

## 2 Samuel 1

### BAD NEWS AND GOOD GRIEF<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

The first thing to note is that this chapter flows on smoothly from the end of 1 Samuel. Nor is this at all surprising in that what we know as the two books of Samuel comprise a single book in the Hebrew Bible. It was the Septuagint which first divided the one book into two, and, as far as I know, all translations since have followed the lead of the Greeks.

What we know as 2 Samuel first concludes the story of David's rise to kingship over Israel and then covers the forty years of his reign.

In terms of subject matter, a good case can be made for taking the end of 2 Samuel 1 as a cutting-off point. For 2 Samuel 1 neatly rounds off the latter section of 1 Samuel – with David's lament over Saul forming a fitting conclusion to the account of Saul's reign and, in particular, to the lengthy overlap which there had been in the lives of the two men.<sup>2</sup>

But where, we may wonder, does all this fit into the overall Bible story-line?

As I understand it, it had been God's purpose from the beginning that the Saviour who was to come should be His, God's, Messiah – and that He would one day reign both over Israel and over the world itself.<sup>3</sup> And, indeed, that this coming Ruler would come from the tribe of Judah.<sup>4</sup>

But, back in the early chapters of 1 Samuel, the people of Israel had 'jumped the gun' so to speak, and had demanded a king tailored to their own specifications. In response to their demands, God gave them Saul.<sup>5</sup> But, as could be expected in the case of a king who was the people's choice, Saul failed – and failed seriously. The crisis came in 1 Samuel 15, when Saul's blatant disobedience cost and lost him the kingdom.<sup>6</sup> At that time, the Lord made it clear to Saul that His, the Lord's, decision to take the kingdom from him and to give it to another, 'better' than he, was irreversible – that He, the Lord, would not repent of it.

And so, at the beginning of 1 Samuel 16, the man of God's choice, David, was duly anointed by God's prophet. And the narrative from there through to 2 Samuel 5 focuses on how God brought His own purpose back on track, installing a king of His choosing over Israel who was of the tribe of Judah.

As Samuel told Saul in 1 Samuel 28, from the days of 1 Samuel 15, it had been inevitable, not only that he, Saul, would die, but that, in dying, he would lose his kingdom – which he did in 1 Samuel 31. Following several years of civil war, in God's time, David – the man after God's own heart – would be, according to 2 Samuel 5, made king over a united Israel. And so, from 1 Samuel 16 to 1 Samuel 31 the lives of these two men ran in parallel.

But where precisely does our chapter fit into this scheme of things?

We noted previously that there were many in the court of Saul who had made it their business to stir him up with wild and false tales about David's supposed conspiracies to kill him and to usurp his office as king. And, as I see it, one of the Holy Spirit's purposes in selecting the events recorded from 1 Samuel 24 onwards was to set out conclusive evidence that David did *not* usurp the kingdom from Saul – that it was *God* who removed Saul, and that it was *God* who gave the kingdom to David.<sup>7</sup>

We saw that the section from 1 Samuel 24 to 1 Samuel 26 forms a unit, showing that, though without Abigail's timely intervention David would have readily and cheerfully killed Nabal, David steadfastly and purposefully refused to lift his hand against Saul, even though he had more than one opportunity to do so.

The section beginning with 1 Samuel 27 explains why David was not involved in any way in the fateful battle of Gilboa at which Saul died – explaining that David hadn't entered the battlefield in company with Saul and Israel because he had earlier felt compelled to flee from Israel to the Philistines, and that he hadn't reached the battlefield in company with the Philistines on account of the forceful objection voiced by four of the Philistine lords. By means of the lengthy account in chapter 30, the Holy Spirit makes it clear that, at the very time when Saul died battling the Philistines, David was the best part of a 100 miles away from the spot – battling Israel's age-long enemies, the Amalekites. So that there was absolutely no way in which David could have been implicated directly and physically in the death of Saul.

But could David have somehow contributed to Saul's death by *indirect* means – as one day he would contribute to the death of Uriah? And I suggest that it is here that 2 Samuel 1 comes into its own. Because our chapter puts on

record – and that in two unmistakable ways – David’s genuine feelings about the death of Saul and of the royal house of Israel.

For, in this chapter, the Holy Spirit draws attention to two separate pieces of evidence that David had been no enemy of Saul. In the first half of the chapter, we read that, when David first heard of Saul’s death, he not only mourned publicly but ordered the immediate execution of the man who was putting out the story that he had inflicted the death blow on Saul. And, in the latter half, we read of David’s eloquent and heartfelt lament over Saul – demonstrating that, far from entertaining bitter feelings towards Saul, he held him in high esteem – and how, by means of his lamentation, David sought to engrave on people’s memories both the name and the greatness of Israel’s first king. The opening section of the chapter therefore declared David’s high regard for Saul *as the Lord’s anointed* – in that he had the Amalekite to death for daring to touch the one who was that, v. 16 – and the second half declared David’s high regard for Saul *as a man*.

For completeness, I ought to point out that the succeeding chapters follow the same theme – recording : (i) how David rewarded the men of Jabesh-gilead who had risked their lives to give Saul and his sons a decent burial, 2 Sam. 2. 4-7; (ii) how David publicly distanced himself from the murder of Abner, Saul’s cousin who had earlier championed the cause of the house of Saul, 2 Sam. 3. 28-39 – and how David’s actions in doing so were noted and applauded by all in Israel, vv. 36-37; and (iii) how David had the murderers of Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son and successor, not only executed but mutilated and crucified, 2 Sam. 4. 9-12.

I suggest therefore that one of the main burdens of the section from 1 Samuel 24 to 2 Samuel 4 is to establish that the man who was anointed king over all Israel in 2 Samuel 5 was truly *God’s* choice of a king – that David’s reign was the result of God’s doing alone and that he, David, had done nothing to eliminate either Saul himself or his house. And, as I see it, our chapter features large in this body of evidence.

## CHAPTER DIVISION

### 1. Verses 1-16 :

**An Amalekite who was dying to tell David something – and who died because he did!**<sup>8</sup>

**Verse 1. David – returned from the slaughter (the ‘smiting, striking’ literally) of the Amalekites**

**Verses 2-5. David’s questions, and the answer of the Amalekite :**

A man with his clothes rent, v. 2

‘Whence comest thou?’, v. 3

‘How knowest thou ...?’, v. 5

(Note : the people fallen and ‘Saul and Jonathan his son’ dead, v. 4)

**Verses 6-10. The Amalekite’s story**

**Verse 11-14. David’s questions, and the response of David and his men :**

Men with their clothes rent, v. 11

Whence art thou?’, v. 13

‘How wast thou not afraid ...?’, v. 14

(Note : ‘Saul and Jonathan his son’ and the people fallen, v. 12)

**Verses 15-16. David – issuing an order for the ‘smiting’ of an Amalekite**

### 2. Verses 17-27 :

**Good grief – the Song of the Bow**

**Verses 17-18. David’s lamentation : its title and archive**

**Verses 19-27. David’s lamentation : its content :**

**Verse 19a. Opening metaphorical description of Saul and Jonathan – ‘the beauty of Israel slain’.**

**Verse 19b. The first ‘How are the mighty fallen?’**

**Verses 20-24. The main body of the lamentation :**

‘The daughters of the Philistines’ – who David *doesn’t* want to rejoice, v. 20

(i) The scene of the battle – cursed, v. 21a

(ii) The weapons of war – shield and sword of Saul; bow of Jonathan, vv. 21b, 22

(iii) The quality of the men – beloved, pleasant, united, swift and strong, v. 23  
*'The daughters of Israel – who David does want to weep, v. 24*

**Verses 25-26.** David's personal lamentation for Jonathan, his devoted friend – introduced, as the main body of David's lamentation, by 'How are the mighty fallen ... '.

**Verse 27a.** The last *'How are the mighty fallen?'*

**Verse 27b.** Closing metaphorical description of Saul and Jonathan – "the weapons of war perished".

## EXPOSITION

### Verses 1-16. An Amalekite dying to tell David something – who died because he did!

#### Verse 1. David – returned from the slaughter (the 'smiting, striking' literally) of the Amalekites

*'Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites'.* Verse 1 and verses 15-16 provide the frame for the first half of the chapter in that the Hebrew word 'to smite, to strike down' is used in connection with Amalekites both at the beginning and the end of the section. Verse 1 reminds us that David had been responsible for 'smiting' the Amalekite raiding party of 1 Samuel 30, and verse 15 informs us that he was also responsible for the 'smiting' of the Amalekite messenger of our chapter.

*'David had abode two days in Ziklag'.* And, in all likelihood, it was during these two days that David had distributed his spoil among the elders of the cities in Judah which had supported him when on the run from Saul, 1 Sam. 30. 26-31.

#### Verses 2-5. David's questions, and the answer of the Amalekite

**Verse 2.** *'It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head'.* As we noted when introducing 1 Samuel 31, it probably took the Amalekite young man about four days to cover the 95 miles or so from Gilboa to Ziklag. In that the royal leaders of Israel, together with Saul's own bodyguard, had been wiped out by the Philistines, and the rest of the people of Israel put to flight, there were unlikely to be many official messengers to relay the tidings south about the disastrous outcome of the battle. In any case, it was most unlikely that an official messenger would have headed for Ziklag deep in the south of the land of the Philistines – in 'the land of the Philistines', mark you – the very people who are currently pursuing and slaughtering every Israelite they see. But the one man who headed straight for David had his own ulterior motive for doing so. David later referred back to the man's base and sordid motive in chapter 4: 'When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, *thinking* to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, *who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings*', 2 Sam. 4. 10.

*'When he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance'.* Fully expecting, no doubt, that David would handsomely reward the first man to pay homage to him (which is what the word translated 'did obeisance' signifies) as the new king.

**Verses 3-5.** *'David said unto him, How went the matter?'* As we have noted previously, a clear echo of the question asked by Eli back in 1 Samuel 4 following the first 'Israel-defeated-by-the-Philistines' battle.<sup>9</sup>

*'Saul and Jonathan his son'.* The young man made no reference to Saul's two other sons who fell at Gilboa. I assume that either he was aware of the special friendship which had existed between David and Jonathan, or that he singled out Jonathan because Jonathan was the crown-prince and, as the man supposed, David would have been delighted to hear that, with the death of both Saul and Jonathan, the way was more or less clear for him now to take the kingdom.

In either case, having got the point in about Jonathan, even though specifically asked by David his grounds for claiming that both 'Saul and Jonathan' were dead, he focused throughout verses 6 to 10 on Saul alone.

#### Verses 6-10. The Amalekite's story

**Verse 6.** *'The young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him'.*

I am satisfied that the account which the young man gave of Saul's death was a complete fabrication – a pack of lies from start to finish. As far as I see it, the only part of his statement which was true was his claim in verse 10, 'I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet ('armlet') that was upon his arm' – for this part was verified in that he had brought them to David.

But is it not possible that the young man's claims can be made to reconcile with the narrative of 1 Samuel 31? After all, 1 Samuel 31 does not actually say the Saul died from his self-inflicted wound. Verses 4-5 there read, 'Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him'. Is it possible, therefore, that, perhaps on account of great weakness caused by the serious wounds inflicted by the Philistine archers, Saul managed to bungle his own attempted suicide and called upon the services of this obliging young man to put him out of his agony?

Such attempts to fit the two accounts of Saul's death together are nothing new. They go back certainly as far as the first century. Josephus harmonized the two accounts as follows; 'his (Saul's) armourbearer not daring to kill his master, he drew his own sword, and placing himself over against its point, he threw himself upon it; and when he could neither run it through him, nor, by leaning against it, make the sword pass through him, he turned himself

around, and asked a certain young man that stood by who he was; and when he understood that he was an Amalekite, he desired him to force the sword through him, because he was not able to do it with his own hands, and thereby to procure him such a death as he desired. This the young man did accordingly; and he took the golden armlet that was on Saul's arm, and his royal crown that was on his head, and ran away. And when Saul's armourbearer saw that he was slain, he killed himself.<sup>10</sup>

Well, that is neat enough – but I am sorry, Mr. Josephus, I am not convinced. I guess that my main concern lies with Saul's armourbearer. That he was present throughout Saul's last moments is clear from 1 Samuel 31. Saul had first directed him to 'thrust him through' and, when the noble armourbearer refused, Saul had fallen on his own sword. Seeing Saul was dead, he then took his own life. Now am I to believe that, in point of fact, following Saul's abortive suicide attempt, this good armourbearer was twiddling his thumbs while along 'chanced' – the young man's own word! – a complete stranger who kindly did the necessary? 'Kindly' slew the Lord's anointed, that is – which the armourbearer himself wouldn't do when asked. Am I to believe that the king of Israel had been left by everyone of his men – including his own personal bodyguard – so totally isolated in the thick of battle that he had to depend on some passing foreigner to finish him off?

To me, the reconciliation between the account of Saul's death in 1 Samuel 31 and the account of Saul's death in 2 Samuel 1 is far simpler. In 1 Samuel 31, we have *the Holy Spirit's* description of what actually happened, and, in 2 Samuel 1, we have the bundle of lies told by a young Amalekite which he 'thought' (David's word, 2 Sam. 4. 10) would have ingratiated him with David.

It seems to me that the young Amalekite came across the bodies both of the king and his armourbearer sometime soon after their joint suicide and while the Philistines were still occupied dealing with living Israelites. When, on the following day, 1 Sam. 31. 8, the Philistines returned to strip the bodies of the slain, they took Saul's armour but not his crown or armlet – for the simple reason that this opportunist Amalekite had already made off with them and was racing hot foot for David!

But the young man knew that when he finally reached David and fell at his feet, he was not as likely to impress David and secure his coveted reward with the truth – which was that, when the fighting was all over, while scouring the battlefield for any pickings, he had spotted the royal insignia, grabbed them and run for it – as with his cock-and-bull story that, in the heat of the battle with the Philistines pressing all around, he had gallantly assisted the king of Israel to die with dignity.

And this young man could certainly spin a yarn when he put his mind to it – and he had had some four days to think it all out. What a tragic picture he managed to paint for David – of a seriously wounded and weary king propped up only by his spear (the emblem of his royalty), his followers all now scattered or dead, with the Philistine chariots and cavalry zeroing in on him – of a man who pleaded to be put out of his misery because of the 'anguish' (probably 'cramp') which had seized him – of a man having 'fallen' ('fallen', that is, metaphorically; 'having been defeated'), a man barely alive but terrified that his final minutes would be spent at the mercy of his foes, vv. 6, 9, 10. It was a real tear-jerker – except for one small detail!

'He said unto me', the young man claimed, *'Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite'*. Bad shot, sir! I would love to have seen David's face at that moment. I have a suspicion that this nugget of information did nothing whatever to endear the messenger to the man who but three days before had been embroiled in a life-or-death conflict with a sizeable company of Amalekites who had walked off with his wives and everything else he held dear in life. Talk about 'red flag to a bull'! I can almost see – if you will excuse the awful pun – Abishai fingering his spear at this point.

The Amalekite young man evidently knew a reasonable amount about David, not only where to find him, but that, with both Saul and Jonathan dead, David was 'in the running' for Israel's next king. But he clearly knew nothing of David's recent 'run in' with the Amalekite raiding party – or he wouldn't have been so quick to reveal his nationality in his graphic account of Saul's last moments!

But, for our part, we must be careful not to read *too much* into the Amalekite's story and motivation. As always, we need to stick closely to the text. And I note that at no point did the Amalekite even hint to David that he had killed Saul for his – David's – sake. Indeed, his story was that he did it entirely for the sake of poor, mortally-wounded Saul. That is, as he presented it to David, he – the Amalekite – was simply the one who brought the 'good tidings' to him that Saul was dead. The Amalekite never insinuated that he had deliberately slain Saul to do David the favour of eliminating his rival for him. He simply attempted to turn the death of Saul to his own personal advantage and to curry favour with David by being the man who first brought the 'gospel' (the Septuagint rendering of 2 Sam. 4. 10) of Saul's death to him. But, as we will see, in David's book it didn't matter so much why the Amalekite had done it – if he had at all – only that he said he had done it.

'I took the crown that was upon his head', the Amalekite concluded, *'and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord'*. In other words, 'Here, David, is the evidence both that Saul is truly dead and of my loyalty and devotion to you'.

Saul's 'crown' probably consisted of a diadem, a band worn around his head or helmet as a symbol of his royal authority<sup>11</sup>, and his 'bracelet' was probably a distinctive gold armlet such as often distinguished kings and other distinguished warriors in the Ancient Near East.<sup>12</sup> I note that a diadem and armlets are mentioned in a list of jewelry that the Assyrian king Sennacherib gave to his son and successor, Esarhaddon.

The young man had clearly not attempted to bring the third emblem of Saul's kingship – namely his spear, upon which the Amalekite claimed he had found Saul 'leaning', v. 6, for the obvious reason that the royal spear would have been far too cumbersome and conspicuous for him to carry for some 90-95 miles.

Clearly, whatever else Saul was, he was no coward, and, unlike king Ahab on a later occasion, 2 Chron. 18. 29, had gone into battle wearing the symbols of his office for all to see. He may have worn a disguise to hide his identity from the medium of Endor, 1 Sam. 28. 8, but he made no attempt to hide it from the Philistines at Jezreel.

#### **Verse 11-14. David's questions, and the response of David and his men.**

**Verses 11-12.** *'Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him'.* Having once been a member of Saul's court, David would immediately have recognized the crown and armlet in the hands of the Amalekite. They were genuine alright. But David does not reach out and grasp them. Instead, he grasps his own clothes and rends those in a recognizable gesture of mourning and sorrow.<sup>13</sup>

I guess that David's reaction rather startled the young Amalekite – although not the reader of 1 Samuel who is familiar with David's consistent loyalty to Saul as the Lord's anointed.

And so David and his men 'rent' their garments, as had the Amalekite, v. 2, and fasted, as had the men of Jabesh-gilead, 1 Sam. 31. 13. And we ought not to miss that 'likewise all the men that were with him'. For the grief of David's men is impressive and pays tribute to the change which David, by his consistent words and actions, had wrought in them. For these were the same men who would once have happily plunged a sword or spear in Saul themselves, 1 Sam. 24. 4; 26. 8.

*And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword'.* I suggest that both the order and the description here are significant. Whereas the Amalekite had reported first on the flight and fate of 'the people' and then added 'Saul and his son Jonathan are dead also', David and his men focus first on the loss of Saul and 'Jonathan his son'. With my eye particularly of the reference to the mourning, weeping and fasting for Saul, I wonder whether Solomon learnt from his father the proverb, 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth', Prov. 24. 17.

And to David and his men, though not of course to the alien Amalekite, 'the people' were viewed in two distinct ways – first and foremost as 'the people of the Lord', as those who belonged to Him – and then, but only then, as their fellow-countrymen – as 'the house of Israel'. It was the condition of the people of God – *as the people of God* – which disturbed them. And surely the same principle should control our outlook today. Surely we ought also to feel, and to mourn over, not only our own weakness, failure and coldness, but over the weakness, failure and coldness of all who are truly 'the people of the Lord'.

**Verse 13.** *'And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou?'* David's question now has deeper significance, of course, than his first question, 'From whence comest thou?', v. 3. Then he had been concerned only with the starting point of the man's journey. Now, picking up on the man's answer to Saul's 'Who art thou?' – 'I am an Amalekite', v. 8, David wants to know something of the man's personal background.<sup>14</sup> What was an Amalekite doing on Gilboa?

*'And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite'.* That is, the young man was the son of a resident alien – of a foreigner who had emigrated to Israel and had been accepted. Frankly, it is outrageous that the people of Israel could have ever received into their midst a man out of the nation whose 'remembrance' they were under divine mandate to blot out from under heaven, Deut. 25. 25!

**Verse 14.** *'And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?'* I can hear the expression of horror in David's voice. The knowledge of Saul's sacred office had not only kept back his armour-bearer from taking Saul's life on Gilboa, 1 Sam. 31. 4, but had restrained David himself from reaching out and killing Saul on more than one occasion. It was the Lord Himself who had appointed Saul to reign as His anointed king and David was clear that it was God's work – and God's work alone – to remove Saul from that office. And woe betide anyone who put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. I recall David's words to Abishai when they had stood together over Saul's sleeping form, 'Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?', 1 Sam. 26. 9. And it was just that which this self-confessed pagan, and an Amalekite at that, had claimed to have done!

Why were you not afraid?', David wanted to know. The Amalekite had clearly assumed that no amount of scruples would stop David from immediately seizing the kingship; David assumed that just one moment of fear should have stopped the Amalekite from destroying the king, which is after all what the young man insisted he had done.

This young man had certainly misjudged his audience – had *badly* misjudged his audience. I enjoy the story told by one commentator on 2 Samuel 1 concerning, I quote, 'a young accident-prone American pilot. Everything the young man did always seemed to go wrong. He was stationed aboard an aircraft carrier during World War II, and there was considerable doubt whether this fellow would be allowed to fly, since no one knew what might happen. One particular day he was given a mission, and everything seemed to be going his way. He spotted and sunk a Japanese warship; then he shot down several Japanese Zeros. Out of ammunition and nearly out of fuel, the pilot was trying to return to his aircraft carrier, but he couldn't locate it. Suddenly the clouds opened up, and there below him was an aircraft carrier. For once, his landing was flawless. With the plane secured, he jumped out and rushed up to the commanding officer, eager to share the details of his successful mission. He reported he had sunk a Japanese warship and downed several fighters ...to which the commander responded, "Ha So!" His successful mission had ended with his flawless landing ... on a Japanese aircraft carrier'.<sup>15</sup> And as I imagine this young Amalekite so eagerly relating his supposed exploits to David, I feel like shouting out, 'Ha So – wrong aircraft carrier!'

#### **Verses 15-16. David – issuing an order for the 'smiting' of an Amalekite**

**Verse 15.** *David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died*. The young Amalekite had signed own death warrant! I note that both the RV translates David's words in 2 Samuel 4. 10 concerning the Amalekite as, 'I took hold of him, and slew him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his tidings!' So too in substance the NASB and ESV. And the young man who had raced to David expecting to receive a 'reward' for his news did! But it wasn't the kind of reward he had been expecting.<sup>16</sup>

**Verse 16.** *And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head<sup>17</sup>; for thy mouth hath testified against thee*. I gather from David's words in chapter 4 that David had suspicions that the Amalekite wasn't telling him the truth; 'When one *told* me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead', was how David put it, 2 Sam. 4. 10. But as there were no witnesses to collaborate – or otherwise – the man's story,<sup>18</sup> David was content to rest on the man's own evidence. If the man had done as he had claimed, in David's eyes he was guilty of murdering the Lord's anointed and so deserved to die – and if he hadn't, the responsibility for his death rested entirely with himself and his own lying testimony. 'Thy mouth hath testified against thee'.<sup>19</sup>

*'I have slain the Lord's anointed'*. It is most unlikely that this is how the Amalekite actually expressed himself. As an Amalekite, he was unlikely to think in such terms. As far as the record goes, he had referred to the king by his personal name, Saul, twice, vv. 4, 6, and else only as 'he' or 'him'. But this was how David construed what the Amalekite had said – for to David this was what Saul had always been – 'the Lord's anointed'.

And so this section of the narrative ends where it began – with David seeing to it that another Amalekite was 'smitten', was 'struck down'. Nor need David lose any sleep over his action for, as an Amalekite, the young man was in any case devoted to destruction by the very law of God, Deut. 25. 17-19.

One of the main factors which led to Saul's shameful death was his sparing of the Amalekite Agag, sheep and oxen back in 1 Samuel 15. And it is ironic therefore that the very crown which Saul had forfeit because he spared the best of what the Amalekites had on offer should now be removed from his corpse by an Amalekite. In a loose sense, it could be said that Saul was slain because he – foolishly – had failed to kill the king of Amalek. Now an Amalekite was slain because he – foolishly – claimed to have killed the king of Israel.

#### **Verses 17-18. David's lamentation : its title and archive**

**Verse 17.** *David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son*. 'Lamentation' is the technical expression for an elegy or poem of bereavement<sup>20</sup> and differs from informal, spontaneous outbursts of grief such as we read of in verses 11-12.

It is never easy to compose an elegy for two people at the same time, and still harder to compose one for two people together when the relationships involved are so different as were David's with Saul and Jonathan. But, no doubt aided by 'the Spirit of the Lord' who on occasions spoke by him and whose word was in his tongue, 2 Sam. 23. 2, David achieved it skillfully.

David 'lamented this lament', literally. And the first point I note is that, although the news brought to him by the Amalekite had indeed been life-changing news, in that the anointing he had received from the Lord and Samuel many years before now seemed soon to be fulfilled, David's heart was just too great to harbour one selfish thought in Saul and Jonathan's dark hour. With no thought of the consequences for himself, his generous soul poured out a flood of the noblest tears and words any man in Israel had for Saul.

When David first heard of the death of Nabal, another man who had rewarded David evil for good, he had rejoiced and had exclaimed, 'Blessed be the Lord', 25. 39. But here he expressed nothing but grief, with no word of blessing, only at one point a word of cursing on the mountains where Saul and Jonathan had fallen, v. 21.

In chapter 25, David had spoken of the Lord having 'returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head', v. 39, but here in 2 Samuel 1, in spite of the many injuries Saul had done him, he doesn't make the faintest allusion to Saul's wickedness, even though Saul had himself confessed it to David on more than one occasion, 24. 17; cf. 26. 21.

We noted that David nursed no grievance against Saul and spoke only well of him after his death. From David's lamentation we would never have guessed that Saul had ever been anything except a brave and effective king. Note carefully: every negative thing which David said of Saul he said to his face, 24. 11-15; 26. 19 – save on the one occasion when he alerted Jonathan to his father's intention to kill him, 1 Sam. 20. 1, 3. What a magnificent example David has set us!

Now when David came to mourn for Saul, he has nothing but praise for him. I read of the funeral of one man who had lived a deplorable kind of life where the preacher gave a flowery and insincere description of the man, telling those assembled what a good husband and father he had been. After 10 minutes of this, the widow leaned over to her little boy and whispered, 'Go over and see if that's your dad in that coffin'. David was made of better stuff than that preacher! He tells no lies about Saul – he makes him out to be nothing which he wasn't. David was truthful in all that he said about him although he was deliberately selective, his affection and respect for Saul 'covering a multitude of sins', Prov. 10. 12; cf. 1 Pet. 4. 8. Did Solomon learn that one from David too? And we learn that it isn't wrong for us also to be selective when speaking about others – that honesty doesn't require us to tell everything which we know about them.

And, in one sense, David's lament over Saul says far more about David than it does about Saul.

**Verse 18.** *Also he bade them teach the children of Judah*. It was wise to have the lament taught to his own tribe of Judah. For in this way, Judah was shown not to be anti-Saul or delighted that he had been removed to make way for a man from their own tribe. But this was no public-relations exercise! There is no mistaking the genuineness of

David's grief. As we know from his many psalms, it was not unusual for David to express his emotions in song and poetry, and the loss of Saul and Jonathan clearly affected him deeply.

Although we should note that David's lamentation here is strikingly different to all and any of his Psalms in that his lamentation is expressed entirely in secular language – at no point does God's name appear nor is there any mention of any of the key elements of Israel's faith. I conclude that this elegy was never meant for use in the context of Israel's worship, and that it was meant, for reasons I shall suggest in a moment, as a memorial song for David's fellow-tribesmen to press into their mental back pockets for future reference.

*'Teach ... the use of the bow'*. As I am sure we all know, this is literally, 'teach the Bow' – and should almost certainly be understood that they were to teach the children of Judah 'the song entitled the Bow'. Such shorthand as 'to teach the Bow' will not surprise those who are familiar with our Lord's reference in Luke 20 to God's words spoken in Exodus 3 as that which 'Moses shewed at the Bush' – in all likelihood 'at the Bush' signifying the portion of scripture known as 'the Bush'.<sup>21</sup> But why call this lament 'the Bow'? In that only one bow is mentioned in David's lament – the 'sword of Jonathan', v. 22 – it is most likely a reference to that bow. David was aware that Jonathan was known by his bow,<sup>22</sup> his skill in its use being matched by many others of the tribe of Benjamin.<sup>23</sup> It is also possible that, although scripture doesn't say this that the Amalekite young man had informed David that Saul's grievous wounds had been inflicted by Philistine archers.<sup>24</sup>

I suspect that David had more than one reason for insisting that the men of Judah be taught the song of the Bow. First and foremost it was meant, of course, as a fitting – and lasting – memorial and tribute to the prowess and qualities of Saul and Jonathan. In his closing moments, Saul had been concerned that he should not be abused and mocked before his death, 1 Sam. 31. 4. And here David is equally concerned that Saul should not be mocked after his death! For, to David, far from being objects for ridicule and scorn, Saul and Jonathan were great warriors to be revered. And it was only right that future generations should learn of the greatness of these men. And for us too it is right that we do what we can to see that the upcoming generation are made aware of the great debt we – and they – owe to men of God of a bygone day. I am sure that most, if not all, of us have treasured memories of great men now home with the Lord – it is not wrong to keep these memories alive by sharing them with others!

But I suggest that David had at least one other reason for having this song taught to the fighting men of his own tribe. Let them ever remember the rejoicing of the Philistines over the death of Saul and Jonathan and over Israel's defeat at Gilboa. For Gilboa would not be the last time Israel would fight the Philistines – and, as part of Israel's military training, he wanted his men to remember the tragedy and the pagan arrogance. By means of the song, he wanted his men to be deeply stirred – for next time – and there would be a 'next time'! And the very same principle operates in the Israeli army of our day. I understand that the Israel Armored Corps swear their oath of allegiance on top of the old fortress of Masada, west of the Dead Sea, where, in AD 72–73, some 960 Jews held out against Flavius Silva's Roman army. After seven months of siege the Romans breached the fortress but were denied the pleasure of spilling Jewish blood because the defenders had committed suicide during the night. To the state of Israel Masada stands as a symbol of courage and determination, and Israeli troops today stand on its summit to swear their oath of allegiance: 'Masada shall not fall again'.

In a not dissimilar way, following Japan's surprise bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941, which left 2,403 dead, 188 planes destroyed and crippled the American Pacific Fleet, I am told that American soldiers used the phrase "Remember Pearl Harbour" to raise their spirits throughout the remainder of the war against Japan. I guess that, for the men of Judah, as they later would face the might of the Philistine war machine on at least two occasions, 2 Sam. 5. 17-25 and 8. 1, the song of the Bow sounded the clarion call, 'remember Gilboa'!

And yet there may be a third purpose served by David's lamentation. In his commentary on 2 Samuel 1. 17-27, D. R. Davis writes, 'There is a poignant entry in the diary of Andrew Bonar, the nineteenth-century Scottish pastor. He notes the death of Isabella, his wife of seventeen years, on October 14-15, 1864. Subsequent entries reveal his state of mind and sorrow. But what caught my attention (and yet did not surprise me) was how Bonar inevitably refers to his loss every year on the anniversary of Isabella's death. Grief remains; sorrow is not merely a sad event but a continuing process. Grief not only irrupts (as in 2 Sam. 1. 1-12); it abides. And because it abides there must be some mechanism, some procedures, by which God's people can express that grief. That is what David does in this passage; in his lament over Israel, Saul, and Jonathan, he provides a vehicle by which Israel can continue her mourning ... The sorrows and wounds God's people receive from their losses are not miraculously healed after a short time ... And sometimes in the church there is such an impatience with grief. Why isn't Allan 'over' Carol's death or Connie over Tom's since it's been eighteen months – why can't that mother get beyond the death of her ten-year-old? But the lament-form of the Bible assumes that our grief is deep and ongoing'. And then Professor Davis asks, 'Why should God's people be shoddy in their sorrow?' No, we do not sorrow as those who have no hope – but this doesn't mean that we do not sorrow!

But, however many reasons David may have had for composing and teaching this song, he clearly believed, as did the apostle Paul, in the principle of 'teaching ... one another in ... spiritual songs', Col. 3. 16.<sup>25</sup> For our hymns and songs perform not only a praising ministry but a teaching ministry. And, for this reason, we ought to be careful both about *what* we sing and about *how* we sing – considering both the doctrinal content of *what* we sing and the sincerity and level of concentration *with which* we sing.

*'Behold, it is written in the book of Jasher'*. Joshua 10. 13 provides the only other certain reference to the Book of Jasher ('the upright') in scripture – so clearly the record began very early in Israel's history. It may have been a collection of Israel's war songs or ballads. But we have no way of knowing – the book has long been out of print!

**Verse 19a. Opening metaphorical description of Saul and Jonathan – 'the beauty of Israel slain'.**

*'The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!'* I suggest that 'the beauty of Israel' refers to Saul and Jonathan as the leaders in Israel. The king and his noble son were the chief ornament of Israel.<sup>26</sup> 'Thy high places' means Israel's 'high places', here, of course, the heights of the 'mountains of Gilboa', v. 21.

### **Verse 19b. The first 'How are the mighty fallen?'**

These words bracket the entire poem, vv. 19, 27, as well as marking off the section about Jonathan alone, v. 25. I note that, when the curtain rose on Saul's royal career, he was seen standing; 'the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward', 1 Sam. 10. 22-23, but that, when the curtain dropped on that career, he is seen falling – five times in our chapter, vv. 10, 12, 19, 25, 27. And I hear Paul's warning yet again, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth heed lest he fall', 1 Cor. 10. 12.

### **Verses 20-24. The main body of the lamentation**

#### **'The daughters of the Philistines' – who David doesn't want to rejoice, v. 20**

*'Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.'* This was only a poetical wish, of course. David knew full well that such a command was ineffective. He was in no position to censor the Philistine press releases. And the Philistines would most certainly broadcast it both in Gath, at the eastern edge of Philistine territory near the hill country of Israel, and in Ashkelon, far off in the west on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. But what riled David in particular was the way in which the Philistine women, with their public songs and dances, will be leading the cheers and mocking, not only Israel, but Israel's God. It seems from Micah chapter 1 that David's words, 'Tell it not in Gath' became something of a proverb in later times; 'her (Israel's) wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah ... Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all', Mic. 1. 9-10. That is, the prophet warns the people not to weep lest the inhabitants of Gath learn of their impending doom. David had, of course, lived at Gath before moving to Ziklag and he had no illusions about the celebrations which had probably already begun there.

The point for us is simple – to make every effort to prevent the faults and failures of God's people being aired in public.

#### **The scene of the battle – cursed, v. 21a**

*'Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings.'* David summons nature itself to join in mourning for Saul. Gilboa is a ridge some eight miles long and three to five miles wide running southeast and south from Jezreel. It slopes gradually to the west and on this gentle fertile slope barley, wheat, figs and olives are grown. It was this western slope – the scene of Israel's disaster – to which David directed his curse of perpetual drought and barrenness. By becoming a place of death – of dry, fruitless fields – it would serve as a memorial to the human deaths which had occurred there.<sup>27</sup>

#### **The weapons of war – the shield and sword of Saul, and the bow of Jonathan, vv. 21b, 22**

**Verse 21b.** *'For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.'* The close of the verse is literally, 'there was defiled the shield of the mighty, the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil' – and the reference to the absence of anointing is probably a reference to Saul's shield rather than to Saul himself.<sup>28</sup> Oil rubbed on a wooden and leather shield was essential to keep it in proper condition – that it might successfully deflect missiles and darts. And, in his imagination, David sees Saul's shield lying somewhere on the mountain, no longer polished and ready for action, but now discarded as worthless.<sup>29</sup>

**Verse 22.** *'From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.'* How could David ever forget the bow of Jonathan, with which one day Jonathan had caused one of his arrows to go 'beyond the lad', as confirmation of Saul's hatred for David, 1 Sam. 20. 36. For that was the occasion when a solemn oath had passed between him and Jonathan, his covenant-brother, which would bind not only him – as had their earlier covenant – but his seed for ever. And again, was the reference to Jonathan's bow here a flash-back to the gift which Jonathan had given him at an ever earlier time, when they had made their first covenant together, 1 Sam. 18. 4 – when the first-born son of a king handed his most prized possessions to the last-born son of a sheep-farmer!

And *'the sword of Saul'*? David was confident that, though Saul's shield may now lie unpolished and ineffective somewhere on Gilboa, Saul's sword, clear of its scabbard, had been, not only active, but highly effective while the battle raged there.

#### **The quality of the men – beloved, pleasant, united, swift and strong, v. 23**

*'Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.'* The word 'pleasant' signifies 'pleasing, agreeable'. David's statement that Saul and Jonathan were together in death says more than that they were slain on the same battlefield. David recognized that Jonathan had remained loyal to his father right till the last, in spite of Jonathan's knowledge that one day David would rule Israel, and not he. Even at



the battle which cut the mighty warrior down he remained faithful to his father as together they fought their common foe. And David also knew that, in spite of temporary outbursts of passion, king Saul dearly loved his oldest son to the last.

*'They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions'. Here David celebrated the military prowess of the two great men, swooping down as birds of prey to devour some hapless enemy, and greater in strength than lions, acknowledged by Solomon to be the 'strongest among beasts, which turneth not away for any', Prov. 30. 30. And David knew all about the strength of lions – he had had occasion to tackle more than one in his youth, 1 Sam. 17. 34-37.*

#### **'The daughters of Israel' – who David does want to weep, v. 24**

**Verse 24.** *'Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel'.* David now calls on those women who had once celebrated Saul's triumphs and shared the spoils of his victories to lament his loss. I take it that David's reference to purple clothing and gold ornaments indicates the general economic prosperity which Saul's reign had brought to Israel following the near-anarchy which had prevailed through the days of the judges.

Having assigned the task of weeping over Saul to the women, David turns now to mourn himself over Jonathan.

#### **Verses 25-26. David's personal lamentation for Jonathan, his devoted friend**

**Verse 25.** *O Jonathan, thou wast slain in (on) thine high places'.* Jonathan, hero of fights beyond number, slain on a mountain height such he had once won from the Philistines and defended so successfully.<sup>30</sup>

**Verse 26.** *'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women'.* David had described both Saul and Jonathan as 'pleasant' in their lives – but Jonathan had been specially so to David.

Over the years, David had had many loyal and devoted followers, but he had never had a friend like Jonathan. Jonathan's sister, Michal, had loved David as a young and brave warrior, 1 Sam. 18. 20, 28, but she wasn't able to cope with David the leaping, dancing harpist, 2 Sam. 6. 14-16, 20-22. Jonathan's father, Saul, loved David the harpist, but he wasn't able to cope with David's success as a warrior. Only Jonathan loved David as a whole person.

David's description of Jonathan as his 'brother' isn't a reference to the family connection through Michal whereby Jonathan had become David's brother-in-law. David uses it here rather in the sense of his 'covenant brother', a bond forged soon after David's spectacular victory over Goliath.<sup>31</sup>

David acknowledged that Jonathan's 'love' for him had been wonderful – extraordinary, 'marvellous'.<sup>32</sup>

When commenting last year on the words of 1 Samuel 18. 1, 'Jonathan loved him (David) as his own soul', I noted two points about the relationship between Jonathan and David: First, that it is likely that Jonathan was considerably older than David – perhaps 25 years older.<sup>33</sup> And, second, that there is no question of there being anything improper or abnormal about their relationship. It is important to note that the Hebrew word translated 'love' here is nowhere used to describe either homosexual desire or activity.<sup>34</sup> When homosexual relationships are in view, the word employed consistently throughout the Old Testament is an entirely different word. The relationship between David and Jonathan was that of a pure and close friendship, built on a common faith in God and a common delight in His service.

#### **Verse 27. The last 'How are the mighty fallen?' and the closing metaphorical description of Saul and Jonathan – 'the weapons of war perished'.**

*'How are the mighty fallen'.* David doesn't say it – and, I guess, wouldn't have said it – but we know that in reality Saul had fallen long before the battle of Gilboa. In point of fact Saul had fallen when, in 1 Samuel 13 and 15, he had hardened his heart against God and against the word of God through His prophet.

I note that a summary of Saul's reign was given back towards the close of 1 Samuel 14: 'So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them'.

In many ways this summary of Saul's exploits, together with the family details which follow, 1 Sam. 14. 49-51, seem strangely out of place. In normal circumstances, we should expect to find any such summary material after the record of the individual's death.<sup>35</sup> I suggest that, by placing that section where He has, the Holy Spirit is telling us that Saul's disobedience in 1 Samuel 15 was pivotal – that, as Samuel told Saul at the time, 'the Strength of Israel' would not repent – that Saul had muffed his last chance as king (though not, of course, as a person) – and that the kingdom he had sinned away could not be recovered. In other words, that, as Israel's first king, it was already then over for Saul – long before his life actually came to its sad and tragic close. It is for this reason, I suggest, that the Holy Spirit has set out the positive achievements of Saul where He has.

And so we leave Saul – with his head and armour on display in heathen temples, with three of his sons dead, with his task of saving Israel unfinished, with his army decimated, with his territorial area significantly reduced, with his nation humiliated, with his God blasphemed. What else can be said? Just this – again – that *God was still God!* And He was still on course to fulfil His purpose. For His chosen king (as opposed to man's choice of a king), the man after His own heart, the man anointed as Israel's future king immediately after Saul's great act of disobedience – was waiting in the wings. And, in due course, of that 'man's seed', He – the Lord – would, according to His promise, 'bring to Israel a Saviour, Jesus', through whom would be proclaimed – to gentiles as to Jews – the forgiveness of sins and justification, Acts 13. 23, 38-39. Everything was therefore still very much on track, not only for the fulfilment of His promise, but for the ultimate fulfilment of His great and grand eternal purpose. Praise His name!

## Pick up the lessons :

**Verse 12.** We noted that it was the condition of 'the people of the Lord', as the verse specifically describes them, which disturbed David and his men – and observed that we also ought to feel, and to mourn over, not only our own weakness, failure and coldness, but over the weakness, failure and coldness of all who are truly 'the people of the Lord'.

**Verse 16.** David told the Amalekite, 'thy mouth hath testified against thee'. We do well to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned', Matt. 12. 36-37. Perhaps we need to pray with David in Psalm 141. 3, 'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips'.

**Verse 17.** We noted that David nursed no grievance against Saul and spoke only well of him after his death – and that, with just one, understandable exception, every negative thing which David said of Saul he said to his face. Let us determine to take a leaf out of David's book!

We saw that, at no point, did David make Saul out to be something he wasn't. David was truthful in all that he said about Saul although he was deliberately selective. We learnt from this that it isn't wrong for us also to be selective when speaking about others – that honesty doesn't require us to tell everything which we know about them.

**Verse 18.** We noted from David's requirement that others be taught his song about Saul and Jonathan that we should do what we can to see the upcoming generation are made aware of the great debt we – and they – owe to men of God of a bygone day.

We also noted that the sorrows and wounds God's people receive from their losses aren't necessarily healed after a short time ... and that as Christians we are sometimes far too impatient with the grief of others. Let us try to be more sensitive. It is true, of course, that we don't sorrow as those who have no hope – but that doesn't mean that we don't sorrow!

We saw that David clearly shared the convictions of the apostle Paul about 'teaching ... one another in ... spiritual songs', and concluded that we ought to be careful both about *what* we sing and about *how* we sing – considering both the doctrinal content of *what* we sing and the sincerity and level of concentration *with which* we sing.

**Verse 20.** From David's desire that the defeat of Israel shouldn't be broadcast in the cities of the Philistines, we learnt that we too should make every effort to prevent the faults and failures of God's people being aired before unbelievers.

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## End-notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'Good Grief' being the heading given to the second half of the chapter by D. R. Davis.
- <sup>2</sup> The introductory notes on 1 Samuel 16 read, "The section from 1 Sam. 16.1 to 2 Sam. 5.10 covers the rise of David to kingship over a united Israel. (Although there is a case for making the break at the end of 1 Samuel. For, just as Joshua begins with 'Now after the death of Moses', and Judges begins with 'Now after the death of Joshua,' so also 2 Samuel begins with 'Now ... after the death of Saul', 1. 1. That is, there is as sharp a break at 2 Sam. 1. 1 as at Josh. 1. 1 and Judg. 1. 1.)". But, as pointed out in the main notes here, on the basis of content, a good case can be made for treating the end of 2 Samuel 1 as a reasonable cut-off point.
- <sup>3</sup> See 'Kingship in Israel' – Annex A to the notes on 1 Samuel 16.
- <sup>4</sup> See, 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh (or, 'he to whom it belongs') comes', Gen. 49.10 NASB.
- <sup>5</sup> See 1 Sam. 8. 7-22 with Acts 13. 21.
- <sup>6</sup> A separate issue to his forfeiting his dynasty in 1 Samuel 13.
- <sup>7</sup> See Acts 13. 21-22.
- <sup>8</sup> Based on Bob Deffinbaugh's heading, 'What an Amalekite is Dying to Tell David'.
- <sup>9</sup> See the note to 1 Sam. 31. 10.
- <sup>10</sup> *Antiquities*, Book VI, chapter xiv, paragraph 7.
- <sup>11</sup> Compare the statement of Revelation 19 concerning the Lord Jesus, the coming Warrior-King, 'His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns', Rev. 19. 12, and note also how Jehoiada 'brought forth the king's son (Jehoash), and put the crown upon him', 2 Kings 11.12 (//2 Chronicles 23.11).
- <sup>12</sup> See NIDOTTE, number 731, volume 1, page 487. The armlet may well have been made of gold; compare use of the same Hebrew word in Num. 31. 50; 'We have therefore brought an oblation for the Lord, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and *bracelets* ('*armlets*'), rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the Lord'. Both Egyptian and Assyrian monuments represent kings and distinguished warriors as wearing highly ornamented bracelets or armlets.
- <sup>13</sup> See, for example, Josh. 7. 6; 1 Sam. 4. 12; Job 2. 12.
- <sup>14</sup> Compare David's questions to another young man back in 1 Samuel 30, 'To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou?', 1 Sam 30. 13.
- <sup>15</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh.
- <sup>16</sup> Compare 2 Sam. 18. 22.
- <sup>17</sup> Compare 'Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children', Matt. 27. 25.
- <sup>18</sup> See Deut. 19. 15.
- <sup>19</sup> Compare the words of our Lord's parable concerning the servant who made an excuse to cover his laziness, 'he (the servant's lord) saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?', Luke 19. 22-23.
- <sup>20</sup> Compare David's lamentation over Abner, 2 Sam. 3. 33-34, and Jeremiah's over Josiah, 2 Chron. 35. 25.
- <sup>21</sup> See, for example, A Plummer in the International Critical Commentary.
- <sup>22</sup> See 1 Sam. 18. 4; 20. 20, 22, 35-37.
- <sup>23</sup> See 1 Chron. 8. 40; 12. 2; 17. 17.
- <sup>24</sup> Although, if anything, the Amalekite gave the impression that Saul was in most danger from the Philistine charioteers and cavalry – rather than from their archers, 2 Sam. 1. 6.
- <sup>25</sup> Compare Eph. 5. 19.
- <sup>26</sup> The word, translated 'beauty' is used by Isaiah to refer to Israel's coming Messiah – the 'anointed' – who is Israel's true and supreme beauty and glory: 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be *beautiful* and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel', Isa. 4. 2; 'In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of *glory*, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people', Isa. 28. 5. Personally, I do not accept that the word translated 'beauty' should be rendered and taken as a reference to Jonathan alone. See NIDOTTE, number 7382, volume 3, pages 738-739, and the note to 2 Sam. 1. 19 in Keil/Delitzsch. For any who wish to look further into the argument, Ronald Youngblood in the Expositor's Bible Commentary is attracted to it.
- <sup>27</sup> For the rendering 'upsurging of deep' in place of 'fields of offerings' (based on the wording of a similar curse in the Aquat Epic from Ras Shamra), see *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, pages 594-595.
- <sup>28</sup> It is, I suppose, possible that 'not been anointed with oil' does refer to Saul as in the KJV – in which case the expression would mean, 'the shield of Saul, who shared the common fate just as if he had never been set apart as the Anointed of the Lord'.
- <sup>29</sup> Compare Isa. 21. 5, which urges the Babylonians to 'prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, and *anoint the shield*'.
- <sup>30</sup> See, for example, 1 Sam. 14. 12. That the description of Jonathan's tactics and victory are accurate has been confirmed some 3,000 years later. On pages 179-180 of his book, *The Bible as History*, The Reprint Society, 1956, Werner Keller records: "We owe to Major Vivian Gilbert, a British army officer, this description of a truly remarkable occurrence. Writing in his reminiscences (The Romance of the Last Crusade) he says: 'In the First World War a

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brigade major in Allenby's army in Palestine was on one occasion searching his Bible with the light of a candle, looking for a certain name. His brigade had received orders to take a village that stood on a rocky prominence on the other side of a deep valley. It was called Michmash and the name seemed somehow familiar. Eventually he found it in 1 Samuel 13 and read there: 'And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash'. It then went on to tell how Jonathan and his armour-bearer crossed over during the night 'to the Philistines' garrison' on the other side, and how they passed two sharp rocks: 'there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez and the name of the other Seneh', 1 Sam. 14. 4. They clambered up the cliff and overpowered the garrison, 'within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough', v.14. The main body of the enemy awakened by the melee thought they were surrounded by Saul's troops and 'melted away, and they went on beating down one another', v. 16. Thereupon Saul attacked with his whole force and beat the enemy. 'So the Lord saved Israel that day', v. 23.

"The brigade major reflected that there must still be this narrow passage through the rocks, between the two spurs, and at the end of it the 'half acre of land'. He woke the commander and they read the passage through together once more. Patrols were sent out. They found the pass, which was thinly held by the Turks, and which led past two jagged rocks—obviously Bozez and Seneh. Up on top, beside Michmash, they could see by the light of the moon a small flat field. The brigadier altered his plan of attack. Instead of deploying the whole brigade he sent one company through the pass under cover of darkness. The few Turks whom they met were overpowered without a sound, the cliffs were scaled, and shortly before daybreak the company had taken up a position on 'the half acre of land'.

The Turks woke up and took to their heels in disorder since they thought that they were being surrounded by Allenby's army. They were all killed or taken prisoner. 'And so', concludes Major Gilbert, 'after thousands of years British troops successfully copied the tactics of Jonathan'."

<sup>31</sup> Compare the use of the word with a similar sense in, 'Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us', Num. 20. 14; 'Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother?', 1 Kings 9. 12-13; 'they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother', 20. 32-33.

<sup>32</sup> The word translated 'marvellous' in Psa. 118. 23.

<sup>33</sup> See Annex A to 1 Samuel 18 – reproduced on the present CD for ease of reference.

<sup>34</sup> This word for 'love' (*'ahab*) is used, for instance by the Lord of Himself in Hosea 11. 1, 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him', and in Malachi 1. 2, 'yet I loved Jacob'. See the lengthy note in NIDOTTE, number 170, volume 1, pages 277-299 – especially the comments about David and Jonathan on page 294.

<sup>35</sup> The word translated 'fought against' in 1 Sam. 14. 47 is translated 'warred' in the following cases (taken as examples only) where reference is made to a king's exploits *after* the record of his death: (i) 'the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned ...', 1 Kings 14. 19; (ii) 'the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred ...', 1 Kings 22. 45; (iii) 'the rest of the acts of Jeroboam (Jeroboam II, that is), and all that he did, and his might, how he warred ...', 2 Kings 14. 28.