Saul’s fury. At that time, Gad continued with David, and Nathan, a student of Gad, stayed with Saul and recorded his actions until Saul’s death. After David becomes king, Gad and Nathan continue to chronicle the kingdom’s activities. Gad will stay with David until he becomes the total king of all the twelve tribes of Israel. Nathan will stay with the eleven northern tribes that did not immediately transfer to David. Once David becomes the king of all Israel, Gad will fade away in Second Samuel, but Nathan will be ever-present. Nathan will continue to chronicle the deeds of the kings into Solomon’s reign after David resigns to allow Solomon to be king. From the first chapters of First Kings, it is evident that David lived at least two years and maybe three into the reign of Solomon. Nathan was there to record the details.

Second Samuel can be broken down into three segments. They are David’s Throne, David’s Triumph, and David’s Trouble. The sections are not in exact chronological order. David’s Throne speaks of his reign as king. David’s Triumph speaks of his victories as king, and David’s Trouble speaks of his struggles as king. You will notice that each is a summary spanning his life, and the three overlay each other, not starting at the same time but in the course of his life. And so, we begin our

study of David's life as king of Israel with his turbulent beginning as king and the establishment of his throne over all of Israel.

## II. David's Throne (Chapters 1 – 4)

### A. The Death in the Kingdom (1:1-27)

#### 1. The Discouraging Report (1:1-10)

Our first stop in the story of David's Throne begins with the death in the kingdom and the discouraging report. We start with Chapter 1, verse 1. *“Now it came about after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, that David remained two days in Ziklag.<sup>2</sup> On the third day, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes torn and dust on his head. And it came about when he came to David that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.<sup>3</sup> Then David said to him, ‘From where do you come?’ And he said to him, ‘I have escaped from the camp of Israel.’<sup>4</sup> David said to him, ‘How did things go? Please tell me.’ And he said, ‘The people have fled from the battle, and also many of the people have fallen and are dead; and Saul and Jonathan, his son are dead also.’<sup>5</sup> So David said to the young man who told him, ‘How do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?’<sup>6</sup> The young man who told him said, ‘By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and behold, Saul was leaning on his spear. And behold, the chariots and the horsemen pursued him closely.<sup>7</sup> When he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I said, ‘Here I am.’<sup>8</sup> He said to me, ‘Who are you?’ And I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, ‘Please stand beside me and kill me, for agony has seized me because my life still lingers in me.’<sup>10</sup> So I stood beside him and killed him, because I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown which was on his head and the bracelet which was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord.”*

First, this Amalekite had the same distance to travel to David's village as David did when he was sent away from Gilboa by the Philistine leaders. It was no less than a three-day journey; probably four is more likely. But, in the context of the stories told in First Samuel by the chronicles of Gad and Nathan, David was at least a week away from his departure from Gilboa, maybe more. This timing means that David had already rescued the families and spoils taken by the Amalekite tribes while David was on his way to Gilboa and back to Ziklag. It means that David, his families, and soldiers had been settled back at Ziklag when this sole Amalekite left Gilboa. Why was he so late in leaving Gilboa? How did he conclude that he should take the crown and bracelet to David? We must remember that the Amalekites were enemies of Israel, and King Saul was supposed to have destroyed every last one. It was the reason Saul's sons would never sit on the throne.

Second, the story this Amalekite has told David cannot be faithful unless Saul, after falling on his sword to commit suicide, was lingering in death. When Saul committed suicide with his sword, his armor-bearer, who would not kill Saul upon his request, killed himself. So, this Amalekite was not Saul's armor bearer. But, if the Amalekite did come upon Saul, still lingering, he might have asked the Amalekite to finish him in death. The Amalekite's testimony to David is either truth or lie. We would like to say it was a lie based on the record in First Samuel. The prophet Nathan was with Saul on his journeys and chronicled his daily life. Gad was with David. We proved these two points in our First Samuel study. So, we must ask, “Why did Nathan not record for us the arrival of this Amalekite to finish Saul in death?” The answer may be that Nathan fled for his life once Nathan saw that Saul had fallen on his sword. The young Nathan could not have stayed in the vicinity very long, or the Philistines would have killed him. But the Amalekite was different. The Amalekites and Philistines were neighbors and did not find each other a threat. The Amalekite could have picked up his crown and bracelet before the Philistines found Saul dead. We do not know who mortally wounded Saul, a Philistine for sure, but Nathan chronicles that the Philistines moved in the battle so quickly that they did not notice that Saul was dead until the campaign was over, and they came back to survey the dead. No doubt, the Amalekite had been near the death of King Saul because he was delivering Saul's crown

and bracelet to David. The Philistines took the head and sword of Saul as national treasures; indeed, had the crown and bracelet still been on Saul when the Philistines identified him, they would have taken them also. This Amalekite must have taken them before the Philistines retraced their warpath and found Saul. Nathan did not tell us what happened to the crown and bracelet in First Samuel, but Gad is telling us that now in Second Samuel. This story of the Amalekite may have been confirmed after all, and Gad discovered his actions simultaneously with David. Nathan was still in the north with the Israelites, on the run or hiding. I think the story is true. The Amalekite finished off Saul so that Saul would not linger even after he fell on his sword. He took the crown and bracelet and decided to deliver them to David because he knew David was to be the next king of Israel. Everyone knew that. Even Saul knew it and admitted it.

## 2. The Distressing Regret (1:11-12)

From the discouraging report, we come to David and the distressing regret. Verse 11. *“Then David took hold of his clothes and tore them, and so also did all the men who were with him.”*<sup>12</sup> *They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and his son Jonathan and for the people of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.”*

Of all that we know about David, how he lived and what he believed, one thing stood out in First Samuel David’s life standard. It was David’s disdain for those who dared to “touch the LORD’s anointed,” meaning anyone selected by the LORD and anointed to that position by the priests or prophets. Throughout the book of First Samuel, that standard consumes and hangs over the entire story.

Here we find David and his men mourning the deaths of Saul and his sons. David led the way, and the men followed. The way Gad reports this story, the Amalekite must have arrived in the morning before breakfast was served. The news disturbed the clan that they did not eat *“until evening.”* We call evening the late part of the day, before midnight. But the Jews did not have the same names for the parts of the day that we do. Theirs were morning, evening, and night. We have morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Evening in David’s day began after high noon when the sun started its journey down towards the west. When darkness came, it was called night, not evening. Therefore, Gad tells us that when the news came of Saul’s death, the village did not eat breakfast in the morning but ate their regular meal in the afternoon.

## 3. The Disturbing Result (1:13-16)

After the distressing regret of David and the inhabitants of his village, we come to the disturbing result. Verse 13. *“David said to the young man who told him, ‘Where are you from?’ And he answered, ‘I am the son of an alien, an Amalekite.’”*<sup>14</sup> *Then David said to him, ‘How is it you were not afraid to stretch out your hand to destroy the LORD’s anointed?’”*<sup>15</sup> *And David called one of the young men and said, ‘Go, cut him down.’ So he struck him, and he died.”*<sup>16</sup> *David said to him, ‘Your blood is on your head, for your mouth has testified against you, saying, ‘I have killed the LORD’s anointed.’”*

Even though Saul was a horrible father-in-law to David and an awful king for the nation, David still recognized his anointing as king by the LORD and Samuel. David had at least two opportunities to kill Saul in the cave, once when he cut off the hem of his garment and in the dark when Saul was sleeping unprotected when David took Saul’s sword and water jug. Both times, David’s men proclaimed that the LORD had given Saul into his hands to kill him, but David would not dare touch the LORD’s anointed. He would not do it and expected no one else to do it.

No doubt, it was still morning when David replied to the Amalekite. David’s standard was set. He did not need to think about what he wanted to do with this Amalekite. He immediately knew what he would do, and he did it. The Amalekite must die for what he did to Saul, even though Saul may have asked him for help. Had the Amalekite simply brought the crown and bracelet and reported the death without including his part in the death, David would not have killed this Amalekite. But he did admit

it, and David rendered his verdict immediately. In David's mind, no one should ever touch anyone whom the LORD had anointed for a position.

#### 4. The Disheartening Refrain (1:16-27)

##### a) The Introduction of David's Chant (1:17-18)

During the morning, David chanted the disheartening refrain. We come to the introduction of David's chant. Verse 17. *"Then David chanted with this lament over Saul and Jonathan his son, <sup>18</sup> and he told them to teach the sons of Judah the song of the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar."*

The first thing David did after having the Amalekite killed was to do what David always seemed to do; he wrote a psalm. As we moved through First Samuel, I presented each psalm of David as he was writing them and presented them in the context of the storyline in which the essence of their context was set. In this case, the psalm is about the deaths of Saul and Jonathan.

After writing the psalm, David sang it to the inhabitants of his village. He used an old melody with the song. More than likely, having the melody in his mind, David crafted the words to fit the melody. The melody was called "the song of the bow." From a cursory visit of the one hundred and fifty psalms, it is evident that the same melody was used with multiple psalms.

Interestingly, Gad reports that David instructed the people to teach this song to "the sons of Judah" and not the nation of Israel. Why? I expect that David sang this song to the inhabitants of his village at the time. Then later, when he was the king over Judah before he became the king over all of Israel, he published the song to the priests and instructed them to teach it to the people he was king over. Remember, in those days, the choir directors and song leaders were a specific section of the priestly line. They were responsible for teaching the psalms and protecting them from destruction.

Now we come to mention the "book of Jashar," where this song was recorded. The "book of Jashar" is mentioned only twice in the Bible, Joshua 10:13 and here in Second Samuel 1:18. In the Joshua passage, we are told how Joshua entreated the LORD in a battle with the Amorites, and the LORD caused the sun to stand still at Gibeon until Israel won the battle. In the telling of that story, it is recorded that the story was recorded in the "book of Jashar." Now, more than four hundred years later, we learn that this song of David was also recorded in the "book of Jashar." What was the book of Jashar?

The word "Jashar" in Hebrew means "upright." It was a record of certain events that occurred in Israel's history, yet, it was not kept in the care of the priests for protection. This fact means it was viewed as a secular book of Israel and not a religious one. It would be nice if we could find the "book of Jashar," and one indeed has been created long after the fact and is in circulation today. Still, it is a forgery because the Hebrew it is written in is far too developed and newer than that used during the writing of these early books of the Old Testament. Even the fonts of the Hebrew alphabet used in this new creation do not match the older pro-Hebrew that our early books of the Old Testament were written.

Nevertheless, the book existed and was recognized by David and Gad at the time. In addition, Joshua was absolutely an upright man, and his story deserves to be in such a book. This action of David was upright and deserving of being in the book. In either case, we do not need the Jashar book because we have the same records in the Holy Scripture.