

# THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

This book contains the history of *David's* reign, arranged according to its leading features: viz.,

- (1) the commencement of his reign as king of *Judah* at Hebron, whereas the other tribes of Israel adhered to the house of Saul (2Sa. 1-4);
- (2) his promotion to be king over all Israel, and the victorious extension of his sway (2Sa. 5-9);
- (3) the decline of his power in consequence of his adultery (2Sa. 10-20);
- (4) the close of his reign (2Sa. 21-24). Parallels and supplements to this history, in which the reign of David is described chiefly in its connection with the development of the kingdom of God under the Old Testament, are given in 11-28 of the first book of Chronicles, where we have an elaborate description of the things done by David, both for the elevation and organization of the public worship of God, and also for the consolidation and establishment of the whole kingdom, and the general administration of government.

## I. David King over Judah; and Ishbosheth King over Israel.

When David received the tidings at Ziklag of the defeat of Israel and the death of Saul, he mourned deeply and sincerely for the fallen king and his noble son Jonathan (2Sa. 1). He then returned by the permission of God into the land of Judah, namely to Hebron, and was anointed king of Judah by the elders of that tribe; whereas Abner, the cousin and chief general of Saul, took Ishbosheth, the only remaining son of the fallen monarch, and made him king over the other tribes of Israel at Mahanaim (2Sa. 2: 1-11). This occasioned a civil war. Abner marched to Gibeon against David with the forces of Ishbosheth, but was defeated by Joab, David's commander-in-chief, and pursued to Mahanaim, in which pursuit Abner slew Asahel the brother of Joab, who was eagerly following him (2Sa. 2:12-32). Nevertheless, the conflict between the house of David and the house of Saul continued for some time longer, but with the former steadily advancing and the latter declining, until at length Abner quarrelled with Ishbosheth, and persuaded the tribes that had hitherto adhered to him to acknowledge David as king over all Israel. After the negotiations with David for effecting this, he was assassinated by Joab on his return from Hebron, — an act at which David not only expressed his abhorrence by a solemn mourning for Abner, but declared it still more openly by cursing Joab's crime (2Sa. 3). Shortly afterwards, Ishbosheth was assassinated in his own house by two Benjaminites; but this murder was also avenged by David, who ordered the

murderers to be put to death, and the head of Ishbosheth, that had been delivered up to him, to be buried in Abner's tomb (2Sa. 4). Thus the civil war and the threatened split in the kingdom were brought to an end, though without any complicity on the part of David, but rather against his will, viz., through the death of Abner, the author of the split, and of Ishbosheth, whom he had placed upon the throne, both of whom fell by treacherous hands, and received the reward of their rebellion against the ordinance of God. David himself, in his long school of affliction under Saul, had learned to put all his hope in the Lord his God; and therefore, when Saul was dead, he took no steps to grasp by force the kingdom which God had promised him, or to remove his rival out of the way by crime.

### **David's Conduct on Hearing of Saul's Death. His Elegy upon Saul and Jonathan. — Ch. 1.**

*2Sa. 1.* David received the intelligence of the defeat of Israel and the death of Saul in the war with the Philistines from an Amalekite, who boasted of having slain Saul and handed over to David the crown and armlet of the fallen king, but whom David punished with death for the supposed murder of the anointed of God (vv. 1-16). David mourned for the death of Saul and Jonathan, and poured out his grief in an elegiac ode (vv. 17-27). This account is closely connected with the concluding chapters of the first book of Samuel.

*2Sa. 1: 1-16.* DAVID RECEIVES THE NEWS OF SAUL'S DEATH. — Vv. 1-4. After the death of Saul, and David's return to Ziklag from his campaign against the Amalekites, there came a man to David on the third day, with his clothes torn and earth strewed upon his head (as a sign of deep mourning: see at 1Sa. 4:12), who informed him of the flight and overthrow of the Israelitish army, and the death of Saul and Jonathan.

*2Sa. 1: 1.* V. 1 may be regarded as the protasis to v. 2, so far as the contents are concerned, although formally it is rounded off, and וַיֵּשֶׁב forms the apodosis to וַיָּדֹעַ:

*"It came to pass after the death of Saul, David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites (1Sa. 30: 1-26), that David remained at Ziklag two days. And it came to pass on the third day," etc.*

Both of these notices of the time refer to the day, on which David returned to Ziklag from the pursuit and defeat of the Amalekites. Whether the battle at Gilboa, in which Saul fell, occurred before or after the return of David, it is impossible to determine. All that follows from the juxtaposition of the two events in v. 1, is that they were nearly contemporaneous. The man "came from

the army from with Saul,” and therefore appears to have kept near to Saul during the battle.

**2Sa. 1: 4.** David’s inquiry, “How did the thing happen?” refers to the statement made by the messenger, that he had escaped from the army of Israel. In the answer, **שָׁרַר** serves, like **כִּי** in other passages, merely to introduce the words that follow, like our *namely* (vid., Ewald, § 338, b.). “The people fled from the fight; and not only have many of the people fallen, but Saul and Jonathan his son are also dead.” **וְגַם ... וְגַם**: not only...but also.

**2Sa. 1: 5ff.** To David’s further inquiry how he knew this, the young man replied (vv. 6-10),

*“I happened to come (**נִקְרָהּ = נִקְרָא**) up to the mountains of Gilboa, and saw Saul leaning upon his spear; then the chariots (the war-chariots for the charioteers) and riders were pressing upon him, and he turned round and saw me,...and asked me, Who art thou? and I said, An Amalekite; and he said to me, Come hither to me, and slay me, for the cramp (**שָׁבַץ** according to the Rabbins) hath seized me (sc., so that I cannot defend myself, and must fall into the hands of the Philistines); for my soul (my life) is still whole in me. Then I went to him, and slew him, because I knew that after his fall he would not live; and took the crown upon his head, and the bracelet upon his arm, and brought them to my lord” (David).*

“After his fall” does not mean “after he had fallen upon his sword or spear” (Clericus), for this is neither implied in **נִפְלוּ** nor in **נִשְׁעַן עַל-חֲנִיתוֹ** (“supported, i.e., leaning upon his spear”), nor are we at liberty to transfer it from 1Sa. 31: 4 into this passage; but “after his defeat,” i.e., so that he would not survive this calamity. This statement is at variance with the account of the death of Saul in 1Sa. 31: 3ff.; and even apart from this it has an air of improbability, or rather of untruth in it, particularly in the assertion that Saul was leaning upon his spear when the chariots and horsemen of the enemy came upon him, without having either an armour-bearer or any other Israelitish soldier by his side, so that he had to turn to an Amalekite who accidentally came by, and to ask him to inflict the fatal wound. The Amalekite invented this, in the hope of thereby obtaining the better recompense from David. The only part of his statement which is certainly true, is that he found the king lying dead upon the field of battle, and took off the crown and armllet; since he brought these to David. But it is by no means certain whether he was present when Saul expired, or merely found him after he was dead.

**2Sa. 1:11, 12.** This information, the substance of which was placed beyond all doubt by the king’s jewels that were brought, filled David with the deepest sorrow. As a sign of his pain he rent his clothes; and all the men with him did the same, and mourned with weeping and fasting until the evening “for Saul

and for Jonathan his son, for the people of Jehovah, and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword” (i.e., in battle). “The people of Jehovah” and the “house or people of Israel” are distinguished from one another, according to the twofold attitude of Israel, which furnished a double ground for mourning. Those who had fallen were first of all members of the people of Jehovah, and secondly, fellow-countrymen. “They were therefore associated with them, both according to the flesh and according to the spirit, and for that reason they mourned the more” (Seb. Schmidt). “The only deep mourning for Saul, with the exception of that of the Jabeshites (1Sa. 31:11), proceeded from the man whom he had hated and persecuted for so many years even to the time of his death; just as David’s successor wept over the fall of Jerusalem, even when it was about to destroy Himself” (O. v. Gerlach).

*2Sa. 1:13.* David then asked the bringer of the news for further information concerning his own descent, and received the reply that he was the son of an Amalekite stranger, i.e., of an Amalekite who had emigrated to Israel.

*2Sa. 1:14.* David then reproached him for what he had done: “How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord’s anointed?” and commanded one of his attendants to slay him (vv. 15ff.), passing sentence of death in these words: “Thy blood come upon thy head (cf. Lev. 20: 9, Jos. 2;(1); for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord’s anointed.” <sup>fl</sup>

David regarded the statement of the Amalekite as a sufficient ground for condemnation, without investigating the truth any further; though it was most probably untrue, as he could see through his design of securing a great reward as due to him for performing such a deed (vid., 2Sa. 4:10), and looked upon a man who could attribute such an act to himself from mere avarice as perfectly capable of committing it. Moreover, the king’s jewels, which he had brought, furnished a practical proof that Saul had really been put to death. This punishment was by no means so severe as to render it necessary to “estimate its morality according to the times,” or to defend it merely from the standpoint of political prudence, on the ground that as David was the successor of Saul, and had been pursued by him as his rival with constant suspicion and hatred, he ought not to leave the murder of the king unpunished, if only because the people, or at any rate his own opponents among the people, would accuse him of complicity in the murder of the king, if not of actually instigating the murderer. David would never have allowed such considerations as these to lead him into unjust severity. And his conduct requires no such half vindication. Even on the supposition that Saul had asked the Amalekite to give him his death-thrust, as he said he had, it was a crime deserving of punishment to fulfil this request, the more especially as nothing is said about any such mortal

wounding of Saul as rendered his escape or recovery impossible, so that it could be said that it would have been cruel under such circumstances to refuse his request to be put to death. If Saul's life was still "full in him," as the Amalekite stated, his position was not so desperate as to render it inevitable that he should fall into the hands of the Philistines. Moreover, the supposition was a very natural one, that he had slain the king for the sake of a reward. But slaying the king, the anointed of the Lord, was in itself a crime that deserved to be punished with death. What David might more than once have done, but had refrained from doing from holy reverence for the sanctified person of the king, this foreigner, a man belonging to the nation of the Amalekites, Israel's greatest foes, had actually done for the sake of gain, or at any rate pretended to have done. Such a crime must be punished with death, and that by David who had been chosen by God and anointed as Saul's successor, and whom the Amalekite himself acknowledge in that capacity, since otherwise he would not have brought him the news together with the royal diadem.

*2Sa. 1:17-27.* DAVID'S ELEGY UPON SAUL AND JONATHAN. — An eloquent testimony to the depth and sincerity of David's grief for the death of Saul is handed down to us in the elegy which he composed upon Saul and his noble son Jonathan, and which he had taught to the children of Israel. It is one of the finest odes of the Old Testament; full of lofty sentiment, and springing from deep and sanctified emotion, in which, without the slightest allusion to his own relation to the fallen king, David celebrates without envy the bravery and virtues of Saul and his son Jonathan, and bitterly laments their loss. "*He said to teach,*" i.e., he commanded the children of Judah to practise or learn it. קִשֶׁת, *bow*; i.e., a song to which the title *Kesheth* or bow was given, not only because the bow is referred to (v. 22), but because it is a martial ode, and the bow was one of the principal weapons used by the warriors of that age, and one in the use of which the Benjaminites, the tribe-mates of Saul, were particularly skilful: cf. 1Ch. 8:40; 12: 2; 2Ch. 14: 7; 17:17. Other explanations are by no means so natural; such, for example, as that it related to the melody to which the ode was sung; whilst some are founded upon false renderings, or arbitrary alterations of the text, e.g., that of Ewald (*Gesch.* i. p. 41), Thenius, etc. This elegy was inserted in "*the book of the righteous*" (see at Jos. 10:13), from which the author of the books of Samuel has taken it.

The ode is arranged in three strophes, which gradually diminish in force and sweep (viz., vv. 19-24, 25-26, 27), and in which the vehemence of the sorrow so gradually modified, and finally dies away. Each strophe opens with the exclamation, "*How are the mighty fallen!*" The *first* contains all that had to be said in praise of the fallen heroes; the deepest mourning for their death; and praise of their bravery, of their inseparable love, and of the virtues of Saul as

king. The *second* commemorates the friendship between David and Jonathan. The *third* simply utters the last sigh, with which the elegy becomes silent. The *first* strophe runs thus:

*19 The ornament, O Israel, is slain upon thy heights!  
Oh how are the mighty fallen!*

*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!*

*21 Ye mountains of Gilboa,  
let now dew or rain be upon you,  
or fields of first-fruit offerings:  
For there is the shield of the mighty defiled,  
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.*

*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.*

*23 Saul and Jonathan, beloved and kind, in life  
And in death they are not divided.  
Lighter than eagles were they; stronger than lions.*

*24 Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,  
Who clothed you in purple with delight;  
Who put a golden ornament upon your apparel!*

*2Sa. 1:19.* The first clause of v. 19 contains the theme of the entire ode. הַצֵּבִי does not mean the gazelle here (as the Syriac and Clericus and others render it), the only plausible support of which is the expression “upon thy heights,” whereas the parallel גִּבּוֹרִים shows that by הַצֵּבִי we are to understand the two heroes Saul and Jonathan, and that the word is used in the appellative sense of *ornament*. The king and his noble son were the ornament of Israel. They were slain upon the heights of Israel. Luther has given a correct rendering, so far as the sense is concerned (*die Edelsten*, the noblest), after the *inclyti* of the Vulgate. The pronoun “*thy* high places” refers to Israel. The reference is to the heights of the mountains of Gilboa (see v. 21). This event threw Israel into deep mourning, which commences in the second clause.

*2Sa. 1:20.* The tidings of this mourning were not to be carried out among the enemies of Israel, lest they should rejoice thereat. Such rejoicing would only increase the pain of Israel at the loss it had sustained. Only two of the cities of Philistia are mentioned by name, viz., Gath, which was near, and Askelon, which was farther off by the sea. The rejoicing of the daughters of the

Philistines refers to the custom of employing women to celebrate the victories of their nation by singing and dancing (cf. 1Sa. 18: 6).

**2Sa. 1:21.** Even nature is to join in the mourning. May God withdraw His blessing from the mountains upon which the heroes have fallen, that they may not be moistened by the dew and rain of heaven, but, remaining in eternal barrenness, be memorials of the horrible occurrence that has taken place upon them. **הָרֵי גִלְבֹּעַ** is an address to them; and the preposition **בְּ** with the construct state is poetical: “*mountains in Gilboa*” (vid., Ewald, § 289, b.). In **אֲלֵךְ ... עֲלֵיכֶם** the verb **יָהִי** is wanting. The following words, **וְשָׂדֵי תְרוּמוֹת**, are in apposition to the foregoing: “*and let not fields of first-fruit offerings be upon you,*” i.e., fields producing fruit, from which offerings of first-fruits were presented. This is the simplest and most appropriate explanation of the words, which have been very differently, and in some respects very marvellously rendered. The reason for this cursing of the mountains of Gilboa was, that there the shield of the heroes, particularly of Saul, had been defiled with blood, namely the blood of those whom the shield ought to defend. **נָעַל** does not mean to throw away (Dietrich.), but to soil or defile (as in the Chaldee), then to abhor. “*Not anointed with oil,*” i.e., not cleansed and polished with oil, so that the marks of Saul’s blood still adhered to it. **בְּלִי** poetical for **לֵא**. The interpolation of the words “*as though*” (*quasi non esset unctus oleo*, Vulgate) cannot be sustained.

**2Sa. 1:22.** Such was the ignominy experienced upon Gilboa by those who had always fought so bravely, that their bow and sword did not turn back until it was satisfied with the blood and fat of the slain. The figure upon which the passage is founded is, that arrows drink the blood of the enemy, and a sword devours their flesh (vid., Deu. 32:42; Isa. 34: 5, 6; Jer. 46:10). The two principal weapons are divided between Saul and Jonathan, so that the bow is assigned to the latter and the sword to the former.

**2Sa. 1:23.** In death as in life, the two heroes were not divided, for they were alike in bravery and courage. Notwithstanding their difference of character, and the very opposite attitude which they assumed towards David, the noble Jonathan did not forsake his father, although his fierce hatred towards the friend whom Jonathan loved as his own soul might have undermined his attachment to his father. The two predicates, **נְאֻדָּב**, loved and amiable, and **נְעִים**, affectionate or kind, apply chiefly to Jonathan; but they were also suitable to Saul in the earliest years of his reign, when he manifested the virtues of an able ruler, which secured for him the lasting affection and attachment of the people. In his mourning over the death of the fallen hero, David forgets all the injury that Saul has inflicted upon him, so that he only brings out and celebrates the more

amiable aspects of his character. The light motion or swiftness of an eagle (cf. Hab. 1: 8), and the strength of a lion (vid., 2Sa. 17:10), were the leading characteristics of the great heroes of antiquity. — Lastly, in v. 24, David commemorates the rich booty which Saul had brought to the nation, for the purpose of celebrating his heroic greatness in this respect as well. שָׁנִי was the scarlet purple (see at Exo. 25: 4). “With delights,” or with lovelinesses, i.e., in a lovely manner.

The *second* strophe (vv. 25 and 26) only applies to the friendship of Jonathan:

*25 Oh how are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!  
Jonathan (is) slain upon thy heights!*

*26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:  
Thou wast very kind to me:  
Stranger than the love of woman was thy love to me!*

*2Sa. 1:25.* V. 25 is almost a verbal repetition of v. 19. צָר (v. 26) denotes the pinching or pressure of the heart consequent upon pain and mourning. נִפְלְאוֹתָהּ, *third pers. fem.*, like a verb לִי"ה with the termination lengthened (vid., Ewald, § 194, *b.*), to be wonderful or distinguished. אֶהְבֵּתֶךָ, thy love to me. Comparison to the love of woman is expressive of the deepest earnestness of devoted love.

*2Sa. 1:27.* The *third* strophe (v. 27) contains simply a brief aftertone of sorrow, in which the ode does away:

*Oh how are the mighty fallen,  
The instruments of war perished!*

“*The instruments of war*” are not the weapons; but the expression is a figurative one, referring to the heroes by whom war was carried on (vid., Isa. 13: 5). Luther has adopted this rendering (*die Streitbaren*).

## **David King over Judah, and Ishbosheth King over Israel. Battle at Gibeon. — Ch. 2.**

*2Sa. 2.* After David had mourned for the fallen king, he went, in accordance with the will of the Lord as sought through the Urim, to Hebron, and was there anointed king by the tribe of Jabesh, for the love which they had shown to Saul in burying his bones (vv. 1-7), and reigned seven years and a half at Hebron over Judah alone (vv. 10 and 11). Abner, on the other hand, put forward Ishbosheth the son of Saul, who still remained alive, as king over Israel (vv. 8 and 9); so that a war broke out between the adherents of Ishbosheth and those of David, in which Abner and his army were beaten, but the brave Asahel, the



son-in-law of David, was slain by Abner (vv. 12-32). The promotion of Ishbosheth as king was not only a continuation of the hostility of Saul towards David, but also an open act of rebellion against Jehovah, who had rejected Saul and chosen David prince over Israel, and who had given such distinct proofs of this election in the eyes of the whole nations, that even Saul had been convinced of the appointment of David to be his successor upon the throne. But David attested his unqualified submission to the guidance of God, in contrast with this rebellion against His clearly revealed will, not only by not returning to Judah till he had received permission from the Lord, but also by the fact that after the tribe of Judah had acknowledged him as king, he did not go to war with Ishbosheth, but contented himself with resisting the attack made upon him by the supporters of the house of Saul, because he was fully confident that the Lord would secure to him in due time the whole of the kingdom of Israel.

**2Sa. 2: 1-4a.** David's return to Hebron, and anointing as king over Judah. — V. 1. "*After this,*" i.e., after the facts related in 2Sa. 1, David inquired of the Lord, namely through the Urim, whether he should go up to one of the towns of Judah, and if so, to which. He received the reply, "*to Hebron,*" a place peculiarly well adapted for a capital, not only from its situation upon the mountains, and in the centre of the tribe, but also from the sacred reminiscences connected with it from the olden time. David could have no doubt that, now that Saul was dead, he would have to give up his existing connection with the Philistines and return to his own land. But as the Philistines had taken the greater part of the Israelitish territory through their victory at Gilboa, and there was good reason to fear that the adherents of Saul, more especially the army with Abner, Saul's cousin, at its head, would refuse to acknowledge David as king, and consequently a civil war might break out, David would not return to his own land without the express permission of the Lord. Vv. 2-4a. When he went with his wives and all his retinue (vid., 1Sa. 27: 2) to Hebron and the "*cities of Hebron,*" i.e., the places belonging to the territory of Hebron, the men of Judah came (in the persons of their elders) and anointed him king *over the house*, i.e., the tribe, *of Judah*. Just as Saul was made king by the tribes after his anointing by Samuel (1Sa. 11:15), so David was first of all anointed by Judah here, and afterwards by the rest of the tribes (2Sa. 5: 3).

**2Sa. 2: 4-7.** A new section commences with **וַיִּגְדֹּל**. The first act of David as king was to send messengers to Jabesh, to thank the inhabitants of this city for burying Saul, and to announce to them his own anointing as king. As this expression of thanks involved a solemn recognition of the departed king, by which David divested himself of even the appearance of a rebellion, the announcement of the anointing he had received contained an indirect summons to the Jabeshites to recognise him as their king now.

**2Sa. 2: 6.** “*And now,*” sc., that ye have shown this love to Saul your lord, “*may Jehovah show you grace and truth.*” “*Grace and truth*” are connected together, as in Exo. 34: 6, as the two sides by which the goodness of God is manifested to men, namely in His forgiving grace, and in His trustworthiness, or the fulfilment of His promises (vid., Psa. 25:10). “*And I also show you this good,*” namely the prayer for the blessing of God (v. 5), because ye have done this (to Saul). In v. 7 there is attached to this the demand, that now that Saul their lord was dead, and the Judaeans had anointed him (David) king, they would show themselves valiant, namely valiant in their reverence and fidelity towards David, who had become their king since the death of Saul. יְדִיכֶם תְּחַקְּנֶה, i.e., be comforted, spirited (cf. Jud. 7:11). It needed some resolution and courage to recognise David as king, because Saul’s army had fled to Gilead, and there was good ground for apprehending opposition to David on the part of Abner. Ishbosheth, however, does not appear to have been proclaimed king yet; or at any rate the fact was not yet known to David. וְגַם does not belong to אֶת־, but to the whole clause, as אֶת־ is placed first merely for the sake of emphasis.

**2Sa. 2: 8-11.** PROMOTION OF ISHBOSHETH TO BE KING OVER ISRAEL. —

The account of this is attached to the foregoing in the form of an antithesis: “*But Abner, the chief captain of Saul* (see at 1Sa. 14:50), *had taken Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and led him over to Mahanaim.*” Ishbosheth had probably been in the battle at Gilboa, and fled with Abner across the Jordan after the battle had been lost. *Ishbosheth* (i.e., man of shame) was the fourth son of Saul (according to 1Ch. 8:33; 9:39): his proper name was *Esh-baal* (i.e., fire of Baal, probably equivalent to destroyer of Baal). This name was afterwards changed into Ishbosheth, just as the name of the god Baal was also translated into *Bosheth* (“shame,” Hos. 9:10, Jer. 3:24, etc.), and Jerubbaal changed into Jerubbosheth (see at Jud. 8:35). Ewald’s supposition, that *bosheth* was originally employed in a good sense as well, like αἰδώς and פִּחַד (Gen. 31:53), cannot be sustained. *Mahanaim* was on the eastern side of the Jordan, not far from the ford of Jabbok, and was an important place for the execution of Abner’s plans, partly from its historical associations (Gen. 32: 2, 3), and partly also from its situation. There he made Ishbosheth king “*for Gilead,*” i.e., the whole of the land to the east of the Jordan (as in Num. 32:29, Jos. 22: 9, etc.). “*For the Ashurites:*” this reading is decidedly faulty, since we can no more suppose it to refer to Assyria (Asshur) than to the Arabian tribe of the Assurim (Gen. 25: 3); but the true name cannot be discovered.<sup>12</sup>

“*And for Jezreel,*” i.e., not merely the city of that name, but the plain that was named after it (as in 1Sa. 29: 1). “*And for Ephraim, and Benjamin, and all* (the

rest of) *Israel*,” of course not including Judah, where David had already been acknowledged as king.

**2Sa. 2:10, 11.** LENGTH OF THE REIGNS OF ISHBOSHETH OVER ISRAEL, AND DAVID AT HEBRON. — The age of Ishbosheth is given, as is generally the case at the commencement of a reign. He was forty years old when he began to reign, and reigned *two years*; whereas David was king at Hebron over the house of Judah *seven years and a half*. We are struck with this difference in the length of the two reigns; and it cannot be explained, as Seb. Schmidt, Clericus, and others suppose, on the simple assumption that David reigned two years at Hebron over *Judah*, namely up to the time of the murder of Ishbosheth, and then five years and a half over *Israel*, namely up to the time of the conquest of Jerusalem: for this is at variance with the plain statement in the text, that “David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah seven years and a half.” The opinion that the two years of Ishbosheth’s reign are to be reckoned up to the time of the war with David, because Abner played the principal part during the other five years and a half that David continued to reign at Hebron, is equally untenable. We may see very clearly from 2Sa. 3-5 not only that Ishbosheth was king to the time of his death, which took place after that of Abner, but also that after both these events David was anointed king over Israel in Hebron by all the tribes, and that he then went directly to attack Jerusalem, and after conquering the citadel of Zion, chose that city as his own capital. The short duration of Ishbosheth’s reign can only be explained, therefore, on the supposition that he was not made king, as David was, immediately after the death of Saul, but after the recovery by Abner of the land which the Philistines had taken on this side the Jordan, which may have occupied five years.<sup>63</sup>

**2Sa. 2:12-32.** WAR BETWEEN THE SUPPORTERS OF ISHBOSHETH AND THOSE OF DAVID. — Vv. 12, 13. When Abner had brought all Israel under the dominion of Ishbosheth, he also sought to make Judah subject to him, and went with this intention from Mahanaim to *Gibeon*, the present Jib, in the western portion of the tribe of Benjamin, two good hours to the north of Jerusalem (see at Jos. 9: 3), taking with him the servants, i.e., the fighting men, of Ishbosheth. There Joab, a son of Zeruiah, David’s sister (1Ch. 2:16), advanced to meet him with the servants, i.e., the warriors of David; and the two armies met at the pool of Gibeon, i.e., probably one of the large reservoirs that are still to be found there (see Rob. *Pal.* ii. pp. 135-6; Tobler, *Topogr. v. Jerusalem*, ii. pp. 515-6), the one encamping upon the one side of the pool and the other upon the other.

**2Sa. 2:14ff.** Abner then proposed to Joab that the contest should be decided by a single combat, probably for the purpose of avoiding an actual civil war. “*Let the young men arise and wrestle before us.*” שֶׁחָק, to joke or play, is used

here to denote the war-play of single combat. As Joab accepted this proposal, twelve young warriors for Benjamin and Ishbosheth, and twelve from David's men, went over, i.e., went out of the two camps to the appointed scene of conflict; *"and one seized the other's head, and his sword was (immediately) in the side of the other (his antagonist), so that they fell together."* The clause **וְחֶרְבוֹ בַצֵּד רָעָהוּ** is a circumstantial clause: and his sword (every one's sword) was in the side of the other, i.e., thrust into it. Sending the sword into the opponent's side is thus described as simultaneous with the seizure of his head. The ancient translators expressed the meaning by supplying a verb (**ἐνέπηξον**, *defixit*: LXX, Vulg.). This was a sign that the young men on both sides fought with great ferocity, and also with great courage. The place itself received the name of *Helkath-hazzurim*, "*field of the sharp edges*," in consequence (for this use of *zur*, see Psa. 89:44).

**2Sa. 2:17.** As this single combat decided nothing, there followed a general and very sore or fierce battle, in which Abner and his troops were put to flight by the soldiers of David. The only thing connected with this, of which we have any further account, is the slaughter of Asahel by Abner, which is mentioned here (vv. 18-23) on account of the important results which followed. Of the three sons of Zeruiah, viz., Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, Asahel was peculiarly light of foot, like one of the gazelles; and he pursued Abner most eagerly, without turning aside to the right or to the left.

**2Sa. 2:20, 21.** Then Abner turned round, asked him whether he was Asahel, and said to him, *"Turn to thy right hand or to thy left, and seize one of the young men and take his armour for thyself,"* i.e., slay one of the common soldiers, and take his accoutrements as booty, if thou art seeking for that kind of fame. But Asahel would not turn back from Abner. Then he repeated his command that he would depart, and added, *"Why should I smite thee to the ground, and how could I then lift up my face to Joab thy brother?"* from which we may see that Abner did not want to put the young hero to death, out of regard for Joab and their former friendship.

**2Sa. 2:23.** But when he still refused to depart in spite of this warning, Abner wounded him in the abdomen with the hinder part, i.e., the lower end of the spear, so that the spear came out behind, and Asahel fell dead upon the spot. The lower end of the spear appears to have been pointed, that it might be stuck into the ground (vid., 1Sa. 26: 7); and this will explain the fact that the spear passed through the body. The fate of the young hero excited such sympathy, that all who came to the place where he had fallen stood still to mourn his loss (cf. 2Sa. 20:12).

**2Sa. 2:24.** But Joab and Abishai pursued Abner till the sun set, and until they had arrived at the hill *Ammah*, in front of *Giah*, on the way to the desert of *Gibeon*. Nothing further is known of the places mentioned here.

**2Sa. 2:25, 26.** The Benjaminites then gathered in a crowd behind Abner, and halted upon the top of a hill to beat back their pursuers; and Abner cried out to Joab,

*“Shall the sword then devour for ever (shall there be no end to the slaughter)? dost thou not know that bitterness arises at last? and how long wilt thou not say to the people, to return from pursuing their brethren?”*

Thus Abner warns Joab of the consequences of a desperate struggle, and calls upon him to put an end to all further bloodshed by suspending the pursuit.

**2Sa. 2:27.** Joab replied, *“If thou hadst not spoken (i.e., challenged to single combat, v. 14), the people would have gone away in the morning, every one from his brother,”* i.e., there would have been no such fratricidal conflict at all. The first **וַיִּשְׁבַּח** introduces the substance of the oath, as in 1Sa. 25:34; the second gives greater force to it (vid., Ewald, § 330, *b.*). Thus Joab threw all the blame of the fight upon Abner, because he had been the instigator of the single combat; and as that was not decisive, and was so bloody in its character, the two armies had felt obliged to fight it out. But he then commanded the trumpet to be blown for a halt, and the pursuit to be closed.

**2Sa. 2:29.** Abner proceeded with his troops through the *Arabah*, i.e., the valley of the Jordan, marching the whole night; and then crossing the river, went through the whole of *Bithron* back to Mahanaim. *Bithron* is a district upon the eastern side of the Jordan, which is only mentioned here. Aquila and the Vulgate identify it with *Bethhoron*; but there is no more foundation for this than for the suggestion of Thenius, that it is the same place as *Bethharam*, the later *Libias*, at the mouth of the Nahr *Hesbân* (see at Num. 32:36). It is very evident that *Bithron* is not the name of a city, but of a district, from the fact that it is preceded by the word *all*, which would be perfectly unmeaning in the case of a city. The meaning of the word is a cutting; and it was no doubt the name given to some ravine in the neighbourhood of the Jabbok, between the Jordan and Mahanaim, which was on the north side of the Jabbok.

**2Sa. 2:30, 31.** Joab also assembled his men for a retreat. Nineteen of his soldiers were missing besides Asahel, all of whom had fallen in the battle. But they had slain as many as three hundred and sixty of Benjamin and of Abner’s men. This striking disproportion in the numbers may be accounted for from the fact that in Joab’s army there were none but brave and well-tried men, who had gathered round David a long time before; whereas in Abner’s army there were

only the remnants of the Israelites who had been beaten upon Gilboa, and who had been still further weakened and depressed by their attempts to recover the land which was occupied by the Philistines.

**2Sa. 2:32.** On the way back, David's men took up the body of Asahel, and buried it in his father's grave at Bethlehem. They proceeded thence towards Hebron, marching the whole night, so that they reached Hebron itself at daybreak. "*It got light to them* (i.e., the day dawned) *at Hebron.*"

### **David Advances and Ishbosheth Declines. Abner Goes Over to David, and Is Murdered by Joab. — Ch. 3.**

**2Sa. 3: 1.**

*"And the war became long (was protracted) between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David became stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul weaker and weaker."*

וַיִּלְחָמְ, when connected with another verb or with an adjective, expresses the idea of the gradual progress of an affair (vid., Ges. § 131, 3, Anm. 3). The historian sums up in these words the historical course of the two royal houses, as they stood opposed to one another. "*The war*" does not mean continual fighting, but the state of hostility or war in which they continued to stand towards one another. They concluded no peace, so that David was not recognised by Ishbosheth as king, any more than Ishbosheth by David. Not only is there nothing said about any continuance of actual warfare by Abner or Ishbosheth after the loss of the battle at Gibeon, but such a thing was very improbable in itself, as Ishbosheth was too weak to be able to carry on the war, whilst David waited with firm reliance upon the promise of the Lord, until all Israel should come over to him.

**2Sa. 3: 2-5.** GROWTH OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID. — Proof of the advance of the house of David is furnished by the multiplication of his family at Hebron. The account of *the sons who were born to David at Hebron* does not break the thread, as Clericus, Thenius, and others suppose, but is very appropriately introduced here, as a practical proof of the strengthening of the house of David, in harmony with the custom of beginning the history of the reign of every king with certain notices concerning his family (vid., 2Sa. 5:13ff.; 1Ki. 3: 1; 14:21; 15: 2, 9, etc.). We have a similar list of the sons of David in 1Ch. 3: 1-4. The first two sons were born to him from the two wives whom he had brought with him to Hebron (1Sa. 25:42, 43). The *Chethibh* וַיִּלְדוּ is probably only a copyist's error for וַיִּוָּלְדוּ, which is the reading in many Codices. From *Ahinoam* — the first-born, *Amnon* (called *Aminon* in 2Sa. 13:20); from *Abigail* — the second, *Chileab*. The latter is also called *Daniel* in 1Ch. 3: 1, and

therefore had probably two names. The *lamed* before Ahinoam and the following names serves as a periphrasis for the genitive, like the German *von*, in consequence of the word *son* being omitted (vid., Ewald, § 292, a.). The other four were by wives whom he had married in Hebron: *Absalom* by *Maachah*, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, a small kingdom in the north-east of Bashan (see at Deu. 3:14); *Adonijah* by *Haggith*; *Shephatiah* by *Abital*; and *Ithream* by *Eglah*. The origin of the last three wives is unknown. The clause appended to Eglah's name, viz., "*David's wife*," merely serves as a fitting conclusion to the whole list (Bertheau on 1Ch. 3: 3), and is not added to show that Eglah was David's principal wife, which would necessitate the conclusion drawn by the Rabbins, that Michal was the wife intended.

**2Sa. 3: 6-39.** DECLINE OF THE HOUSE OF SAUL. — Vv. 6-11. *Abner's quarrel with Ishbosheth.* — During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David, Abner adhered firmly to the house of Saul, but he appropriated one of Saul's concubines to himself. When Ishbosheth charged him with this, he fell into so violent a rage, that he at once announced to Ishbosheth his intention to hand over the kingdom to David. Abner had certainly perceived the utter incapacity of Ishbosheth for a very long time, if not from the very outset, and had probably made him king after the death of Saul, merely that he might save himself from the necessity of submitting to David, and might be able to rule in Ishbosheth's name, and possibly succeed in paving his own way to the throne. His appropriation of the concubine of the deceased monarch was at any rate a proof, according to Israelitish notions, and in fact those generally prevalent in the East, that he was aiming at the throne (vid., 2Sa. 16:21; 1Ki. 2:21). But it may gradually have become obvious to him, that the house of Saul could not possibly retain the government in opposition to David; and this may have led to his determination to persuade all the Israelites to acknowledge David, and thereby to secure for himself an influential post under his government. This will explain in a very simple manner Abner's falling away from Ishbosheth and going over to David.

**2Sa. 3: 6, 7.** v. 6 and 7 constitute one period, expanded by the introduction of circumstantial clauses, the **וַיָּבֹא** (it came to pass) of the protasis being continued in the **וַיֹּאמֶר** (he said) of v. 7b.

*"It came to pass, when there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, and Abner showed himself strong for the house of Saul, and Saul had a concubine named Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, that he (Ishbosheth) said to Abner, Why hast thou gone to my father's concubine?"*

The subject to "*said*" is omitted in the apodosis; but it is evident from v. 8, and the expression "*my father*," that *Ishbosheth* is to be supplied. Even in the

second circumstantial clause, “*and Saul had a concubine,*” the reason why this is mentioned is only to be gathered from Ishbosheth’s words. **הִתְחַזֵּק בְּ**: to prove one’s self strong for, or with, a person, i.e., to render him powerful help. **בְּוֹאֵ אֵל** means “*to cohabit with.*” It was the exclusive right of the successor to the throne to cohabit with the concubines of the deceased king, who came down to him as part of the property which he inherited.

**2Sa. 3: 8.** Abner was so enraged at Ishbosheth’s complaint, that he replied,

*“Am I a dog’s head, holding with Judah? To-day (i.e., at present) I show affection to the house of Saul thy father, towards his brethren and his friends, and did not let thee fall into the hand of David, and thou reproachest me to-day with the fault with the woman?”*

“*Dog’s head*” is something thoroughly contemptible. **אֲשֶׁר לַיהוּדָה**, *lit.* which (belongs) to Judah, i.e., holds with Judah.

**2Sa. 3: 9.** “*God do so to Abner,...as Jehovah hath sworn to David, so will I do to him.*” The repetition of **כִּי** serves to introduce the oath, as in 2Sa. 2:27. “*To take away the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.*” We do not know of any oath with which God had promised the kingdom to David; but the promise of God in itself is equivalent to an oath, as God is the true God, who can neither lie nor deceive (1Sa. 15:29; Num. 23:19). This promise was generally known in Israel. “*From Dan to Beersheba*” (as in Jud. 20: 1).

**2Sa. 3:11.** Ishbosheth could make no reply to these words of Abner, “*because he was afraid of him.*”

**2Sa. 3:12-21.** ABNER GOES OVER TO DAVID. — V. 12. Abner soon carried out his threat to Ishbosheth. He sent messengers to David *in his stead* (not “on the spot,” or immediately, a rendering adopted by the Chaldee and Symmachus, but for which no support can be found) with this message: “*Whose is the land?*” i.e., to whom does it belong except to thee? and, “*Make a covenant with me; behold, so is my hand with thee* (i.e., so will I stand by thee), *to turn all Israel to thee.*”

**2Sa. 3:13.** David assented to the proposal on this condition:

*“Only one thing do I require of thee, namely, Thou shalt not see my face, unless thou first of all bringest me Michal, the daughter of Saul, when thou comest to see my face.”* **כִּי אִם־לְפָנַי הָבִי־אֶת־**, “*except before thy bringing,*”

i.e., unless when thou hast first of all brought or delivered “Michal to me.” This condition was imposed by David, not only because Michal had been unjustly



taken away from him by Saul, after he had rightfully acquired her for his wife by paying the dowry demanded, and in spite of her love to him (1Sa. 18:27; 19:11, 12), and given to another man (1Sa. 25:44), so that he could demand her back again with perfect justice, and Ishbosheth could not refuse to give her up to him, but probably on political grounds also, namely, because the renewal of his marriage to the king's daughter would show to all Israel that he cherished no hatred in his heart towards the fallen king.

**2Sa. 3:14.** Thereupon, namely when Abner had assented to this condition, David sent messengers to Ishbosheth with this demand: *“Give (me) my wife Michal, whom I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines”* (see 1Sa. 18:25, 27). David sent to Ishbosheth to demand the restoration of Michal, that her return might take place in a duly legal form, *“that it might be apparent that he had dealt justly with Paltiel in the presence of his king, and that he had received his wife back again, and had not taken her by force from her husband”* (Seb. Schmidt).

**2Sa. 3:15.** Ishbosheth probably sent Abner to Gallim (1Sa. 25:44) to fetch Michal from her husband Paltiel (see at 1Sa. 25:44), and take her back to David. The husband was obliged to consent to this separation.

**2Sa. 3:16.** When he went with his wife, weeping behind her, to Bahurim, Abner commanded him to turn back; *“and he returned.”* Bahurim, Shimei's home (2Sa. 19:17; 1Ki. 2: 8), was situated, according to 2Sa. 16: 1, 5, and 17:18, upon the road from Jerusalem to Gilgal, in the valley of the Jordan, not far from the Mount of Olives, and is supposed by v. Schubert (*R.* iii. p. 70) to have stood upon the site of the present *Abu Dis*, though in all probability it is to be sought for farther north (see Rob. *Pal.* ii. p. 103). Paltiel had therefore followed his wife to the border of the tribe of Judah, or of the kingdom of David.

**2Sa. 3:17, 18.** But before Abner set out to go to David, he had spoken to the elders of Israel (the tribes generally, with the exception of Benjamin [see v. 19] and Judah):

*“Both yesterday and the day before yesterday (i.e., a long time ago), ye desired to have David as king over you. Now carry out your wish: for Jehovah hath spoken concerning David, Through my servant David will I save my people Israel out of the power of the Philistines and all their enemies.”*

**הושיע** is an evident mistake in writing for **אוישיע**, which is found in many MSS, and rendered in all the ancient versions.

**2Sa. 3:19.** Abner had spoken in the same way in the ears of Benjamin. He spoke to the Benjaminites more especially, because the existing royal family belonged to that tribe, and they had reaped many advantages in consequence (vid., 1Sa. 22: 7). The verb **הִיָּדַבֵּר** in the circumstantial clause (v. 17), and the verb **וַיִּדְבַּר** in v. 19, which serves as a continuation of the circumstantial clause, must be translated as pluperfects, since Abner's interview with the elders of Israel and with Benjamin preceded his interview with David at Hebron. We may see from Abner's address to the elders, that even among the northern tribes the popular voice had long since decided for David. In 1Ch. 12 we have historical proofs of this. The word of Jehovah concerning David, which is mentioned in v. 18, is not met with anywhere in this precise form in the history of David as it has come down to us. Abner therefore had either some expression used by one of the prophets (Samuel or Gad) in his mind, which he described as the word of Jehovah, or else he regarded the anointing of David by Samuel in accordance with the command of the Lord, and the marvellous success of all that David attempted against the enemies of Israel, as a practical declaration on the part of God, that David, as the appointed successor of Saul, would perform what the Lord had spoken to Samuel concerning Saul (1Sa. 9:16), but what Saul had not fulfilled on account of his rebellion against the commandments of the Lord.

**2Sa. 3:19b.** When Abner had gained over the elders of Israel and Benjamin to recognise David as king, he went to Hebron to speak in the ears of David "*all that had pleased Israel and the whole house of Benjamin,*" i.e., to make known to him their determination to acknowledge him as king. There went with him twenty men as representatives of all Israel, to confirm Abner's statements by their presence; and David prepared a meal for them all.

**2Sa. 3:21.** After the meal, Abner said to David,

*"I will raise and go and gather together all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with thee (i.e., do homage to thee before God as king), and thou mayest become king over all that thy soul desireth,"*

i.e., over all the nation of God; whereupon David took leave of him, and Abner went away in peace. The expression "*in peace*" serves to prepare the way for what follows. It is not stated, however, that David sent him away in peace (without avenging himself upon him), but that "David sent him away, and he went in peace." Apart altogether from the mildness of David's own character, he had no reason whatever for treating Abner as an enemy, now that he had given up all opposition to his reigning, and had brought all the Israelites over to him. What Abner had done for Ishbosheth, including his fighting against David, was indeed a sinful act of resistance to the will of Jehovah, which was not

unknown to him, and according to which Samuel had both called and anointed David king over the nation; but for all that, it was not an ordinary act of rebellion against the person of David and his rightful claim to the throne, because Jehovah had not yet caused David to be set before the nation as its king by Samuel or any other prophet, and David had not yet asserted the right to reign over all Israel, which had been secured to him by the Lord and guaranteed by his anointing, as one which the nation was bound to recognise; but, like a true servant of God, he waited patiently till the Lord should give him the dominion over all His people.

**2Sa. 3:22-30.** ABNER ASSASSINATED BY JOAB. — V. 22. After Abner's departure, the servants of David returned with much booty from a marauding expedition, and Joab at their head. The singular אֶבְנֵי may be explained from the fact that Joab was the principal person in the estimation of the writer. מְהַדְדֵי, *lit.* from the marauding host, i.e., from the work of a marauding host, or from a raid, which they had been making upon one of the tribes bordering upon Judah.

**2Sa. 3:23.** When Joab learned *Lit. they told him*, that Abner had been with David, and he had sent him away again, he went to David to reproach him for having done so. "*What hast thou done? Behold, Abner came to thee; why then hast thou sent him away, and he is gone quite away?*" i.e., so that he could go away again without being detained (for this meaning of the *inf. abs.*, see Ewald, § 280, *b.*).

*"Thou knowest (or more correctly as a question, Dost thou know?) Abner, the son of Ner, that he came to persuade thee (i.e., to make thee certain of his intentions), and to learn thy going out and in (i.e., all thine undertakings), and to learn all that thou wilt do"*

(i.e., all thy plans). Joab hoped in this way to prejudice David against Abner, to make him suspected as a traitor, that he might then be able to gratify his own private revenge with perfect impunity.

**2Sa. 3:26.** For Abner had only just gone away from David, when Joab sent messengers after him, no doubt in David's name, though without his knowledge, and had him fetched back "from *Bor-hasirah*, i.e., the cistern of *Sirah*." *Sirah* is a place which is quite unknown to us. According to Josephus (*Ant.* vii. 1, 5), it was twenty stadia from Hebron, and called Βησιρά.

**2Sa. 3:27.** When he came back, Joab "*took him aside into the middle of the gate, to talk with him in the stillness,*" i.e., in private, and there thrust him through the body, so that he died "*for the blood of Asahel his brother,*" i.e., for having put Asahel to death (2Sa. 2:23).

**2Sa. 3:28, 29.** When David heard this, he said,

*“I and my kingdom are innocent before Jehovah for ever of the blood of Abner. Let it turn (חָיַל), to twist one’s self, to turn or fall, irruit) upon the head of Joab and all his father’s house (or so-called family)! Never shall there be wanting (אֵל יִפְרֶת), let there not be cut off, so that there shall not be, as in Jos. 9:23) in the house of Joab one that hath an issue (vid., Lev. 15: 2), and a leper, and one who leans upon a stick (i.e., a lame person or cripple; פִּלֵּד, according to the LXX σκυτάλη, a thick round staff), and who falls by the sword, and who is in want of bread,”*

The meaning is: May God avenge the murder of Abner upon Joab and his family, by punishing them continually with terrible diseases, violent death, and poverty. To make the reason for this fearful curse perfectly clear, the historian observes in v. 30, that Joab and his brother Abishai had murdered Abner, *“because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle”* (2Sa. 2:23). This act of Joab, in which Abishai must have been in some way concerned, was a treacherous act of assassination, which could not even be defended as blood-revenge, since Abner had slain Asahel in battle after repeated warnings, and only for the purpose of saving his own life. The principal motive for Joab’s act was the most contemptible jealousy, or the fear lest Abner’s reconciliation to David should diminish his own influence with the king, as was the case again at a later period with the murder of Amasa (2Sa. 20:10).

**2Sa. 3:31-39.** DAVID’S MOURNING FOR ABNER’S DEATH. — Vv. 31, 32. To give a public proof of his grief at this murder, and his displeasure at the crime in the sight of all the nation, David commanded Joab, and all the people with him (David), i.e., all his courtiers, and the warriors who returned with Joab, to institute a public mourning for the deceased, by tearing their clothes, putting on sackcloth, i.e., coarse hairy mourning and penitential clothes, and by a funeral dirge for Abner; i.e., he commanded them to walk in front of Abner’s bier mourning and in funeral costume, and to accompany the deceased to his resting-place, whilst David as king followed the bier.

**2Sa. 3:32.** Thus they buried Abner at Hebron; and David wept aloud at his grave, and all the people with him.

**2Sa. 3:33, 34.** Although the appointment of such a funeral by David, and his tears at Abner’s grave, could not fail to divest the minds of his opponents of all suspicion that Joab had committed the murder with his cognizance (see at v. 37), he gave a still stronger proof of his innocence, and of the sincerity of his grief, by the ode which he composed for Abner’s death:

**33 Like an ungodly man must Abner die!**

**34 Thy hands were not bound,  
and thy feet were not placed in fetters.  
As one falls before sinners, so hast thou fallen!**

**2Sa. 3:33.** The first strophe (v. 33) is an expression of painful lamentation at the fact that Abner had died a death which he did not deserve. “*The fool*” (*nabal*) is “the ungodly,” according to Israelitish ideas (vid., Psa. 14: 1). The meaning of v. 34 is: Thou hadst not made thyself guilty of any crime, so as to have to die like a malefactor, in chains and bonds; but thou hast been treacherously murdered. This dirge made such an impression upon all the people (present), that they wept still more for the dead.

**2Sa. 3:35.** But David mourned so bitterly, that when all the people called upon him to take some food during the day, he declared with an oath that he would not taste bread or anything else before the setting of the sun. לָחֵם הַבְּרֹוֹת does not mean, as in 2Sa. 13: 5, to give to eat, on account of the expression “*all the people,*” as it can hardly be imagined that all the people, i.e., all who were present, could have come to bring David food, but it signifies to make him eat, i.e., call upon him to eat; whilst it is left uncertain whether David was to eat with the people (cf. 2Sa. 12:17), i.e., to take part in the funeral meal that was held after the burial, or whether the people simply urged him to take some food, for the purpose of soothing his own sorrow. אִם כִּי are to be taken separately: כִּי, ὅτι, introducing the oath, and אִם being the particle used in an oath: “*if,*” i.e., assuredly not.

**2Sa. 3:36.** “*And all the people perceived it (i.e., his trouble), and it pleased them, as everything that the king did pleased all the people.*”

**2Sa. 3:37.** All the people (sc., who were with the king) and all Israel discerned on that day (from David’s deep and heartfelt trouble), that the death of Abner had not happened (proceeded) from the king, as many may probably at first have supposed, since Joab had no doubt fetched Abner back in David’s name.

**2Sa. 3:38, 39.** Finally, David said to his (confidential) servants: “*Know ye not (i.e., surely perceive) that a prince and great man has this day fallen in Israel?*” This sentence shows how thoroughly David could recognise the virtues possessed by his opponents, and how very far he was from looking upon Abner as a traitor, because of his falling away from Ishbosheth and coming over to him, that on the contrary he hoped to find in him an able general and a faithful servant. He would at once have punished the murderer of such a man, if he had only possessed the power. “*But,*” he adds, “*I am this day (still) weak, and only anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too strong for*

me. The Lord reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.” The expression “to-day” not only applies to the word “weak,” or tender, but also to “anointed” (*to-day*, i.e., only just *anointed*). As David was still but a young sovereign, and felt himself unable to punish a man like Joab according to his deserts, he was obliged to restrict himself at first to the utterance of a curse upon the deed (v. 29), and to leave the retribution to God. He could not and durst not forgive; and consequently, before he died, he charged Solomon, his son and successor, to punish Joab for the murder of Abner and Amasa (1Ki. 2: 5).

## **Murder of Ishbosheth, and Punishment of the Murderers. — Ch. 4.**

**2Sa. 4: 1-6.** MURDER OF ISHBOSHETH. — V. 1. When the son of Saul heard of the death of Abner, “*his hands slackened,*” i.e., he lost the power and courage to act as king, since Abner had been the only support of his throne. “*And all Israel was confounded;*” i.e., not merely alarmed on account of Abner’s death, but utterly at a loss what to do to escape the vengeance of David, to which Abner had apparently fallen a victim.

**2Sa. 4: 2, 3.** Saul’s son had two leaders of military companies (for בְּנֵי־שָׁאוּל הָיוּ we must read הָיוּ לְבֵנֵי שׁ): the one was named *Baanah*, the other *Rechab*, sons of *Rimmon* the Beerothite, “*of the sons of Benjamin,*” i.e., belonging to them; “*for Beeroth is also reckoned to Benjamin*” (עַל, over, above, added to). *Beeroth*, the present *Bireh* (see at Jos. 9:17), was close to the western frontier of the tribe of Benjamin, to which it is also reckoned as belonging in Jos. 18:25. This remark concerning Beeroth in the verse before us, serves to confirm the statement that the Beerothites mentioned were Benjaminites; but that statement also shows the horrible character of the crime attributed to them in the following verses. Two men of the tribe of Benjamin murdered the son of Saul, the king belonging to their own tribe.

**2Sa. 4: 3.** “*The Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were strangers there unto this day.*” *Gittaim* is mentioned again in Neh. 11:33, among the places in which Benjaminites were dwelling after the captivity, though it by no means follows from this that the place belonged to the tribe of Benjamin before the captivity. It may have been situated outside the territory of that tribe. It is never mentioned again, and has not yet been discovered. The reason why the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and remained there as strangers until the time when this history was written, is also unknown; it may perhaps have been that the Philistines had conquered Gittaim.

**2Sa. 4: 4.** Before the historian proceeds to describe what the two Beerothites did, he inserts a remark concerning Saul's family, to show at the outset, that with the death of Ishbosheth the government of this family necessarily became extinct, as the only remaining descendant was a perfectly helpless cripple. He was a son of Jonathan, *smitten* (i.e., lamed) *in his feet*. He was five years old when the tidings came from Jezreel of Saul and Jonathan, i.e., of their death. His nurse immediately took him and fled, and on their hasty flight he fell and became lame. His name was *Mephibosheth* (according to Simonis, for **בְּשֵׁת מִפְּתָה**, destroying the idol); but in 1Ch. 8:34 and 9:40 he is called *Meribbaal* (Baal's fighter), just as Ishbosheth is also called *Eshbaal* (see at 2Sa. 2: 8). On his future history, see 2Sa. 9, 16: 1ff., and 19:25ff.

**2Sa. 4: 5.** The two sons of Rimmon went to Mahanaim, where Ishbosheth resided (2Sa. 2: 8, 12), and came in the heat of the day (at noon) into Ishbosheth's house, when he was taking his mid-day rest.

**2Sa. 4: 6.** *“And here they had come into the midst of the house, fetching wheat (i.e., under the pretext of fetching wheat, probably for the soldiers in their companies), and smote him in the abdomen; and Rechab and his brother escaped.”* The first clause in this verse is a circumstantial clause, which furnishes the explanation of the way in which it was possible for the murderers to find their way to the king. The second clause continues the narrative, and **וַיִּכְהוּ** is attached to **וַיִּבְּאוּ** (v. 5).<sup>f4</sup>

**2Sa. 4: 7-12.** PUNISHMENT OF THE MURDERERS BY DAVID. — V. 7. As the thread of the narrative was broken by the explanatory remarks in v. 6, it is resumed here by the repetition of the words **וַיִּבְּאוּ וַיִּגְּרֵ**: *“They came into the house, as he lay upon his bed in his bed-chamber, and smote him, and slew him,”* for the purpose of attaching the account of the further progress of the affair, viz., that they cut off his head, took it and went by the way of the Arabah (the valley of the Jordan: see 2Sa. 2:29) the whole night, and brought the head of Ishbosheth unto David to Hebron with these words: *“Behold (= there thou hast) the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul thine enemy, who sought thy life; and thus hath Jehovah avenged my lord the king this day upon Saul and his seed.”* No motive is assigned for this action. But there can be little doubt that it was no other than the hope of obtaining a great reward from David. Thus they presumed *“to spread the name of God and His providence as a cloak and covering over their villany, as the wicked are accustomed to do”* (*Berleb. Bible*).

**2Sa. 4: 9ff.** But David rewarded them very differently from what they had expected. He replied,

*“As Jehovah liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, the man who told me, Behold, Saul is dead, and thought he was a messenger of good to me, I seized and slew at Ziklag (vid., 1:14, 15), to give him a reward for his news: how much more when wicked men have murdered a righteous man in his house upon his bed, should I not require his blood at your hand, and destroy you from the earth?”*

The several parts of this reply are not closely linked together so as to form one period, but answer to the excited manner in which they were spoken. There is first of all the oath, *“As truly as Jehovah liveth,”* and the clause appended, *“who redeemed my soul,”* in which the thought is implied that David did not feel it necessary to get rid of his enemies by the commission of crimes. After this (v. 10) we have an allusion to his treatment of the messenger who announced Saul’s death to him, and pretended to have slain him in order that he might obtain a good reward for his tidings. כִּי, like ὅτι, simply introduces the address. הַמְגִיד ... בְּעֵינָיו is placed at the head absolutely, and made subordinate to the verb by בו after וְאֶחָזָהּ. לְתַתִּילּוּ. *“namely, to give him.”* אֲשֶׁר is employed to introduce the explanation, like our *“namely”* (vid., Ewald, § 338, b.). בְּשֵׂרָה, good news, here *“the reward of news.”* The main point follows in v. 11, beginning with אַף כִּי, *“how much more”* (vid., Ewald, § 354, c.), and is introduced in the form of a climax. The words אֲנָשִׁים ... מְשַׁבְּבוּ are also written absolutely, and placed at the head: *“men have slain,”* for *“how much more in this instance, when wicked men have slain.”* *“Righteous”* (zaddik), i.e., not guilty of any wicked deed or crime. The assumption of the regal power, which Abner had forced upon Ishbosheth, was not a capital crime in the existing state of things, and after the death of Saul; and even if it had been, the sons of Rimmon had no right to assassinate him. David’s sentence then follows: *“And now that this is the fact, that ye have murdered a righteous man, should I not,”* etc. בְּעֵר, to destroy by capital punishment, as in Deu. 13: 6, etc. בְּקִשׁ דָּם (= דָּרַשׁ דָּם, Gen. 9: 5), to require the blood of a person, i.e., to take blood-revenge.

**2Sa. 4:12.** David then commanded his servant to slay the murderers, and also to make the punishment more severe than usual. *“They cut off their hands and feet,”* — the hands with which they had committed the murder, and the feet which had run for the reward, — *“and hanged the bodies by the pool at Hebron”* for a spectacle and warning, that others might be deterred from committing similar crimes (cf. Deu. 21:22; J. H. Michaelis). In illustration of the fact itself, we may compare the similar course pursued by Alexander towards the murderer of king Darius, as described in Justin’s history (2Sa. 12: 6) and Curtius (2Sa. 7: 5). They buried Ishbosheth’s head in Abner’s grave at Hebron. Thus David acted with strict justice in this case also, not only to prove to the people that he had neither commanded nor approved of the murder, but from



heartfelt abhorrence of such crimes, and to keep his conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

## **II. The Government of David over all Israel in the Time of its Strength and Glory.**

**2Sa. 5-9.** After the death of Ishbosheth, David was anointed in Hebron by all the tribes as king over the whole of Israel (2Sa. 5: 1-5). He then proceeded to attack the Jebusites in Jerusalem, conquered their fortress Zion, and made Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom; fortifying it still further, and building a palace in it (2Sa. 5: 6-16), after he had twice inflicted a defeat upon the Philistines (2Sa. 5:17-25). But in order that the chief city of his kingdom and the seat of his own palace might also be made the religious centre of the whole nation as a congregation of Jehovah, he first of all brought the ark of the covenant out of its place of concealment, and had it conveyed in a festal procession to Zion, and deposited there in a tent which had been specially prepared for it, as a place of worship for the whole congregation (2Sa. 6). He then resolved to erect for the Lord in Jerusalem a temple fitted for His name; and the Lord gave him in return the promise of the eternal perpetuity of his throne (2Sa. 7). To this there is appended a cursory account of David's wars with the neighbouring nations, by which not only his own sovereignty, but the Israelitish kingdom of God, was raised into a commanding power among the nations and kingdoms of the world. In connection with all this, David still maintained his affection and fidelity towards the fallen royal family of Saul, and showed compassion towards the last remaining descendant of that family (2Sa. 9).

This account of the unfolding of the power and glory of the kingdom of Israel, through the instrumentality of David and during his reign, is so far arranged chronologically, that all the events and all the enterprises of David mentioned in this section occurred in the first half of his reign over the whole of the covenant nation. The chronological arrangement, however, is not strictly adhered to, so far as the details are concerned; but the standpoint of material resemblance is so far connected with it, that all the greater wars of David are grouped together in 2Sa. 8 (see the introduction to 2Sa. 8). It is obvious from this, that the plan which the historian adopted was first of all to describe the internal improvement of the Israelitish kingdom of God by David, and then to proceed to the external development of his power in conflict with the opposing nations of the world.

**David Anointed King over All Israel. Jerusalem Taken, and Made the Capital of the Kingdom. Victories over the Philistines. — Ch. 5.**

**2Sa. 5: 1-5.** DAVID ANOINTED KING OVER ALL ISRAEL. — Vv. 1-3 (compare with this the parallel passages in 1Ch. 11: 1-3). After the death of Ishbosheth, all the tribes of Israel (except Judah) came to Hebron in the persons of their representatives the elders (vid., v. 3), in response to the summons of Abner (2Sa. 3:17-19), to do homage to David as their king. They assigned three reasons for their coming:

(1.) “Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh,” i.e., thy blood-relations, inasmuch as all the tribes of Israel were lineal descendants of Jacob (vid., Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9: 2).

(2.) “In time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast the leader of Israel (thou leddest out and broughtest in Israel),” i.e., thou didst superintend the affairs of Israel (see at Num. 27:17; and for the fact itself, 1Sa. 18: 5). מוֹצִיא הַיְיָתָה is an error in writing for הַיְיָתָה הַמוֹצִיא, and מְבִי for מְבִיא, with the א dropped, as in 1Ki. 21:21, etc. (vid., Olshausen, *Gr.* p. 69).

(3.) They ended by asserting that Jehovah had called him to be the shepherd and prince over His people. The remarks which we have already made at 2Sa. 3:18 respecting Abner’s appeal to a similar utterance on the part of Jehovah, are equally applicable to the words of Jehovah to David which are quoted here: “Thou shalt feed my people Israel,” etc. On the *Piska*, see the note to Jos. 4: 1.

**2Sa. 5: 3.** “All the elders of Israel came” is a repetition of v. 1a, except that the expression “all the tribes of Israel” is more distinctly defined as meaning “all the elders of Israel.”

*“So all the elders came;...and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the Lord (see at 2Sa. 3:21): and they anointed David king over (all) Israel.”*

The writer of the Chronicles adds, “according to the word of the Lord through Samuel,” i.e., so that the command of the Lord to Samuel, to anoint David king over Israel (1Sa. 16: 1, 12), found its complete fulfilment in this.

**2Sa. 5: 4, 5.** The age of David when he began to reign is given here, viz., thirty years old; also the length of his reign, viz., seven years and a half at Hebron over Judah, and thirty-three years at Jerusalem over Israel and Judah. In the books of Chronicles these statements occur at the close of David’s reign (1Ch. 29:27).

**2Sa. 5: 6-10.** Conquest of the Stronghold of Zion, and Choice of Jerusalem as the Capital of the Kingdom (cf. 1Ch. 11: 4, 9). — These parallel accounts agree in all the main points; but they are both of them merely brief extracts from a more elaborate history, so that certain things, which appeared of comparatively less importance, are passed over either in the one or the other, and the full

account is obtained by combining the two. The conquest of the citadel Zion took place immediately after the anointing of David as king over all the tribes of Israel. This is apparent, not only from the fact that the account follows directly afterwards, but also from the circumstance that, according to v. 5, David reigned in Jerusalem just as many years as he was king over all Israel.

**2Sa. 5: 6.** The king went with his men (i.e., his fighting men: the Chronicles have “all Israel,” i.e., the fighting men of Israel) to Jerusalem to the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, i.e., the natives or Canaanites; “*and they said* (the singular **וַיֹּאמֶר** is used because **הַיְבוּסִי** is a singular form) *to David, Thou wilt not come hither* (i.e., come in), *but the blind and lame will drive thee away: to say* (i.e., by which they meant to say), *David will not come in.*” **וְהִסִּירָךְ** is not used for the infinitive, but has been rightly understood by the LXX, Aben Ezra, and others, as a perfect. The perfect expresses a thing accomplished, and open to no dispute; and the use of the singular in the place of the plural, as in Isa. 14:32, is to be explained from the fact that the verb precedes, and is only defined precisely by the subject which follows (vid., Ewald, § 319, *a.*). The Jebusites relied upon the unusual natural advantages of their citadel, which stood upon Mount Zion, a mountain shut in by deep valleys on three different sides; so that in their haughty self-security they imagined that they did not even need to employ healthy and powerful warriors to resist the attack made by David, but that the blind and lame would suffice.

**2Sa. 5: 7.** However, David took the citadel Zion, i.e., “the city of David.” This explanatory remark anticipates the course of events, as David did not give this name to the conquered citadel, until he had chosen it as his residence and capital (vid., v. 9). **צִיּוֹן** (*Sion*), from **צָיָה**, to be dry: the dry or arid mountain or hill. This was the name of the southern and loftiest mountain of Jerusalem. Upon this stood the fortress or citadel of the town, which had hitherto remained in the possession of the Jebusites; whereas the northern portion of the city of Jerusalem, which was upon lower ground, had been conquered by the Judaeans and Benjaminites very shortly after the death of Joshua (see at Jud. 1: 8). — In v. 8 we have one circumstance mentioned which occurred in connection with this conquest. On that day, i.e., when he had advanced to the attack of the citadel Zion, David said, “Every one who smites the Jebusites, let him hurl into the waterfall (i.e., down the precipice) both the lame and blind, who are hateful to David’s soul.” This is most probably the proper interpretation of these obscure words of David, which have been very differently explained. Taking up the words of the Jebusites, David called all the defenders of the citadel of Zion “lame and blind,” and ordered them to be cast down the precipice without quarter. **צַנּוֹר** signifies a waterfall (*catarracta*) in Psa. 42: 8, the only other

passage in which it occurs, probably from צַנֵּר, to roar. This meaning may also be preserved here, if we assume that at the foot of the steep precipice of Zion there was a waterfall probably connected with the water of Siloah. It is true we cannot determine anything with certainty concerning it, as, notwithstanding the many recent researches in Jerusalem, the situation of the Jebusite fortress and the character of the mountain of Zion in ancient times are quite unknown to us. This explanation of the word *zinnor* is simpler than Ewald's assumption that the word signifies the steep side of a rock, which merely rests upon the fact that the Greek word *καταρράκτης* originally signifies a plunge.<sup>15</sup>

וַיִּנֶּע should be pointed as a *Hiphil* וַיִּנֶּע. The Masoretic pointing וַיִּנֶּע arises from their mistaken interpretation of the whole sentence. The *Chethibh* שָׁנְאוּ might be the *third pers. perf.*, "who hate David's soul;" only in that case the omission of אֲשֶׁר would be surprising, and consequently the *Keri* שָׁנְאוּ is to be preferred. "From this," adds the writer, "the proverb arose, 'The blind and lame shall not enter the house;' " in which proverb the epithet "blind and lame," which David applied to the Jebusites who were hated by him, has the general signification of "repulsive persons," with whom one does not wish to have anything to do. In the Chronicles not only is the whole of v. 7 omitted, with the proverb to which the occurrence gave rise, but also the allusion to the blind and lame in the words spoken by the Jebusites (v. 6); and another word of David's is substituted instead, namely, that David would make the man who first smote the Jebusites, i.e., who stormed their citadel, *head and chief*;<sup>16</sup>

and also the statement that Joab obtained the prize. The historical credibility of the statement cannot be disputed, as Thenius assumes, on the ground that Joab had already been chief (*sar*) for a long time, according to 2Sa. 2:13: for the passage referred to says nothing of the kind; and there is a very great difference between the commander of an army in the time of war, and a "head and chief," i.e., a commander-in-chief. The statement in v. 8 with regard to Joab's part, the fortification of Jerusalem, shows very clearly that the author of the Chronicles had other and more elaborate sources in his possession, which contained fuller accounts than the author of our books has communicated.

2Sa. 5: 9. "David dwelt in the fort," i.e., he selected the fort or citadel as his palace, "and called it David's city." David may have been induced to select the citadel of Zion as his palace, and by so doing to make Jerusalem the capital of the whole kingdom, partly by the natural strength of Zion, and partly by the situation of Jerusalem, viz., on the border of the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, and tolerably near to the centre of the land. "And David built, i.e., fortified (the city of Zion), round about from Millo and inwards." In the Chronicles we have וְעַד-הַסָּבִיב, "and to the environs or surroundings," i.e., to the encircling wall

which was opposite to the Millo. The fortification “inwards” must have consisted in the enclosure of Mount Zion with a strong wall upon the north side, where Jerusalem joined it as a lower town, so as to defend the palace against the hostile attacks on the north or town side, which had hitherto been left without fortifications. The “Millo” was at any rate some kind of fortification, probably a large tower or castle at one particular part of the surrounding wall (comp. Jud. 9: 6 with vv. 46 and 49, where *Millo* is used interchangeably with *Migdal*). The name (“the filling”) probably originated in the fact that through this tower or castle the fortification of the city, or the surrounding wall, was *filled* or completed. The definite article before *Millo* indicates that it was a well-known fortress, probably one that had been erected by the Jebusites. With regard to the situation of *Millo*, we may infer from this passage, and 1Ch. 11: 8, that the tower in question stood at one corner of the wall, either on the north-east or north-west, “where the hill of Zion has the least elevation and therefore needed the greatest strengthening from without” (Thenius on 1Ki. 9:15). This is fully sustained both by 1Ki. 11:27, where Solomon is said to have closed the breach of the city of David by building (fortifying) *Millo*, and by 2Ch. 32: 5, where Hezekiah is said to have built up all the wall of Jerusalem, and made *Millo* strong, i.e., to have fortified it still further (vid., 1Ki. 9:15 and 24).

**2Sa. 5:10.** And David increased in greatness, i.e., in power and fame, for Jehovah the God of hosts was with him.

**2Sa. 5:11-16.** DAVID’S PALACE, WIVES AND CHILDREN (comp. 1Ch. 14: 1-7). — King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, and afterwards, by the express desire of the latter, cedar-wood and builders, carpenters and stonemasons, who built him a house, i.e., a palace. *Hiram* (*Hirom* in 1Ki. 5:32; *Huram* in the Chronicles; LXX: εἰράμ; *Josephus*, Εἰραμος and Εἰρωμος), king of Tyre, was not only an ally of David, but of his son Solomon also. He sent to the latter cedar-wood and builders for the erection of the temple and of his own palace (1Ki. 5:21ff.; 2Ch. 2: 2ff.), and fitted out a mercantile fleet in conjunction with him (1Ki. 9:27, 28; 2Ch. 9:10); in return for which, Solomon not only sent him an annual supply of corn, oil, and wine (1Ki. 5:24; 2Ch. 2: 9), but when all the buildings were finished, twenty years after the erection of the temple, he made over to him twenty of the towns of Galilee (1Ki. 9:10ff.). It is evident from these facts that Hiram was still reigning in the twenty-fourth, or at any rate the twentieth, year of Solomon’s reign, and consequently, as he had assisted David with contributions of wood for the erection of his palace, that he must have reigned at least forty-five or fifty years; and therefore that, even in the latter case, he cannot have begun to reign earlier than the eighth year of David’s reign over all Israel, or from six to ten years after the conquest of the

Jebusite citadel upon Mount Zion. This is quite in harmony with the account given here; for it by no means follows, that because the arrival of an embassy from Hiram, and the erection of David's palace, are mentioned immediately after the conquest of the citadel of Zion, they must have occurred directly afterwards. The arrangement of the different events in the chapter before us is topical rather than strictly chronological. Of the two battles fought by David with the Philistines (vv. 17-25), the first at any rate took place before the erection of David's palace, as it is distinctly stated in v. 17 that the Philistines made war upon David when they heard that he had been anointed king over Israel, and therefore in all probability even before the conquest of the fortress of the Jebusites, or at any rate immediately afterwards, and before David had commenced the fortification of Jerusalem and the erection of a palace. The historian, on the contrary, has not only followed up the account of the capture of the fortress of Zion, and the selection of it as David's palace, by a description of what David gradually did to fortify and adorn the new capital, but has also added a notice as to David's wives and the children that were born to him in Jerusalem. Now, if this be correct, the object of Hiram's embassy cannot have been "to congratulate David upon his ascent of the throne," as Thenius maintains; but after he had ascended the throne, Hiram sent ambassadors to form an alliance with this powerful monarch; and David availed himself of the opportunity to establish an intimate friendship with Hiram, and ask him for cedar-wood and builders for his palace.<sup>17</sup>

*2Sa. 5:12.* "And David perceived (sc., from the success of his enterprises) that Jehovah had firmly established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake," i.e., because He had chosen Israel as His people, and had promised to make it great and glorious.

To the building of David's palace, there is appended in vv. 13-15 the account of the increase of his house by the multiplication of his wives and concubines, and of the sons who were born to him at Jerusalem (as in 1Ch. 14: 3ff.). Taking many wives was indeed prohibited in the law of the king in Deu. 17:17; but as a large harem was considered from time immemorial as part of the court of an oriental monarch, David suffered himself to be seduced by that custom to disregard this prohibition, and suffered many a heartburn afterwards in consequence, not to mention his fearful fall in consequence of his passion for Bathsheba. The concubines are mentioned before the wives, probably because David had taken many of them to Jerusalem, and earlier than the wives. In the Chronicles the concubines are omitted, though not "intentionally," as they are mentioned in 1Ch. 3: 9; but as being of no essential importance in relation to the list of sons which follows, because no difference was made between those born of concubines and those born of wives. "Out of Jerusalem," i.e., away from

Jerusalem: not that the wives were all born in Jerusalem, as the words which follow, “after he was come from Hebron,” clearly show. In the Chronicles, therefore, it is explained as meaning “in Jerusalem.” The sons are mentioned again both in 1Ch. 14: 5-7 and in the genealogy in 1Ch. 3: 5-8. *Shammua* is called *Shimea* in 1Ch. 3: 5, according to a different pronunciation. *Shammua*, *Shobab*, *Nathan*, and *Solomon* were sons of Bathsheba according to 1Ch. 3: 5.

**2Sa. 5:15.** *Elishua* is written incorrectly in 1Ch. 3: 6 as *Elishama*, because *Elishama* follows afterwards. There are two names after *Elishua* in 1Ch. 3: 6, 7, and 14: 6, 7, viz., *Eliphalet* and *Nogah*, which have not crept into the text from oversight or from a wrong spelling of other names, because the number of the names is given as nine in 1Ch. 3: 8, and the two names must be included in order to bring out that number. And, on the other hand, it is not by the mistake of a copyist that they have been omitted from the text before us, but it has evidently been done deliberately on account of their having died in infancy, or at a very early age. This also furnishes a very simple explanation of the fact, that the name *Eliphalet* occurs again at the end of the list, namely, because a son who was born later received the name of his brother who had died young. *Eliada*, the last but one, is called *Beeliada* in 1Ch. 14: 7, another form of the name, compounded with *Baal* instead of *El*. David had therefore nineteen sons, six of whom were born in Hebron (2Sa. 3: 2ff.), and thirteen at Jerusalem. Daughters are not mentioned in the genealogical accounts, because as a rule only heiresses or women who acquired renown from special causes were included in them. There is a daughter named *Thamar* mentioned afterwards in 2Sa. 13: 1.

**2Sa. 5:17-25.** David gains two Victories over the Philistines (compare 1Ch. 14: 8-17). — Both these victories belong in all probability to the interval between the anointing of David at Hebron over all Israel and the conquest of the citadel of Zion. This is very evident, so far as the first is concerned, from the words, “When the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel” (v. 17), not when David had conquered the citadel of Zion. Moreover, when the Philistines approached, David “went down to the hold,” or mountain fortress, by which we cannot possibly understand the citadel upon Zion, on account of the expression “went down.” If David had been living upon Zion at the time, he would hardly have left this fortification when the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim on the west of Jerusalem, but would rather have attacked and routed the enemy from the citadel itself. The second victory followed very soon after the first, and must therefore be assigned to the same period. The Philistines evidently resolved, as soon as the tidings reached them of the union of all the tribes under the sovereignty of David, that they would at

once resist the growing power of Israel, and smite David before he had consolidated his government.

**2Sa. 5:17.** “*The Philistines went up to seek David,*” i.e., to seek him out and smite him. The expression לִבְקֶשׁ לְבָקֵשׁ presupposes that David had not yet taken up his abode upon Zion. He had probably already left Hebron to make preparations for his attack upon the Jebusites. When he heard of the approach of the Philistines, he went down into the mountain fortress. “The hold” cannot be the citadel of Zion (as in vv. 7 and 9), because this was so high that they had to go up to it on every side; and it is impossible to sustain the opinion advanced by Bertheau, that the verb יָרַד (to go down) is used for falling back into a fortification. הַמְצֻודָה (the hold), with the definite article, is probably the mountain stronghold in the desert of Judah, into which David withdrew for a long time to defend himself from Saul (vid., 2Sa. 23:14 and 1Ch. 12: 8). In v. 18 the position of the Philistines is more minutely defined. The verse contains a circumstantial clause: “*The Philistines had come and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim,*” a valley on the west of Jerusalem, and only separated from the valley of Ben-hinnom by a narrow ridge of land (see at Jos. 15: 8). Instead of נִטְשׂוּ the Chronicles have יָבִישׁוּ, they had invaded, which is perfectly equivalent so far as the sense is concerned.

**2Sa. 5:19, 20.** David inquired of the Lord by the Urim whether he should go out against the foe, and whether God would give them into his hand,<sup>18</sup>

and when he had received an answer in the affirmative to both these questions, he went to *Baal-perazim* (lit. into Baal-perazim), and smote them there, and said (v. 20), “Jehovah hath broken mine enemies before me like a water-breach,” i.e., has smitten them before me, and broken their power as a flood breaks through and carries away whatever opposes it. From these words of David, the place where the battle was fought received the name of *Baal-perazim*, i.e., “possessor of breaches” (equivalent to *Bruch-hausen* or *Brechendorf*, *Breach-ham* or *Break-thorpe*). The only other passage in which the place is mentioned is Isa. 28:21, where this event is alluded to, but it cannot have been far from the valley of Rephaim.

**2Sa. 5:21.** The Philistines left their idols behind them there. They had probably brought them to the war, as the Israelites once did their ark, as an auxiliary force. “*And David took them away.*” The Chronicles have “their gods” instead of “their idols,” and “they were burned with fire” instead of נִשְׂפוּ, “he took them away,”<sup>19</sup> took them as booty. The reading in the Chronicles gives the true explanation of the fact, as David would certainly dispose of the idols in the manner prescribed in the law (Deu. 7: 5, 25). The



same reading was also most probably to be found in the sources employed by our author, who omitted it merely as being self-evident. In this way David fully avenged the disgrace brought upon Israel by the Philistines, when they carried away the ark in the time of Eli.

**2Sa. 5:22-25.** Although thoroughly beaten, the Philistines soon appeared again to repair the defeat which they had suffered. As David had not followed up the victory, possibly because he was not sufficiently prepared, the Philistines assembled again in the valley of Rephaim.

**2Sa. 5:23.** David inquired once more of the Lord what he was to do, and received this answer: “*Thou shalt not go up* (i.e., advance to meet the foe, and attack them in front); *turn round behind them, and come upon them* (attack them) *opposite to the Baca-shrubs.*” בְּכַסְיָם, a word which only occurs here and in the parallel passage in 1Ch. 14:14, is rendered ἀπίλους, pear-trees, by the LXX, and mulberry-trees by the Rabbin. But these are both of them uncertain conjectures. *Baca*, according to Abulfadl, is the name given in Arabic to a shrub which grows at Mecca and resembles the balsam, except that it has longer leaves and larger and rounder fruit, and from which, if a leaf be broken off, there flows a white pungent sap, like a white tear, which is all probability gave rise to the name בְּכַסְיָם = בְּכַסָּה, to weep (vid., Celsii, *Hierob.* i. pp. 338ff., and Gesenius, *Thes.* p. 205).

**2Sa. 5:24.**

*“And when thou hearest the rush of a going in the tops of the baca-shrubs, then bestir thyself,”* or hasten; *“for Jehovah has gone out before thee, to smite the army of the Philistines.”*

“The sound of a going,” i.e., of the advance of an army, was a significant sign of the approach of an army of God, which would smite the enemies of Jehovah and of His servant David; like the visions of Jacob (Gen. 32: 2, 3) and Elisha (2Ki. 6:17). “Then thou shalt bestir thyself,” *lit.* be sharp, i.e., active, quick: this is paraphrased in the Chronicles by “then thou shalt go out to battle.”

**2Sa. 5:25.** David did this, and smote the Philistines from *Geba* to the neighbourhood of *Gezer*. In the Chronicles we find “from *Gibeon*” instead of from *Geba*. The former is unquestionably the true reading, and *Geba* an error of the pen: for *Geba*, the present *Jeba*, was to the north of Jerusalem, and on the east of *Ramah* (see at Jos. 18:24); so that it is quite unsuitable here. But that is not the case with *Gibeon*, the present *el Jib*, on the north-west of Jerusalem (see at Jos. 9: 3); for this was on the way to *Gezer*, which was four Roman miles to the north of *Amws*, and is probably to be sought for on the site of the present *el Kubab* (see at Jos. 10:33).<sup>110</sup>

## Removal of the Ark to Jerusalem. — Ch. 6.

*2Sa. 6.* After David had selected the citadel of Zion, or rather Jerusalem, as the capital of the kingdom, he directed his attention to the organization and improvement of the legally established worship of the congregation, which had fallen grievously into decay since the death of Eli, in consequence of the separation of the ark from the tabernacle. He therefore resolved first of all to fetch out the ark of the covenant, as the true centre of the Mosaic sanctuary, from its obscurity and bring it up to Zion; and having deposited it in a tent previously prepared to receive it, to make this a place of worship where the regular worship of God might be carried on in accordance with the instructions of the law. That he should make the capital of his kingdom the central point of the worship of the whole congregation of Israel, followed so naturally from the nature of the kingdom of God, and the relation in which David stood, as the earthly monarch of that kingdom, towards Jehovah the God-king, that there is no necessity whatever to seek for even a partial explanation in the fact that David felt it desirable to have the high priest with the Urim and Thummim always close at hand. But why did not David remove the Mosaic tabernacle to Mount Zion at Jerusalem at the same time as the ark of the covenant, and so restore the divinely established sanctuary in its integrity? This question can only be answered by conjectures. One of the principal motives for allowing the existing separation of the ark from the tabernacle to continue, may have been that, during the time the two sanctuaries had been separated, two high priests had arisen, one of whom officiated at the tabernacle at Gibeon, whilst the other, namely Abiathar, who escaped the massacre of the priests at Nob and fled at once to David, had been the channel of all divine communications to David during the time of his persecution by Saul, and had also officiated as high priest in his camp; so that he could no more think of deposing him from the office which he had hitherto filled, in consequence of the reorganization of the legal worship, than he could of deposing Zadok, of the line of Eleazar, the officiating high priest at Gibeon. Moreover, David may from the very first have regarded the service which he instituted in connection with the ark upon Zion as merely a provisional arrangement, which was to continue till his kingdom was more thoroughly consolidated, and the way had been thereby prepared for erecting a fixed house of God, and so establishing the worship of the nation of Jehovah upon a more durable foundation. David may also have cherished the firm belief that in the meantime the Lord would put an end to the double priesthood which had grown out of the necessities of the times, or at any rate give him some direct revelation as to the arrangements which he ought to make.

We have a parallel account of the removal of the ark of the covenant to Zion in 1Ch. 13:15 and 16, which agrees for the most part *verbatim*, at all events in all

essential points, with the account before us; but the liturgical side of this solemn act is very elaborately described, especially the part taken by the Levites, whereas the account given here is very condensed, and is restricted in fact to an account of the work of removing the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem as carried out by David. David composed the 24th Psalm for the religious ceremonies connected with the removal of the ark to Mount Zion.

**2Sa. 6: 1-10.** THE ARK FETCHED FROM KIRJATH-JEARIM. — V. 1. “David assembled together again all the chosen men in Israel, thirty thousand.” יִסְרָף for אִסְרָף is the *Kal* of אָסַף, as in 1Sa. 15: 6, Psa. 104:29. עוֹד, *again, once more*, points back to 2Sa. 5: 1 and 3, where all Israel is said to have assembled for the first time in Hebron to anoint David king. It is true that that assembly was not convened directly by David himself; but this was not the point in question, but merely their assembling a second time (see Bertheau on 1Ch. 13: 5). בְּחֹרֵר does not mean “the young men” here (νεάνια, LXX), or “the fighting men,” but, according to the etymology of the word, “the picked men.” Instead of thirty thousand, the LXX have seventy chiliads, probably with an intentional exaggeration, because the number of men in Israel who were capable of bearing arms amounted to more than thirty thousand. The whole nation, through a very considerable body of representatives, was to take part in the removal of the ark. The writer of the Chronicles gives a more elaborate account of the preparations for these festivities (1Ch. 13: 1-5); namely, that David took counsel with the heads of thousands and hundreds, and all the leaders, i.e., all the heads of families and households, and then with their consent collected together the whole nation from the brook of Egypt to Hamath, of course not every individual, but a large number of heads of households as representatives of the whole. This account in the Chronicles is not an expansion of the brief notice given here; but the account before us is a condensation of the fuller description given in the sources that were employed by both authors.

**2Sa. 6: 2.** “David went with all the people that were with him to Baale-Jehuda, to fetch up the ark of God from thence.” The words מִבְּעַלֵּי יְהוּדָה cause some difficulty on account of the מֵן, which is used instead of the accusative with הָ *loc.*, like בְּעַלְתָּהּ in the Chronicles; yet the translators of the Septuagint, Chaldee, Vulgate, and other versions, all had the reading מֵן in their text, and בְּעַלֵּי has therefore been taken as an appellative and rendered ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων Ἰουδᾶ (“from the rulers of Judah”), or as Luther renders it, “from the citizens of Judah.” This is decidedly incorrect, as the word “thence” which follows is perfectly unintelligible on any other supposition than that *Baale-Jehudah* is the name of a place. *Baale-Jehudah* is another name of the city of

*Kirjath-jearim* (Jos. 15:60; 18:14), which is called *Baalath* in Jos. 15: 9 and 1Ch. 13: 6, according to its Canaanitish name, instead of which the name *Kirjath-jearim* (city of the woods) was adopted by the Israelites, though without entirely supplanting the old name. The epithet “of Judah” is a contraction of the fuller expression “city of the children of Judah” in Jos. 18:14, and is added to distinguish this Baal city, which was situated upon the border of the tribe of Judah, from other cities that were also named after Baal, such as *Baal* or *Baalath-beer* in the tribe of Simeon (1Ch. 4:33, Jos. 19: 8), *Baalath* in the tribe of Dan (Jos. 19:44), the present *Kuryet el Enab* (see at Jos. 9:17). The **בְּ** (from) is either a very ancient error of the pen that crept by accident into the text, or, if genuine and original, it is to be explained on the supposition that the historian dropped the construction with which he started, and instead of mentioning *Baale-Jehudah* as the place to which David went, gave it at once as the place from which he fetched the ark; so that the passage is to be understood in this way: “And David went, and all the people who were with him, out of Baale-Jehudah, to which they had gone up to fetch the ark of God” (Kimchi). In the sentence which follows, a difficulty is also occasioned by the repetition of the word **שֵׁם** in the clause **אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא ... עָלָיו**, “upon which the name is called, the name of Jehovah of hosts, who is enthroned above the cherubim.” The difficulty cannot be solved by altering the first **שֵׁם** into **שָׁם**, as Clericus, Thenius, and Bertheau suggest: for if this alteration were adopted, we should have to render the passage “where the name of Jehovah of hosts is invoked, who is enthroned above the cherubim (which are) upon it (i.e., upon the ark);” and this would not only introduce an unscriptural thought into the passage, but it would be impossible to find any suitable meaning for the word **עָלָיו**, except by making very arbitrary interpolations. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament we never meet with the idea that the name of Jehovah was invoked at the ark of the covenant, because no one was allowed to approach the ark for the purpose of invoking the name of the Lord there; and upon the great day of atonement the high priest was only allowed to enter the most holy place with the cloud of incense, to sprinkle the blood of the atoning sacrifice upon the ark. Moreover, the standing expression for “call upon the name of the Lord” is “**קָרָא בְּשֵׁם**”; whereas **נִקְרָא שֵׁם יְיָ עָלָיו** signifies “the name of Jehovah is called above a person or thing.” Lastly, even if **עָלָיו** belonged to **יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרִיבִים**, it would not only be a superfluous addition, occurring nowhere else in connection with “**יֹשֵׁב הַכְּ**”, not even in 1Ch. 13: 6 (vid., 1Sa. 4: 4; 2Ki. 19:15; Isa. 37:16; Ps. 99: 1), but such an addition if made at all would necessarily require **עָלָיו אֲשֶׁר** (vid., Exo. 25:22). The only way in which we can obtain a biblical thought and grammatical sense is by connecting **עָלָיו** with the **אֲשֶׁר** before **נִקְרָא**: “above which (ark) the name of Jehovah-Zebaoth is named,” i.e., above which

Jehovah reveals His glory or His divine nature to His people, or manifests His gracious presence in Israel. “The name of God denotes all the operations of God through which He attests His personal presence in that relation into which He has entered to man, i.e., the whole of the divine self-manifestation, or of that side of the divine nature which is turned towards men” (Oehler, Herzog’s *Real-Encycl.* x. p. 197). From this deeper meaning of “the name of God” we may probably explain the repetition of the word שֵׁם, which is first of all written absolutely (as at the close of Lev. 24:16), and then more fully defined as “the name of the Lord of hosts.”

**2Sa. 6: 3, 4.** “They set the ark of God upon a new cart, and took it away from the house of Abinadab.” הִרְבִּיב means here “to put (load) upon a cart,” and נָשָׂא to take away, i.e., drive off: for there are grammatical (or syntactical) reasons which make it impossible to render וַיִּשְׂאֵהוּ as a pluperfect (“they had taken”), on account of the previous וַיִּרְכְּבוּ.

The ark of the covenant had been standing in the house of Abinadab from the time when the Philistines had sent it back into the land of Israel, i.e., about seventy years (viz., twenty years to the victory at Ebenezer mentioned in 1Sa. 7: 1ff., forty years under Samuel and Saul, and about ten years under David: see the chronological table on pp. 210f.). The further statement, that “Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, drove the cart,” may easily be reconciled with this. These two sons were either born about the time when the ark was first taken to Abinadab’s house, or at a subsequent period; or else the term *sons* is used, as is frequently the case, in the sense of grandsons. The words from הִדְרָשָׁה (the last word in v. 3) to *Gibeah* in v. 4 are wanting in the Septuagint, and can only have been introduced through the error of a copyist, whose eye wandered back to the first עֵגְלָה in v. 3, so that he copied a whole line twice over; for they not only contain a pure tautology, a merely verbal and altogether superfluous and purposeless repetition, but they are altogether unsuitable to the connection in which they stand. Not only is there something very strange in the repetition of the הִדְרָשָׁה without an article after הָעֵגְלָה; but the words which follow, עִם אֲרוֹן ה' (with the ark of God), cannot be made to fit on to the repeated clause, for there is no sense whatever in such a sentence as this: “They brought it (the ark) out of the house of Abinadab, which is upon the hill, *with the ark of God.*” The only way in which the words “with the ark” can be made to acquire any meaning at all, is by omitting the repetition referred to, and connecting them with the new cart in v. 3: “Uzzah and Ahio...drove the cart with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark.” נָהַג, to drive (a carriage), is construed here with an accusative, in 1Ch. 13: 7 with אֲרוֹן ה', as in Isa. 11: 6.

2Sa. 6: 5. And David and all the house (people) of Israel were מִשְׁחָקִים, sporting, i.e., they danced and played, before Jehovah. בְּכָל עֵצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים, “with all kinds of woods of cypresses.” This could only mean, with all kinds of instruments made of cypress wood; but this mode of expression would be a very strange one even if the reading were correct. In the Chronicles, however (v. 8), instead of this strange expression, we find בְּכָל-עֹז וּבִשְׂרִירִים, “with all their might and with songs.” This is evidently the correct reading, from which our text has sprung, although the latter is found in all the old versions, and even in the Septuagint, which really combines the two readings thus: ἐν ὄργάνοις ἡρμουςμένοις ἐν ἰσχυρίαι καὶ ἐν ψαλμοῖς, where ἐν ὄργάνοις ἡρμουςμένοις is evidently the interpretation of בְּכָל עֵצֵי בְרוֹשִׁים; for the text of the Chronicles cannot be regarded as an explanation of Samuel. Moreover, songs would not be omitted on such a festive occasion; and two of the instruments mentioned, viz., the *kinnor* and *nebel* (see at 1Sa. 10: 5), were generally played as accompaniments to singing. The *vav* before בְּשִׂירִים, and before the different instruments, corresponds to the Latin *et...et*, both...and. תֶּרֶף, the timbrel. בְּמִנְעֵנִים וּבְצִלְצִלִּים, *sistris et cymbalis* (Vulg., Syr.), “with bells and cymbals” (Luther). מִנְעֵנִים, from נָעַע, are instruments that are shaken, the σῆιστρα, *sistra*, of the ancients, which consisted of two iron rods fastened together at one end, either in a semicircle or at right angles, upon which rings were hung loosely, so as to make a tinkling sound when they were shaken. צִלְצִלִּים = מְצַלְצִלִּים are cymbals or castanets. Instead of מִנְעֵנִים, we find חֲצֹצְרוֹת, trumpets, mentioned in the Chronicles in the last rank after the cymbals. It is possible that *sistra* were played and trumpets blown, so that the two accounts complete each other.

2Sa. 6: 6, 7. When the procession had reached the threshing-floor of *Nachon*, Uzzah stretched out his hand to lay hold of the ark, i.e., to keep it from falling over with the cart, because the oxen slipped. And the wrath of the Lord was kindled, and God slew Uzzah upon the spot. *Goren nachon* means “the threshing-floor of the stroke” (*nachon* from נָכָה, not from כּוֹן); in the Chronicles we have *goren chidon*, i.e., the threshing-floor of destruction or disaster (כִּידוֹן = כִּיד, Job. 21:20). *Chidon* is probably only an explanation of *nachon*, so that the name may have been given to the threshing-floor, not from its owner, but from the incident connected with the ark which took place there. Eventually, however, this name was supplanted by the name *Perez-uzzah* (v. 8). The situation of the threshing-floor cannot be determined, as all that we can gather from this account is that the house of Obed-edom the Gathite was somewhere near it; but no village, hamlet, or town is mentioned.<sup>11</sup>

Jerome paraphrases **כִּי שָׁמַטוּ הַבְּקָר** thus: “Because the oxen kicked and turned it (the ark over.” But **שָׁמַט** does not mean to kick; its true meaning is to let go, or let lie (Exo. 23:11; Deu. 15: 2, 3), hence to slip or stumble. The stumbling of the animals might easily have turned the cart over, and this was what Uzzah tried to prevent by laying hold of the ark. God smote him there “on account of the offence” (**שָׁלַח**, *ἀπ. λει.* from **שָׁלַח**, in the sense of erring, or committing a fault). The writer of the Chronicles gives it thus: “Because he had stretched out his hand to the ark,” though of course the text before us is not to be altered to this, as Thenius and Bertheau suggest.

**2Sa. 6: 8.** “And David was angry, because Jehovah had made a rent on Uzzah, and called the place *Perez-uzzah*” (rent of Uzzah). **פָּרַץ פָּרַץ**, to tear a rent, is here applied to a sudden tearing away from life. **יָחַר לְ** is understood by many in the sense of “he troubled himself;” but this meaning cannot be grammatically sustained, whilst it is quite possible to become angry, or fall into a state of violent excitement, at an unexpected calamity. The burning of David’s anger was not directed against God, but referred to the calamity which had befallen Uzzah, or speaking more correctly, to the cause of this calamity, which David attributed to himself or to his undertaking. As he had not only resolved upon the removal of the ark, but had also planned the way in which it should be taken to Jerusalem, he could not trace the occasion of Uzzah’s death to any other cause than his own plans. He was therefore angry that such misfortune had attended his undertaking. In his first excitement and dismay, David may not have perceived the real and deeper ground of this divine judgment. Uzzah’s offence consisted in the fact that he had touched the ark with profane feelings, although with good intentions, namely to prevent its rolling over and falling from the cart. Touching the ark, the throne of the divine glory and visible pledge of the invisible presence of the Lord, was a violation of the majesty of the holy God. “Uzzah was therefore a type of all who with good intentions, humanly speaking, yet with unsanctified minds, interfere in the affairs of the kingdom of God, from the notion that they are in danger, and with the hope of saving them” (O. v. Gerlach). On further reflection, David could not fail to discover where the cause of Uzzah’s offence, which he had atoned for with his life, really had lain, and that it had actually arisen from the fact that he (David) and those about him had decided to disregard the distinct instructions of the law with regard to the handling of the ark. According to Num. 4 the ark was not only to be moved by none but Levites, but it was to be carried on the shoulders, not in a carriage; and in v. 15, even the Levites were expressly forbidden to touch it on pain of death. But instead of taking these instructions as their rule, they had followed the example of the Philistines when they sent back the ark (1Sa. 6: 7ff.), and had placed it upon a new cart, and directed Uzzah to drive it,

whilst, as his conduct on the occasion clearly shows, he had no idea of the unapproachable holiness of the ark of God, and had to expiate his offence with his life, as a warning to all the Israelites.

**2Sa. 6: 9, 10.** David's excitement at what had occurred was soon changed into fear of the Lord, so that he said, "How shall the ark of Jehovah come to me?" If merely touching the ark of God is punished in this way, how can I have it brought near me, up to the citadel of Zion? He therefore relinquished his intention of bringing it into the city of David, and placed it in the house of Obed-edom the Gathite. *Obed-edom* was a Levite of the family of the Korahites, who sprang from Kohath (compare Exo. 6:21; 18:16, and 1Ch. 26: 4), and belonged to the class of Levitical doorkeepers, whose duty it was, in connection with other Levites, to watch over the ark in the sacred tent (1Ch. 15:18, 24). He is called the *Gittite* or *Gathite* from his birthplace, the Levitical city of *Gath-rimmon* in the tribe of Dan (Jos. 21:24; 19:45).

**2Sa. 6:11-19.** REMOVAL OF THE ARK OF GOD TO THE CITY OF DAVID (cf. 1Ch. 15). — Vv. 11, 12. When the ark had been in the house of Obed-edom for three months, and David heard that the Lord had blessed his house for the sake of the ark of God, he went thither and brought it up to the city of David with gladness i.e., with festal rejoicing, or a solemn procession. (For שִׂמְחָה, in the sense of festal rejoicing, or a joyous *fête*, see Gen. 31:27, Neh. 12:43, etc.) On this occasion, however, David adhered strictly to the instructions of the law, as the more elaborate account given in the Chronicles clearly shows. He not only gathered together all Israel at Jerusalem to join in this solemn act, but summoned the priests and Levites, and commanded them to sanctify themselves, and carry the ark "according to the right," i.e., as the Lord had commanded in the law of Moses, and to offer sacrifices during the procession, and sin songs, i.e., psalms, with musical accompaniment. In the very condensed account before us, all that is mentioned is the carrying of the ark, the sacrificing during the march, and the festivities of the king and people. But even from these few facts we see that David had discovered his former mistake, and had given up the idea of removing the ark upon a carriage as a transgression of the law.

**2Sa. 6:13.** The bearers of the ark are not particularly mentioned in this account; but it is very evident that they were Levites, as the Chronicles affirm, from the fact that the ark was carried this time, and not driven, as before. "*And it came to pass, when the bearers of the ark of Jehovah had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatted calf*" (i.e., had them sacrificed). These words are generally understood as meaning, that sacrifices of this kind were offered along the whole way, at the distance of six paces apart. This would certainly have



been a possible thing, and there would be no necessity to assume that the procession halted every six paces, until the sacrificial ceremony was completed, but the ark might have continued in progress, whilst sacrifices were being offered at the distances mentioned. And even the immense number of sacrificial animals that would have been required is no valid objection to such an assumption. We do not know what the distance really was: all that we know is, that it was not so much as ten miles, as Kirjath-jearim was only about twelve miles from Jerusalem, so that a few thousand oxen, and the same number of fatted calves, would have been quite sufficient. But the words of the text do not distinctly affirm that sacrifices were offered whenever the bearers advanced six paces, but only that this was done as soon as the bearers had taken the first six steps. So that, strictly speaking, all that is stated is, that when the procession had started and gone six paces, the sacrifice was offered, namely, for the purpose of inaugurating or consecrating the solemn procession. In 1Ch. 15 this fact is omitted; and it is stated instead (v. 26), that “when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, they offered seven bullocks and seven rams,” i.e., at the close of the procession, when the journey was ended, to praise God for the fact that the Levites had been enabled to carry the ark of God to the place appointed for it, without suffering the slightest harm.<sup>f12</sup>

## 2Sa. 6:14.

*“And David danced with all his might before the Lord (i.e., before the ark), and was girded with a white ephod (shoulder-dress).”*

Dancing, as an expression of holy enthusiasm, was a customary thing from time immemorial: we meet with it as early as at the festival of thanksgiving at the Red Sea (Exo. 15:20); but there, and also at subsequent celebrations of the different victories gained by the Israelites, none but women are described as taking part in it (Jud. 11:34; 21:19; 1Sa. 18: 6). The white ephod was, strictly speaking, a priestly costume, although in the law it is not prescribed as the dress to be worn by them when performing their official duties, but rather as the dress which denoted the priestly character of the wearer (see at 1Sa. 22:18); and for this reason it was worn by David in connection with these festivities in honour of the Lord, as the head of the priestly nation of Israel (see at 1Sa. 2:18). In v. 15 it is still further related, that David and all the house (nation) of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with jubilee and trumpet-blast. **תְּרוּעָה** is used here to signify the song of jubilee and the joyous shouting of the people. In the Chronicles (v. 28) the musical instruments played on the occasion are also severally mentioned.

**2Sa. 6:16.** When the ark came (i.e., was carried) into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and there she saw king David leaping and dancing before Jehovah, and despised him in her heart. וַיִּהְיֶה, “and it came to pass,” for וַיִּהְיֶה, because there is no progress made, but only another element introduced. וַיִּבֶן is a perfect: “the ark had come,...and Michal looked through the window,...there she saw,” etc. Michal is intentionally designated the daughter of Saul here, instead of the wife of David, because on this occasion she manifested her father’s disposition rather than her husband’s. In Saul’s time people did not trouble themselves about the ark of the covenant (1Ch. 13: 3); public worship was neglected, and the soul for vital religion had died out in the family of the king. Michal possessed teraphim, and in David she only loved the brave hero and exalted king: she therefore took offence at the humility with which the king, in his pious enthusiasm, placed himself on an equality with all the rest of the nation before the Lord.

**2Sa. 6:17.** When the ark was brought to the place appointed for it upon Mount Zion, and was deposited in the tent which David had prepared for it, he offered burnt-offerings and thank-offerings before the Lord. “In its place” is still further defined as “in the midst of the tent which David,” etc., i.e., in the Most Holy Place; for the tent would certainly be constructed according to the type of the Mosaic tabernacle. The burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered to consecrate the newly erected house of God.

**2Sa. 6:18, 19.** When the offering of sacrifice was over, David blessed the people in the name of the Lord, as Solomon did afterwards at the dedication of the temple (1Ki. 8:55), and gave to all the (assembled) people, both men and women, to every one a slice of bread, a measure (of wine), and a cake for a festal meal, i.e., for the sacrificial meal, which was celebrated with the *shelamim* after the offering of the sacrifices, and after the king had concluded the liturgical festival with a benediction. חֶלֶת לֶחֶם is a round cake of bread, baked for sacrificial meals, and synonymous with כֶּבֶד־לֶחֶם (1Ch. 16: 3), as we may see from a comparison of Exo. 29:23 with Lev. 8:26 (see the commentary on Lev. 8: 2). But the meaning of the ἄπ. λεγ. אֶשְׁפַּר is uncertain, and has been much disputed. Most of the Rabbins understand it as signifying a piece of flesh or roast meat, deriving the word from אֶשׁ and פָּר; but this is certainly false. There is more to be said in favour of the derivation proposed by L. de Dieu, viz., from the Ethiopic פַּר\$, *netiri*, from which Gesenius and Roediger (Ges. *Thes.* p. 1470) have drawn their explanation of the word as signifying a measure of wine or other beverage. For אֶשְׁשֵׁה, the meaning grape-cake or raisin-cake is established by Son of Sol. 2: 5 and Hos. 3: 1 (vid., Hengstenberg, *Christol.* on Hos. 3: 1). The people returned home after the festal meal.

**2Sa. 6:20-23.** When David returned home to bless his house, as he had previously blessed the people, Michal came to meet him with scornful words, saying,

*“How has the king of Israel glorified himself to-day, when he stripped himself before the eyes of the maids of his servants, as only one of the loose people strips himself!”*

The unusual combination **בְּהַגְלוֹת נְגִלוֹת** is explained by Ewald (§ 240, *e.*, p. 607) in this manner, that whilst, so far as the sense of the clause is concerned, the second verb ought to be in the infinitive absolute, they were both written with a very slight change of form in the infinitive construct; whereas others regard **נְגִלוֹת** as an unusual form of the infinitive absolute (*Ges. Lehrgeb.* p. 430), or a copyist’s error for **נְגַלָה** (Thenius, *Olsh. Gr.* p. 600). The proud daughter of Saul was offended at the fact, that the king had let himself down on this occasion to the level of the people. She availed herself of the shortness of the priests’ shoulder-dress, to make a contemptuous remark concerning David’s dancing, as an impropriety that was unbecoming in a king.

*“Who knows whether the proud woman did not intend to sneer at the rank of the Levites, as one that was contemptible in her eyes, since their humble service may have looked very trivial to her?”* (*Berleb. Bible.*)

**2Sa. 6:21, 22.** David replied, “Before Jehovah, who chose me before thy father and all his house, to appoint me prince over the people of Jehovah, over Israel, before Jehovah have I played (*lit.* joked, given utterance to my joy). And I will be still more despised, and become base in my eyes: and with the maidens of whom thou hast spoken, with them will I be honoured.” The copula *vav* before **שִׁחֲקֵתִי** serves to introduce the apodosis, and may be explained in this way, that the relative clause appended to “before Jehovah” acquired the power of a protasis on account of its length; so that, strictly speaking, there is an anakolouthon, as if the protasis read thus: “Before Jehovah, as He hath chosen me over Israel, I have humbled myself before Jehovah” (for “before him”). With the words “who chose me before *thy father and all his house,*” David humbles the pride of the king’s daughter. His playing and dancing referred to the Lord, who had chosen him, and had rejected Saul on account of his pride. He would therefore let himself be still further despised before the Lord, i.e., would bear still greater contempt from men than that which he had just received, and be humbled in his own eyes (*vid.*, *Psa.* 131: 1): then would he also with the maidens attain to honour before the Lord. For whoso humbleth himself, him will God exalt (*Mat.* 23:12). **בְּעֵינַי** is not to be altered into **בְּעֵינֶיךָ**, as in the LXX. This alteration has arisen from a total misconception of the nature of true humility, which is of no worth in its own eyes. The rendering given by De Wette

is at variance with both the grammar and the sense (“with the maidens,...with them will I magnify myself”); and so also is that of Thenius (“with them will I be honoured, i.e., indemnify myself for thy foolish contempt!”).

**2Sa. 6:23.** Michael was humbled by God for her pride, and remained childless to the time of her death.

## **David’s Resolution to Build a Temple. The Promised Perpetuity of His Throne. — Ch. 7.**

**2Sa. 7.** To the erection of a sanctuary for the ark upon Mount Zion there is appended an account of David’s desire to build a temple for the Lord. We find this not only in the text before us, but also in the parallel history in 1Ch. 17. When David had acquired rest from his enemies round about, he formed the resolution to build a house for the Lord, and this resolution was sanctioned by the prophet Nathan (vv. 1-3). But the Lord revealed to the prophet, and through him to David, that He had not required the building of a temple from any of the tribes of Israel, and that He would first of all build a house himself for His servant David, and confirm the throne to his seed for ever, and then he should build Him a temple (vv. 4-17). David then gave utterance to his thanksgiving for this glorious promise in a prayer, in which he praised the unmeasurable grace of God, and prayed for the fulfilment of this renewed promised of divine grace (vv. 18-29).<sup>13</sup>

Of the different exegetical treatises upon this passage, see *Christ. Aug. Crusii Hypomnemata*, ii. 190-219, and Hengstenberg’s *Christol.* i. 123ff.

**2Sa. 7: 1-3.** When David was dwelling in his house, i.e., the palace of cedar (2Sa. 5:11), and Jehovah had given him rest from all his enemies round about, he said to Nathan the prophet: “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God dwelleth within the curtains.” הַרְיָעָה in the singular is used, In Exo. 26: 2ff., to denote the inner covering, composed of a number of lengths of tapestry sewn together, which was spread over the planks of the tabernacle, and made it into a dwelling, whereas the separate pieces of tapestry are called יְרִיעֹת in the plural; and hence, in the later writers, יְרִיעֹת alternates sometimes with אֹהֶל (Isa. 54: 2), and at other times with אֹהֳלִים (Son. 1: 5; Jer. 4:20; 49:29). Consequently הַרְיָעָה refers here to the tent-cloth or tent formed of pieces of tapestry. “*Within* (i.e., surrounded by) *the tent-cloth:*” in the Chronicles we find “under curtains.” From the words “when the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies round about,” it is evident that David did not form the resolution to build the temple in the first years of his reign upon Zion, nor immediately after the completion of his palace, but at a later period (see the

remarks on 2Sa. 5:11, note). It is true that the giving of rest from all his enemies round about does not definitely presuppose the termination of *all* the greater wars of David, since it is not affirmed that this rest was a definitive one; but the words cannot possibly be restricted to the two victories over the Philistines (2Sa. 5:17-25), as Hengstenberg supposes, inasmuch as, however important the second may have been, their foes were not even permanently quieted by them, to say nothing of their being entirely subdued. Moreover, in the promise mentioned in v. 9, God distinctly says, “I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off *all* thine enemies before thee.” These words also show that at that time David had already fought against all the enemies round about, and humbled them. Now, as all David’s principal wars are grouped together for the first time in 2Sa. 8 and 10, there can be no doubt that the history is not arranged in a strictly chronological order. And the expression “after this” in 2Sa. 8: 1 is by no means at variance with this, since this formula does not at all express a strictly chronological sequence. From the words of the prophet, “Go, do all that is in thy heart, for the Lord is with thee,” it is very evident that David had expressed the intention to build a splendid palatial temple. The word **לך**, *go* (equivalent to “quite right”), is omitted in the Chronicles as superfluous. Nathan sanctioned the king’s resolution “from his own feelings, and not by divine revelation” (J. H. Michaelis); but he did not “afterwards perceive that the time for carrying out this intention had not yet come,” as Thenius and Bertheau maintain; on the contrary, the Lord God revealed to the prophet that David was not to carry out his intention at all.

**2Sa. 7: 4-17.** THE REVELATION AND PROMISE OF GOD. — V. 4. “*That night,*” i.e., the night succeeding the day on which Nathan had talked with the king concerning the building of the temple, the Lord made known His decree to the prophet, with instructions to communicate it to the king. **הֲאֵפֶאֶה וְגַרְ**, “Shouldst thou build me a house for me to dwell in?” The question involves a negative reply, and consequently in the Chronicles we find “thou shalt not.”

**2Sa. 7: 6, 7.** The reason assigned for this answer: “I have not dwelt in a house from the day of the bringing up of Israel out of Egypt even to this day, but I was wandering about in a tent and in a dwelling.” “*And in a dwelling*” (*mishcan*) is to be taken as explanatory, viz., in a tent which was my dwelling. As a tent is a traveller’s dwelling, so, as long as God’s dwelling was a tent, He himself appeared as if travelling or going from place to place. “In the whole of the time that I walked among all the children of Israel,...have I spoken a word to one of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Wherefore have ye not built me a cedar house?” A “cedar house” is equivalent to a palace built of costly materials. The expression **אֶחָד שְׁבַמֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל** (“one of the tribes of Israel”) is a striking one, as the feeding of the nation does not

appear to be a duty belonging to the “tribes,” and in the Chronicles we have **שֹׁפְטִים** (judges) instead of **שְׁבִטִים** (tribes). But if **שֹׁפְטִים** had been the original expression used in the text, it would be impossible to explain the origin and general acceptance of the word **שְׁבִטִים**. For this very reason, therefore, we must regard **שְׁבִטִים** as the original word, and understand it as referring to the *tribes*, which had supplied the nation with judges and leaders before the tie of David, since the feeding, i.e., the government of Israel, which was in the hands of the judges, was transferred to the tribes to which the judges belonged. This view is confirmed by Psa. 78:67, 68, where the election of David as prince, and of Zion as the site of the sanctuary, is described as the election of the *tribe* of Judah and the rejection of the tribe of Ephraim. On the other hand, the assumption of Thenius, that **שְׁבִטִים**, “shepherd-staffs,” is used poetically for shepherds, cannot be established on the ground of Lev. 27:32 and Micah 7:14. Jehovah gave two reasons why David’s proposal to build Him a temple should not be carried out:

- (1) He had hitherto lived in a tent in the midst of His people;
- (2) He had not commanded any former prince or tribe to build a temple.

This did not involve any blame, as though there had been something presumptuous in David’s proposal, or in the fact that he had thought of undertaking such a work without an express command from God, but simply showed that it was not because of any negligence on the part of the former leaders of the people that they had not thought of erecting a temple, and that even now the time for carrying out such a work as that had not yet come.

**2Sa. 7: 8.** After thus declining his proposal, the Lord made known His gracious purpose to David: “Thus saith Jehovah of hosts” (not only *Jehovah*, as in v. 5, but *Jehovah Sebaoth*, because He manifests himself in the following revelation as the God of the universe):

“I have taken thee from the pasturage (grass-plot), behind the flock, to be prince over my people Israel; and was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and exterminated all thine enemies before thee, and so made thee, **וַעֲשִׂיתִי** (perfect with *vav* consec.), a great name,...and created a place for my people Israel, and planted them, so that they dwell in their place, and do not tremble any more (before their oppressors); and the sons of wickedness do not oppress them any further, as at the beginning, and from the day when I appointed judges over my people Israel: and I create thee rest from all thine enemies. And Jehovah proclaims to thee, that Jehovah will make thee a house.”

The words **לְמַן הַיּוֹם ... עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל** are to be joined to **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, “as in the beginning,” i.e., in Egypt, and from the time of the judges; that is to say, during the rule of the judges, when the surrounding nations constantly oppressed and subjugated Israel. The plan usually adopted, of connecting the words with

**וַהֲנִיחֵתִי**, does not yield any suitable thought at all, as God had not given David rest from the very beginning of the times of the judges; but the period of the judges was long antecedent to the time of David, and was not a period of rest for the Israelites. Again, **וַהֲנִיחֵתִי** does not resume what is stated in v. 9, and is not to be rendered as a preterite in the sense of “I have procured thee rest,” but as a perfect with *vav consec.*, “and I procure thee rest” from what is now about to come to pass. And **וַהֲגִיד** is to be taken in the same way: the Lord shows thee, first of all through His promise (which follows), and then through the fact itself, the realization of His word. **וַהֲנִיחֵתִי** refers to the future, as well as the building of David’s house, and therefore not to the rest from all his enemies, which God had already secured for David, but to that which He would still further secure for him, that is to say, to the maintenance and establishment of that rest. The commentary upon this is to be found in Psa. 89:22-24. In the Chronicles (v. 10) there is a somewhat different turn given to the last clauses: “and I bend down all thine enemies, and make it (the bending-down) known to thee (by the fact), and a house will Jehovah build for thee.” The thought is not essentially changed by this; consequently there is no ground for any emendation of the text, which is not even apparently necessary, unless, like Bertheau, we misinterpret the words, and connect **וַהֲכִנְעֵתִי** erroneously with the previous clause.

**2Sa. 7: 8-16.** The connection between vv. 5-7 and 8-16 has been correctly indicated by Thenius as follows: Thou shalt not build a house for Me; but I, who have from the very beginning glorified myself in thee and my people (vv. 8-11), will build a house for thee; and thy son shall erect a house for me (v. 13). This thought is not merely “a play upon words entirely in the spirit of prophecy,” but contains the deep general truth that God must first of all build a man’s house, before the man can build God’s house, and applies it especially to the kingdom of God in Israel. As long as the quiet and full possession of the land of Canaan, which had been promised by the Lord to the people of God for their inheritance, was disputed by their enemies round about, even the dwelling-place of their God could not assume any other form than that of a wanderer’s tent. The kingdom of God in Israel first acquired its rest and consolation through the efforts of David, when God had made all his foes subject to him and established his throne firmly, i.e., had assured to his descendants the possession of the kingdom for all future time. And it was this which ushered in the time for the building of a stationary house as a dwelling for the name of the Lord, i.e., for the visible manifestation of the presence of God in the midst of His people. The conquest of the citadel of Zion and the elevation of this fortress into the palace of the king, whom the Lord had given to His people, formed the commencement of the establishment of the kingdom of God. But this

commencement received its first pledge of perpetuity from the divine assurance that the throne of David should be established for all future time. And this the Lord was about to accomplish: He would build David a house, and then his seed should build the house of the Lord. No definite reason is assigned why David himself was not to build the temple. We learn this first of all from David's last words (1Ch. 28: 3), in which he says to the assembled heads of the nation, "God said to me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name, because thou art a man of wars, and hast shed blood." Compare with this the similar words of David to Solomon in 1Ch. 22: 8, and Solomon's statement in his message to Hiram, that David had been prevented from building the temple in consequence of his many wars. It was probably not till afterwards that David was informed by Nathan what the true reason was. As Hengstenberg has correctly observed, the fact that David was not permitted to build the temple on account of his own personal unworthiness, did not involve any blame for what he had done; for David stood in a closer relation to the Lord than Solomon did, and the wars which he waged were wars of the Lord (1Sa. 25:28) for the maintenance and defence of the kingdom of God. But inasmuch as these wars were necessary and inevitable, they were practical proofs that David's kingdom and government were not yet established, and therefore that the time for the building of the temple had not yet come, and the rest of peace was not yet secured. The temple, as the symbolical representation of the kingdom of God, as also to correspond to the nature of that kingdom, and shadow forth the peace of the kingdom of God. For this reason, David, the man of war, was not to build the temple; but that was to be reserved for Solomon, the man of peace, the type of the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9: 5).

**2Sa. 7:12-16.** In vv. 12-16 there follows a more precise definition of the way in which the Lord would build a house for His servant David: "When thy days shall become full, and thou shalt lie with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, who shall come from thy body, and establish his kingdom. He will build a house for my name, and I shall establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." **הָקִים**, to set up i.e., to promote to royal dignity. **אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא** is not to be altered into **אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא**, as Thenius and others maintain. The assumption that Solomon had already been born, is an unfounded one (see the note to 2Sa. 5:11, p. 582); and it by no means follows from the statement in v. 1, to the effect that God had given David rest from all his enemies, that his resolution to build a temple was not formed till the closing years of his reign.

**2Sa. 7:14ff.**

*"I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me; so that if he go astray, I shall chastise him with rods of men, and with strokes of the children of men (i.e., not 'with moderate punishment, such as parents are accustomed to inflict,' as Clericus*



explains it, but with such punishments as are inflicted upon all men who go astray, and from which even the seed of David is not to be excepted). *But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I caused it to depart from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever.*”

It is very obvious, from all the separate details of this promise, that it related primarily to Solomon, and had a certain fulfilment in him and his reign. On the death of David, his son Solomon ascended the throne, and God defended his kingdom against the machinations of Adonijah (1Ki. 2:12); so that Solomon was able to say, “The Lord hath fulfilled His word that He spoke; for I have risen up in the stead of my father David,” etc. (1Ki. 8:20). Solomon built the temple, as the Lord said to David (1Ki. 5:19; 8:15ff.). But in his old age Solomon sinned against the Lord by falling into idolatry; and as a punishment for this, after his death his kingdom was rent from his son, not indeed entirely, as one portion was still preserved to the family for David’s sake (1Ki. 11: 9ff.). Thus the Lord punished him with rods of men, but did not withdraw from him His grace. At the same time, however unmistakeable the allusions to Solomon are, the substance of the promise is not fully exhausted in him. The threefold repetition of the expression “for ever,” the establishment of the kingdom and throne of David *for ever*, points incontrovertibly beyond the time of Solomon, and to the eternal continuance of the seed of David. The word *seed* denotes the posterity of a person, which may consist either in one son or in several children, or in a long line of successive generations. The idea of a number of persons living at the same time, is here precluded by the context of the promise, as only one of David’s successors could sit upon the throne at a time. On the other hand, the idea of a number of descendants following one another, is evidently contained in the promise, that God would not withdraw His favour from the seed, even if it went astray, as He had done from Saul, since this implies that even in that case the throne should be transmitted from father to son. There is still more, however, involved in the expression “for ever.” When the promise was given that the throne of the kingdom of David should continue “to eternity,” an eternal duration was also promised to the seed that should occupy this throne, just as in v. 16 the house and kingdom of David are spoken of as existing for ever, side by side. We must not reduce the idea of eternity to the popular notion of a long incalculable period, but must take it in an absolute sense, as the promise is evidently understood in Psa. 89:30: “I set his seed for ever, and this throne as the days of heaven.” No earthly kingdom, and no posterity of any single man, has eternal duration like the heaven and the earth; but the different families of men become extinct, as the different earthly kingdoms perish, and other families and kingdoms take their place. The posterity of David, therefore, could only last for ever by running out in a person who lives for ever, i.e., by culminating in the Messiah, who lives for ever, and

of whose kingdom there is no end. The promise consequently refers to the posterity of David, commencing with Solomon and closing with Christ: so that by the “seed” we are not to understand Solomon alone, with the kings who succeeded him, nor Christ alone, to the exclusion of Solomon and the earthly kings of the family of David; nor is the allusion to Solomon and Christ to be regarded as a double allusion to two different objects.

But if this is established, — namely, that the promise given to the seed of David that his kingdom should endure for ever only attained its ultimate fulfilment in Christ, — we must not restrict the building of the house of God to the erection of Solomon’s temple. “The building of the house of the Lord goes hand in hand with the eternity of the kingdom” (Hengstenberg). As the kingdom endures for ever, so the house built for the dwelling-place of the Lord must also endure for ever, as Solomon said at the dedication of the temple (1Ki. 8:13): “I have surely built Thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for Thee to abide in for ever.” The everlasting continuance of Solomon’s temple must not be reduced, however, to the simple fact, that even if the temple of Solomon should be destroyed, a new building would be erected in its place by the earthly descendants of Solomon, although this is also implied in the words, and the temple of Zerubbabel is included as the restoration of that of Solomon. For it is not merely in its earthly form, as a building of wood and stone, that the temple is referred to, but also and chiefly in its essential characteristic, as the place of the manifestation and presence of God in the midst of His people. The earthly form is perishable, the essence eternal. This essence was the dwelling of God in the midst of His people, which did not cease with the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, but culminated in the appearance of Jesus Christ, in whom Jehovah came to His people, and, as God the Word, made human nature His dwelling-place (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, Joh. 1:14) in the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father; so that Christ could say to the Jews, “Destroy this temple (i.e., the temple of His body), and in three days I will build it up again” (Joh. 2:19). It is with this building up of the temple destroyed by the Jews, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that the complete and essential fulfilment of our promise begins. It is perpetuated with the Christian church in the indwelling of the Father and Son through the Holy Ghost in the hearts of believers (John 14:23; 1Co. 6:19), by which the church of Jesus Christ is built up a spiritual house of God, composed of living stones (1Ti. 3:15, 1Pe. 2:5; compare 2Co. 6:16, Heb. 3:6); and it will be perfected in the completion of the kingdom of God at the end of time in the new Jerusalem, which shall come down upon the new earth out of heaven from God, as the true tabernacle of God with men (Rev. 21:1-3).

As the building of the house of God receives its fulfilment first of all through Christ, so the promise, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son,” is

first fully realized in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the heavenly Father (vid., Heb. 1: 5). In the Old Testament the relation between father and son denotes the deepest intimacy of love; and love is perfected in unity of nature, in the communication to the son of all that the father hath. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand (Joh. 3:35). Sonship therefore includes the government of the world. This not only applied to Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, but also to the seed of David generally, so far as they truly attained to the relation of children of God. So long as Solomon walked in the ways of the Lord, he ruled over all the kingdoms from the river (Euphrates) to the border of Egypt (1Ki. 5: 1); but when his heart turned away from the Lord in his old age, adversaries rose up against him (1Ki. 11:14ff., 23ff.), and after his death the greater part of the kingdom was rent from his son. The seed of David was chastised for its sins; and as its apostasy continued, it was humbled yet more and more, until the earthly throne of David became extinct. Nevertheless the Lord did not cause His mercy to depart from him. When the house of David had fallen into decay, Jesus Christ was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, to raise up the throne of His father David again, and to reign for ever as King over the house of Jacob (Luk. 1:32, 33), and to establish the house and kingdom of David for ever. — In v. 16, where the promise returns to David again with the words, “thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever,” the expression לְפָנֶיךָ (before thee), which the LXX and Syriac have arbitrarily changed into לְפָנַי (before me), should be particularly observed. David, as the tribe-father and founder of the line of kings, is regarded either “as seeing all his descendants pass before him in a vision,” as O. v. Gerlach supposes, or as continuing to exist in his descendants.

**2Sa. 7:17.** “According to all these words...did Nathan speak unto David,” i.e., he related the whole to David, just as God had addressed it to him in the night. The clause in apposition, “according to all this vision,” merely introduces a more minute definition of the peculiar form of the revelation. God spoke to Nathan in a vision which he had in the night, i.e., not in a dream, but in a waking condition, and during the night; for חֲזוֹן = חֲזוֹן is constantly distinguished from חֲלוֹם, a revelation in a dream.

**2Sa. 7:18-29.** DAVID’S PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING. — V. 18. King David came, i.e., went into the sanctuary erected upon Zion, and remained before Jehovah. יָשַׁב, remained, tarried (as in Gen. 25:55; 29:19, etc.), not “sat;” for the custom of sitting before the Lord in the sanctuary, as the posture assumed in prayer, cannot be deduced from Exo. 17:12, where Moses is compelled to sit from simple exhaustion. David’s prayer consists of two parts, — thanksgiving for the promise (vv. 18b -24), and supplication for its fulfilment (vv. 25-29).

The thanksgiving consists of a confession of unworthiness of all the great things that the Lord had hitherto done for him, and which He had still further increased by this glorious promise (vv. 18-21), and praise to the Lord that all this had been done in proof of His true Deity, and to glorify His name upon His chosen people Israel.

**2Sa. 7:18b.** “Who am I, O Lord Jehovah? and who my house (i.e., my family), *that Thou hast brought me hitherto?*” These words recall Jacob’s prayer in Gen. 32:10, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,” etc. David acknowledged himself to be unworthy of the great mercy which the Lord had displayed towards him, that he might give the glory to God alone (vid., Pl. 8: 5 and 144: 3).

**2Sa. 7:19.**

*“And this is still too little in Thine eyes, O Lord Jehovah, and Thou still speakest with regard to the house of Thy servant for a great while to come.”*

**לְמַרְחֹק**, *lit.* that which points to a remote period, i.e., that of the eternal establishment of my house and throne. “*And this is the law of man, O Lord Jehovah.*” “The law of man” is the law which determines or regulates the conduct of man. Hence the meaning of these words, which have been very differently interpreted, cannot, with the context immediately preceding it, be any other than the following: This — namely, the love and condescension manifested in Thy treatment of Thy servant — is the law which applies to man, or is conformed to the law which men are to observe towards men, i.e., to the law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Lev. 19:18, compare Micah 6: 8). With this interpretation, which is confirmed by the parallel text of the Chronicles (in v. 17), “Thou sawest (i.e., visitedst me, or didst deal with me) according to the manner of man,” that words are expressive of praise of the condescending grace of the Lord. “When God the Lord, in His treatment of poor mortals, follows the rule which He has laid down for the conduct of men one towards another, when He shows himself kind and affectionate, this must fill with adoring amazement those who know themselves and God” (Hengstenberg). Luther is wrong in the rendering which he has adopted: “This is the manner of a man, who is God the Lord;” for “Lord Jehovah” is not an explanatory apposition to “man,” but an address to God, as in the preceding and following clause.

**2Sa. 7:20.** “*And what more shall David speak to Thee? Thou knowest Thy servant, Lord Jehovah.*” Instead of expressing his gratitude still further in many words, David appeals to the omniscience of God, before whom his thankful heart lies open, just as in Psa. 40:10 (compare also Psa. 17: 3).

## 2Sa. 7:21.

*“For Thy word’s sake, and according to Thy heart (and therefore not because I am worthy of such grace), has Thou done all this greatness, to make it known to Thy servant.”*

The word, for the sake of which God had done such great things for David, must be some former promise on the part of God. Hengstenberg supposes it to refer to the word of the Lord to Samuel, “Rise up and anoint him” (1Sa. 16:12), which is apparently favoured indeed by the parallel in the corresponding text of 1Ch. 17:19, “for Thy servant’s sake,” i.e., because Thou hast chosen Thy servant. But even this variation must contain some special allusion which does not exclude a *general* interpretation of the expression “for Thy word’s sake,” viz., an allusion to the earlier promises of God, or the Messianic prophecies generally, particularly the one concerning Judah in Jacob’s blessing (Gen. 49:10), and the one relating to the ruler out of Jacob in Balaam’s sayings (Num. 24:17ff.), which contain the germs of the promise of the everlasting continuance of David’s government. For the fact that David recognised the connection between the promise of God communicated to him by Nathan and Jacob’s prophecy in Gen. 49:10, is evident from 1Ch. 28: 4, where he refers to his election as king as being the consequence of the election of Judah as ruler. “According to Thine own heart” is equivalent to “according to Thy love and grace; for God is gracious, merciful, and of great kindness and truth” (Exo. 34: 6, compare Psa. 103: 8). גְּדוּלָה does not mean great things, but greatness.

The praise of God commences in v. 22: *“wherefore Thou art great, Jehovah God; and there is not (one) like Thee, and no God beside Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”* By the word “wherefore,” i.e., because Thou hast done this, the praise of the singleness of God is set forth as the result of David’s own experience. God is great when He manifests the greatness of His grace to men, and brings them to acknowledge it. And in these great deeds He proves the incomparable nature of His Deity, or that He alone is the true God. (For the fact itself, compare Exo. 15:11; Deu. 3:24; 4:35.)

## 2Sa. 7:23.

*“And where is (any) like Thy people, like Israel, a nation upon earth, which God went to redeem as a people for himself, that He might make Him a name, and do great things for you, and terrible things for Thy land before Thy people, which Thou hast redeemed for Thee out of Egypt, (out of the) nations and their gods?”*

מַי does not really mean *where*, but *who*, and is to be connected with the words immediately following, viz., גּוֹי אֶחָד (one nation); but the only way in which the words can be rendered into good English (*German* in the original: Tr.) is,

“where is there any people,” etc. The relative אֲשֶׁר does not belong to הֵלְכוּ, “which Elohim went to redeem.” The construing of *Elohim* with a plural arises from the fact, that in this clause it not only refers to the true God, but also includes the idea of the gods of other nations. The idea, therefore, is not, “Is there any nation upon earth to which the only true God went?” but, “Is there any nation to which the deity worshipped by it went, as the true God went to Israel to redeem it for His own people?” The rendering given in the Septuagint to הֵלְכוּ, viz., ὠδῆγησεν, merely arose from a misapprehension of the true sense of the words; and the emendation הוֹלִיךְ, which some propose in consequence, would only distort the sense. The stress laid upon the incomparable character of the things which God had done for Israel, is merely introduced to praise and celebrate the God who did this as the only true God. (For the thought itself, compare the original passage in Deu. 4: 7, 34.) In the clause וְלַעֲשׂוֹת לָכֶם, “and to do for you,” David addresses the people of Israel with oratorical vivacity. Instead of saying “to do great things to (for) Israel,” he says “to do great things to (for you).” *For you* forms an antithesis to *him*, “to make Him a name, and to do great things for you (Israel).” The suggestion made by some, that לָכֶם is to be taken as a *dativ. comm.*, and referred to *Elohim*, no more needs a serious refutation than the alteration into לָהֶם. There have been different opinions, however, as to the object referred to in the suffix attached to לְאַרְצֶךָ, and it is difficult to decide between them; for whilst the fact that נֹרְאוֹת לְאַרְצֶךָ (terrible things to Thy land) is governed by לַעֲשׂוֹת (to do) favours the allusion to Israel, and the sudden transition from the plural to the singular might be accounted for from the deep emotion of the person speaking, the words which follow (“before Thy people”) rather favour the allusion to God, as it does not seem natural to take the suffix in two different senses in the two objects which follow so closely the one upon the other, viz., “for Thy land,” and “before Thy people;” whilst the way is prepared for a transition from speaking of God to speaking to God by the word לָכֶם (to you). The words of Deu. 10:21 floated before the mind of David at the time, although he has given them a different turn. (On the “terrible things,” see the commentary on Deu. 10:21 and Exo. 15:11.) The connection of נֹרְאוֹת (terrible things) with לְאַרְצֶךָ (to Thy land) shows that David had in mind, when speaking of the acts of divine omnipotence which had inspired fear and dread of the majesty of God, not only the miracles of God in Egypt, but also the marvellous extermination of the Canaanites, whereby Israel had been established in the possession of the promised land, and the people of God placed in a condition to found a kingdom. These acts were performed *before* Israel, before the nation, whom the Lord redeemed to himself out of Egypt. This view is confirmed by the last words, “nations and their gods,” which are in

apposition to “from Egypt,” so that the preposition **מִן** should be repeated before **גוֹיִם** (nations). The suffix to **וְאֱלֹהֵיוּ** (literally “and *its* gods”) is to be regarded as distributive: “the gods of each of these heathen nations.” In the Chronicles (v. 21) the expression is simplified, and explained more clearly by the omission of “to Thy land,” and the insertion of **לְגַרֵשׁ**, “to drive out nations from before Thy people.” It has been erroneously inferred from this, that the text of our book is corrupt, and ought to be emended, or at any rate interpreted according to the Chronicles. But whilst **לְאַרְצֶךָ** is certainly not to be altered into **לְגַרֵשׁ**, it is just as wrong to do as Hengstenberg proposes, — namely, to take the thought expressed in **לְגַרֵשׁ** from the preceding **לַעֲשׂוֹת** by assuming a *zeugma*; for **עָשָׂה**, to do or make, has nothing in common with driving or clearing away.

### 2Sa. 7:24.

*“And Thou hast established to thyself Thy people Israel to be a people unto Thee for ever: and Thou, Jehovah, hast become a God to them.”*

The first clause does not refer merely to the liberation of Israel out of Egypt, or to the conquest of Canaan alone, but to all that the Lord had done for the establishment of Israel as the people of His possession, from the time of Moses till His promise of the eternal continuance of the throne of David. Jehovah had thereby become God to the nation of Israel, i.e., had thereby attested and proved himself to be its God.

To this praise of the acts of the Lord there is attached in vv. 25ff. the prayer for the fulfilment of His glorious promise. Would Jehovah set up (i.e., carry out) the word which He had spoken to His servant that His name might be great, i.e., be glorified, through its being said, “The Lord of Sabaoth is God over Israel,” and “the house of Thy servant will be firm before Thee.” The prayer is expressed in the form of confident assurance.

**2Sa. 7:27.** David felt himself encouraged to offer this prayer through the revelation which he had received. Because God had promised to build him a house, “therefore Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer,” i.e., hath found joy in doing so.

**2Sa. 7:28, 29.** David then briefly sums up the two parts of his prayer of thanksgiving in the two clauses commencing with **וְעַתָּה**, “and now.” — In v. 28 he sums up the contents of vv. 18b -24 by celebrating the greatness of the Lord and His promise; and in v. 29 the substance of the prayer in vv. 25-27. **הוּאֵל וּבְרָךְ**, may it please Thee to bless (**הוּאֵל**; see at Deu. 1: 5). “And from (out of) Thy blessing may the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever.”

## David's Wars, Victories, and Ministers of State. — Ch. 8.

*2Sa. 8.* To the promise of the establishment of this throne there is appended a general enumeration of the wars by which David secured the supremacy of Israel over all his enemies round about. In this survey all the nations are included with which war had ever been waged by David, and which he had conquered and rendered tributary: the Philistines and Moabites, the Syrians of Zobah and Damascus, Toi of Hamath, the Ammonites, Amalekites, and Edomites. It is very evident from this, that the chapter before us not only treats of the wars which David carried on after receiving the divine promise mentioned in *2Sa. 7*, but of all the wars of his entire reign. The only one of which we have afterwards a fuller account is the war with the Ammonites and their allies the Syrians (*2Sa. 10 and 11*), and this is given on account of its connection with David's adultery. In the survey before us, the war with the Ammonites is only mentioned quite cursorily in v. 12, in the account of the booty taken from the different nations, which David dedicated to the Lord. With regard to the other wars, so far as the principal purpose was concerned, — namely, to record the history of the kingdom of God, — it was quite sufficient to give a general statement of the fact that these nations were smitten by David and subjected to his sceptre. But if this chapter contains a survey of all the wars of David with the nations that were hostile to Israel, there can be no doubt that the arrangement of the several events is not strictly regulated by their chronological order, but that homogeneous events are grouped together according to a material point of view. There is a parallel to this chapter in *1Ch. 18*.

*2Sa. 8: 1.* SUBJUGATION OF THE PHILISTINES. — In the introductory formula, "*And it came to pass afterwards,*" the expression "*afterwards*" cannot refer specially to the contents of *2Sa. 7*, for reasons also given, but simply serves as a general formula of transition to attach what follows to the account just completed, as a thing that happened afterwards. This is incontestably evident from a comparison of *2Sa. 10: 1*, where the war with the Ammonites and Syrians, the termination and result of which are given in the present chapter, is attached to what precedes by the same formula, "*It came to pass afterwards*" (cf. *2Sa. 13: 1*). "*David smote the Philistines and subdued them, and took the bridle of the mother out of the hand of the Philistines,*" i.e., wrested the government from them and made them tributary. The figurative expression *Metheg-ammah*, "bridle of the mother," i.e., the capital, has been explained by Alb. Schultens (on *Job. 30:11*) from an Arabic idiom, in which giving up one's bridle to another is equivalent to submitting to him. Gesenius also gives several proofs of this (*Thes. p. 113*). Others, for example Ewald, render it arm-bridle; but there is not a single passage to support the rendering "arm" for *ammah*. The



word is a feminine form of **אִמָּה**, mother, and only used in a tropical sense.

“*Mother*” is a term applied to the chief city or capital, both in Arabic and Phoenician (vid., Ges. *Thes.* p. 112). The same figure is also adopted in Hebrew, where the towns dependent upon the capital are called its daughters (vid., Jos. 15:45, 47). In 1Ch. 18: 1 the figurative expression is dropped for the more literal one: “David took Gath and its daughters out of the hand of the Philistines,” i.e., he wrested Gath and the other towns from the Philistines. The Philistines had really five cities, every one with a prince of its own (Jos. 13: 3). This was the case even in the time of Samuel (1Sa. 6:16, 17). But in the closing years of Samuel, Gath had a *king* who stood at the head of all the princes of the Philistines (1Sa. 29: 2ff., cf. 27: 2). Thus Gath became the capital of the land of the Philistines, which held the bridle (or reins) of Philistia in its own hand. The author of the Chronicles has therefore given the correct explanation of the figure. The one suggested by Ewald, Bertheau, and others, cannot be correct, — namely, that David wrested from the Philistines the power which they had hitherto exercised over the Israelites. The simple meaning of the passage is, that David wrested from the Philistines the power which the capital had possessed over the towns dependent upon it, i.e., over the whole of the land of Philistia; in other words, he brought the capital (Gath) and the other towns of Philistia into his own power. The reference afterwards made to a king of Gath in the time of Solomon in 1Ki. 2:39 is by no means at variance with this; for the king alluded to was one of the tributary sovereigns, as we may infer from the fact that Solomon ruled over all the kings on this side of the Euphrates as far as to Gaza (1Ki. 5: 1, 4).

## 2Sa. 8: 2. SUBJUGATION OF MOAB. —

*“He smote Moab (i.e., the Moabites), and measured them with the line, making them lie down upon the ground, and measured two lines (i.e., two parts) to put to death, and one line full to keep alive.”*

Nothing further is known about either the occasion or the history of this war, with the exception of the cursory notice in 1Ch. 11:22, that Benaiah, one of David’s heroes, smote two sons of the king of Moab, which no doubt took place in the same war. In the earliest period of his flight from Saul, David had met with a hospitable reception from the king of Moab, and had even taken his parents to him for safety (1Sa. 22: 3, 4). But the Moabites must have very grievously oppressed the Israelites afterwards, that David should have inflicted a severer punishment upon them after their defeat, than upon any other of the nations that he conquered, with the exception of the Ammonites (2Sa. 12:31), upon whom he took vengeance for having most shamefully insulted his ambassadors (2Sa. 10: 2ff.). The punishment inflicted, however, was of course restricted to the fighting men who had been taken prisoners by the Israelites.

They were ordered to lie down in a row upon the earth; and then the row was measured for the purpose of putting two-thirds to death, and leaving one-third alive. The Moabites were then made “servants” to David (i.e., they became his subjects), “bringing gifts” (i.e., paying tribute).

**2Sa. 8: 3-8.** CONQUEST AND SUBJUGATION OF THE KING OF ZOBAB, AND OF THE DAMASCENE SYRIANS. — V. 3. The situation of *Zobah* cannot be determined. The view held by the Syrian church historians, and defended by Michaelis, viz., that *Zobah* was the ancient *Nisibis* in northern Mesopotamia, has no more foundation to rest upon than that of certain Jewish writers who suppose it to have been *Aleppo*, the present *Haleb*. *Aleppo* is too far north for *Zobah*, and *Nisibis* is quite out of the range of the towns and tribes in connection with which the name of *Zobah* occurs. In 1Sa. 14:47, compared with v. 12 of this chapter, *Zobah*, or *Aram Zobah* as it is called in 2Sa. 10: 6 and Psa. 60: 2, is mentioned along with Ammon, Moab, and Edom, as a neighbouring tribe and kingdom to the Israelites; and, according to vv. 3, 5, and 9 of the present chapter, it is to be sought for in the vicinity of Damascus and Hamath towards the Euphrates. These data point to a situation to the north-east of Damascus and south of Hamath, between the Orontes and Euphrates, and in fact extending as far as the latter according to v. 3, whilst, according to 2Sa. 10:16, it even reached beyond it with its vassal-chiefs into Mesopotamia itself. Ewald (*Gesch.* iii. p. 195) has therefore combined *Zobah*, which was no doubt the capital, and gave its name to the kingdom, with the *Sabe* mentioned in Ptol. v. 19, — a town in the same latitude as Damascus, and farther east towards the Euphrates. The king of *Zobah* at the time referred to is called *Hadadezer* in the text (i.e., whose help is *Hadad*); but in 2Sa. 10:16-19 and throughout the Chronicles he is called *Hadarezer*. The first is the original form; for *Hadad*, the name of the sun-god of the Syrians, is met with in several other instances in Syrian names (vid., Movers, *Phönizier*). David smote this king “as he was going to restore his strength at the river (Euphrates).” **הָשִׁיב יָדוֹ** does not mean to turn his hand, but signifies to return his hand, to stretch it out again over or against any one, in all the passage in which the expression occurs. It is therefore to be taken in a derivative sense in the passage before us, and signifying to restore or re-establish his sway. The expression used in the Chronicles (v. 3), **הָצִיב יָדוֹ**, has just the same meaning, since establishing or making fast presupposes a previous weakening or dissolution. Hence the subject of the sentence “as he went,” etc., must be *Hadadezer* and not David; for David could not have extended his power to the Euphrates before the defeat of *Hadadezer*. The Masoretes have interpolated *P'rath* (Euphrates) after “the river,” as in the text of the Chronicles. This is correct enough so far as the sense is concerned, but it is by no means necessary, as the *nahar* (the river **נַחַר**) is quite sufficient of itself to indicate the Euphrates.

There is also a war between David and Hadadezer and other kings of Syria mentioned in 2Sa. 10; and the commentators all admit that that war, in which David defeated these kings when they came to the help of the Ammonites, is connected with the war mentioned in the present chapter. But the connection is generally supposed to be this, that the first of David's Aramaean wars is given in 2Sa. 8, the second in 2Sa. 10; for no other reason, however, than because 2Sa. 10 stands after 2Sa. 8. This view is decidedly an erroneous one. According to the chapter before us, the war mentioned there terminated in the complete subjugation of the Aramaean kings and kingdoms. Aram became subject to David, paying tribute (v. 6). Now, though the revolt of subjugated nations from their conquerors is by no means a rare thing in history, and therefore it is perfectly conceivable in itself that the Aramaeans should have fallen away from David when he was involved in the war with the Ammonites, and should have gone to the help of the Ammonites, such an assumption is precluded by the fact that there is nothing in 2Sa. 10 about any falling away or revolt of the Aramaeans from David; but, on the contrary, these tribes appear to be still entirely independent of David, and to be hired by the Ammonites to fight against him. But what is absolutely decisive against this assumption, is the fact that the number of Aramaeans killed in the two wars is precisely the same (compare v. 4 with 2Sa. 10:18): so that it may safely be inferred, not only that the war mentioned in 2Sa. 10, in which the Aramaeans who had come to the help of the Ammonites were smitten by David, was the very same as the Aramaean war mentioned in 2Sa. 8, but of which the result only is given; but also that all the wars which David waged with the Aramaeans, like his war with Edom (vv. 13ff.), arose out of the Ammonitish war (2Sa. 10), and the fact that the Ammonites enlisted the help of the kings of Aram against David (2Sa. 10: 6). We also obtain from 2Sa. 10 an explanation of the expression "as he went to restore his power (Eng. Ver. 'recover his border') at the river," since it is stated there that Hadadezer was defeated by Joab the first time, and that, after sustaining this defeat, he called the Aramaeans on the other side of the Euphrates to his assistance, that he might continue the war against Israel with renewed vigour (2Sa. 10:13, 15ff.). The power of Hadadezer had no doubt been crippled by his first defeat; and in order to restore it, he procured auxiliary troops from Mesopotamia with which to attack David, but he was defeated a second time, and obliged to submit to him (2Sa. 10:17, 18). In this second engagement "*David took from him* (i.e., captured) *seventeen hundred horse-soldiers and twenty thousand foot*" (v. 4, compare 2Sa. 10:18). This decisive battle took place, according to 1Ch. 18: 3, in the neighbourhood of *Hamath*, i.e., Epiphania on the Orontes (see at Num. 13:21, and Gen. 10:18), or, according to 2Sa. 10:18 of this book, at *Helam*, — a difference which may easily be reconciled by the simple assumption that the unknown Helam was somewhere near to Hamath. Instead of 1700 horse-soldiers, we find in the

Chronicles (1 Chr 18: 4) 1000 chariots and 7000 horsemen. Consequently the word *receb* has no doubt dropped out after אֶלֶף in the text before us, and the numeral denoting a thousand has been confounded with the one used to denote a hundred; for in the plains of Syria seven thousand horsemen would be a much juster proportion to twenty thousand foot than seventeen hundred. (For further remarks, see at 2Sa. 10:18.) “*And David lamed all the cavalry,*” i.e., he made the war-chariots and cavalry perfectly useless by laming the horses (see at Jos. 11: 6, 9), — “*and only left a hundred horses.*” The word *receb* in these clauses signifies the war-horses generally, — not merely the carriage-horses, but the riding-horses as well, — as the meaning cavalry is placed beyond all doubt by Isa. 21: 7, and it can hardly be imagined that David would have spared the riding-horses.

**2Sa. 8: 5, 6.** After destroying the main force of Hadadezer, David turned against his ally, against *Aram-Damascus*, i.e., the Aramaeans, whose capital was Damascus. *Dammesek* (for which we have *Darmesek* in the Chronicles according to its Aramaean form), *Damascus*, a very ancient and still a very important city of Syria, standing upon the *Chrysorroas (Pharpar)*, which flows through the centre of it. It is situated in the midst of paradisaical scenery, on the eastern side of the Antilibanus, on the road which unites Western Asia with the interior. David smote 22,000 Syrians of Damascus, placed garrisons in the kingdom, and made it subject and tributary. נְצִיבִים are not governors of officers, but military posts, garrisons, as in 1Sa. 10: 5; 13: 3.

**2Sa. 8: 7.** Of the booty taken in these wars, David carried the golden shields which he took from the servants, i.e., the governors and vassal princes, of Hadadezer, to Jerusalem.<sup>f14</sup>

*Shelet* signifies “a shield,” according to the Targums and Rabbins, and this meaning is applicable to all the passages in which the word occurs; whilst the meaning “equivalent” cannot be sustained either by the rendering *πανοπλία* adopted by Aquila and Symmachus in 2Ki. 11:10, or by the renderings of the Vulgate, viz., *arma* in loc. and *armatura* in Son. 4: 4, or by an appeal to the etymology (vid., Gesenius’ *Thes.* and Dietrich’s *Lexicon*).

**2Sa. 8: 8.** And from the cities of *Betach* and *Berothai* David took very much brass, with which, according to 1Ch. 18: 8, Solomon made the brazen sea, and the brazen columns and vessels of the temple. The LXX have also interpolated this notice into the text. The name *Betach* is given as *Tibhath* in the Chronicles; and for *Berothai* we have *Chun*. As the towns themselves are unknown, it cannot be decided with certainty which of the forms and names are the correct and original ones. מְבַטַח appears to have been written by mistake for מְבַבַח. This supposition is favoured by the rendering of the LXX, ἐκ τῆς Μετεβάκ; and

by that of the Syriac also (viz., *Tebach*). On the other hand, the occurrence of the name *Tebah* among the sons of *Nahor the Aramaean* in Gen. 22:24 proves little or nothing, as it is not known that he founded a family which perpetuated his name; nor can anything be inferred from the fact that, according to the more modern maps, there is a town of *Tayibeh* to the north of Damascus in 35 north lat., as there is very little in common between the names *Tayibeh* and *Tebah*. Ewald connects *Berothai* with the *Barathena* of Ptol. v. 19 in the neighbourhood of Saba. The connection is a possible one, but it is not sufficiently certain to warrant us in founding any conclusions upon it with regard to the name *Chun* which occurs in the Chronicles; so that there is no ground whatever for the opinion that it is a corruption of *Berothai*.

**2Sa. 8: 9-12.** After the defeat of the king of Zobah and his allies, Toi king of Hamath sought for David's friendship, sending his son to salute him, and conveying to him at the same time a considerable present of vessels of silver, gold, and brass. The name *Toi* is written *Tou* in the Chronicles, according to a different mode of interpretation; and the name of the son is given as *Hadoram* in the Chronicles, instead of *Joram* as in the text before us. The former is evidently the true reading, and *Joram* an error of the pen, as the Israelitish name *Joram* is not one that we should expect to find among Aramaeans; whilst *Hadoram* occurs in 1Ch. 1:21 in the midst of Arabic names, and it cannot be shown that the *Hadoram* or *Adoram* mentioned in 2Ch. 10:18 and 1Ki. 12:18 was a man of Israelitish descent. The primary object of the mission was to salute David ("to ask him of peace;" cf. Gen. 43:27, etc.), and to congratulate him upon his victory ("to bless him because he had fought," etc.); for Toi had had wars with Hadadezer. "*A man of wars*" signifies a man who wages wars (cf. 1Ch. 28: 3; Isa. 42:13). According to 1Ch. 18: 3, the territory of the king of Hamath bordered upon that of Hadadezer, and the latter had probably tried to make king Toi submit to him. The secret object of the salutation, however, was no doubt to secure the friendship of this new and powerful neighbour.

**2Sa. 8:11, 12.** David also sanctified Toi's presents to the Lord (handed them over to the treasury of the sanctuary), together with the silver and gold which he had sanctified from all the conquered nations, from Aram, Moab, etc. Instead of אֲשֶׁר הִקְדִּישׁ the text of the Chronicles has אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא, which he took, i.e., took as booty. Both are equally correct; there is simply a somewhat different turn given to the thought.<sup>fi5</sup>

In the enumeration of the conquered nations in v. 12, the text of the Chronicles differs from that of the book before us. In the first place, we find "*from Edom*" instead of "*from Aram*;" and secondly, the clause "*and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob king of Zobah*," is altogether wanting there. The text of the Chronicles is certainly faulty here, as the name of *Aram* (Syria) could not

possibly be omitted. *Edom* could much better be left out, not “because the conquest of Edom belonged to a later period,” as Movers maintains, but because the conquest of Edom is mentioned for the first time in the subsequent verses. But if we bear in mind that in v. 12 of both texts not only are those tribes enumerated the conquest of which had been already noticed, but all the tribes that David ever defeated and subjugated, even the Ammonites and Amalekites, to the war with whom no allusion whatever is made in the present chapter, we shall see that *Edom* could not be omitted. Consequently “*from Syria*” must have dropped out of the text of the Chronicles, and “*from Edom*” out of the one before us; so that the text in both instances ran originally thus, “from Syria, and from Edom, and from Moab.” For even in the text before us, “from Aram” (Syria) could not well be omitted, notwithstanding the fact that the booty of Hadadezer is specially mentioned at the close of the verse, for the simple reason that David not only made war upon Syria-Zobah (the kingdom of Hadadezer) and subdued it, but also upon Syria-Damascus, which was quite independent of Zobah.

### 2Sa. 8:13, 14.

*“And David made (himself) a name, when he returned from smiting (i.e., from the defeat of) Aram, (and smote Edom) in the valley of Salt, eighteen thousand men.”*

The words enclosed in brackets are wanting in the Masoretic text as it has come down to us, and must have fallen out from a mistake of the copyist, whose eye strayed from אֶת־אֲרָם to אֶת־אֱדוֹם; for though the text is not “utterly unintelligible” without these words, since the passage might be rendered “after he had smitten Aram in the valley of Salt eighteen thousand men,” yet this would be decidedly incorrect, as the Aramaeans were not smitten in the *valley of Salt*, but partly at *Medeba* (1Ch. 19: 7) and *Helam* (2Sa. 10:17), and partly in their own land, which was very far away from the Salt valley. Moreover, the difficulty presented by the text cannot be removed, as Movers supposes, by changing אֶת־אֲרָם (Syria) into אֶת־אֱדוֹם (Edom), as the expression בָּשָׁבוּ (“when he returned”) would still be unexplained. The facts were probably these: Whilst David, or rather Israel, was entangled in the war with the Ammonites and Aramaeans, the Edomites seized upon the opportunity, which appeared to them a very favourable one, to invade the land of Israel, and advanced as far as the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. As soon, therefore, as the Aramaeans were defeated and subjugated, and the Israelitish army had returned from this war, David ordered it to march against the Edomites, and defeated them in the valley of Salt. This valley cannot have been any other than the Ghor adjoining the Salt mountain on the south of the Dead Sea, which really separates the ancient territories of Judah and Edom (Robinson, *Pal.* ii. 483). There Amaziah also smote the Edomites at a later period (2Ki. 14: 7). We gather more

concerning this war of David from the text of the Chronicles (v. 12) taken in connection with 1Ki. 11:15, 16, and Psa. 60: 2. According to the Chronicles, it was Abishai the son of Zeruiah who smote the Edomites. This agrees very well not only with the account in 2Sa. 10:10ff., to the effect that Abishai commanded a company in the war with the Syrians and Ammonites under the generalship of his brother Joab, but also with the heading to Psa. 60, in which it is stated that Joab returned after the defeat of Aram, and smote the Edomites in the valley of Salt, twelve thousand men; and with 1Ki. 11:15, 16, in which we read that when David was in Edom, Joab, the captain of the host, came up to bury the slain, and smote every male in Edom, and remained six months in Edom with all Israel, till he had cut off every male in Edom. From this casual but yet elaborate notice, we learn that the war with the Edomites was a very obstinate one, and was not terminated all at once. The difference as to the number slain, which is stated to have been 18,000 in the text before us and in the Chronicles, and 12,000 in the heading to Psa. 60, may be explained in a very simple manner, on the supposition that the reckonings made were only approximative, and yielded different results;<sup>f16</sup>

and the fact that *David* is named as the victor in the verse before us, *Joab* in Psa. 60, and *Abishai* in the Chronicles, admits of a very easy explanation after what has just been observed. The Chronicles contain the most literal account. Abishai smote the Edomites as commander of the men engaged, Joab as commander-in-chief of the whole army, and David as king and supreme governor, of whom the writer of the Chronicles affirms, “The Lord helped David in all his undertakings.” After the defeat of the Edomites, David placed garrisons in the land, and made all Edom subject to himself. Vv. 15-18. David’s Ministers. — To the account of David’s wars and victories there is appended a list of his official attendants, which is introduced with a general remark as to the spirit of his government. As king over all Israel, David continued to execute right and justice.

**2Sa. 8:16.** The chief ministers were the following: — *Joab* (see at 2Sa. 2:18) was “*over the army*,” i.e., commander-in-chief. *Jehoshaphat* the son of Ahilud, of whom nothing further is known, was *mazcir*, chancellor; not merely the national annalist, according to the Septuagint and Vulgate (ἐπὶ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων ὑπομνηματογράφος; *a commentariis*), i.e., the recorder of the most important incidents and affairs of the nation, but an officer resembling the *magister memoriae* of the later Romans, or the *waka nuvis* of the Persian court, who keeps a record of everything that takes place around the king, furnishes him with an account of all that occurs in the kingdom, places his *visé* upon all the king’s commands, and keeps a special protocol of all these things (vid.,

Chardin, *Voyages* v. p. 258, and Paulsen, *Regierung der Morgenländer*, pp. 279-80).

**2Sa. 8:17.** *Zadok* the son of Ahitub, of the line of Eleazar (1Ch. 5:34; 6:37, 38), and *Ahimelech* the son of Abiathar, were *cohanim*, i.e., officiating high priests; the former at the tabernacle at Gibeon (1Ch. 16:39), the latter probably at the ark of the covenant upon Mount Zion. Instead of *Ahimelech*, the Chronicles have *Abimelech*, evidently through a copyist's error, as the name is written *Ahimelech* in 1Ch. 24: 3, 6. But the expression "*Ahimelech the son of Abiathar*" is apparently a very strange one, as Abiathar was a son of Ahimelech according to 1Sa. 22:20, and in other passages *Zadok* and *Abiathar* are mentioned as the two high priests in the time of David (2Sa. 15:24, 35; 17:15; 19:12; 20:25). This difference cannot be set aside, as Movers, Thenius, Ewald, and other suppose, by transposing the names, so as to read Abiathar the son of Ahimelech; for such a solution is precluded by the fact that, in 1Ch. 24: 3, 6, 31, *Ahimelech* is mentioned along with *Zadok* as head of the priests of the line of Ithamar, and according to v. 6 he was the son of Abiathar. It would therefore be necessary to change the name Ahimelech into Abiathar in this instance also, both in v. 3 and v. 6, and in the latter to transpose the two names. But there is not the slightest probability in the supposition that the names have been changed in so many passages. We are therefore disposed to adopt the view held by Bertheau and Oehler, viz., that Abiathar the high priest, the son of Ahimelech, had also a son named Ahimelech, as it is by no means a rare occurrence for grandfather and grandson to have the same names (vid., 1Ch. 5:30-41), and also that this (the younger) Ahimelech performed the duties of high priest in connection with his father, who was still living at the commencement of Solomon's reign (1Ki. 2:27), and is mentioned in this capacity, along with *Zadok*, both here and in the book of Chronicles, possibly because Abiathar was ill, or for some other reason that we cannot discover. As Abiathar was thirty or thirty-five years old at the time when his father was put to death by Saul, according to what has already been observed at 1Sa. 14: 3, and forty years old at the death of Saul, he was at least forty-eight years old at the time when David removed his residence to Mount Zion, and might have had a son of twenty-five years of age, namely the Ahimelech mentioned here, who could have taken his father's place in the performance of the functions of high priest when he was prevented by illness or other causes. The appearance of a son of Abiathar named Jonathan in 2Sa. 15:27; 17:17, 20, is no valid argument against this solution of the apparent discrepancy; for, according to these passages, he was still very young, and may therefore have been a younger brother of Ahimelech. The omission of any allusion to Ahimelech in connection with Abiathar's conspiracy with Adonijah against Solomon (1Ki. 1:42, 43), and the reference to his son Jonathan alone, might be explained on the supposition



that Ahimelech had already died. But as there is no reference to Jonathan at the time when his father was deposed, no stress is to be laid upon the omission of any reference to Ahimelech. Moreover, when Abiathar was deposed after Solomon had ascended the throne, he must have been about eighty years of age. *Seraiah* was a scribe. Instead of *Seraiah*, we have *Shavsha* in the corresponding text of the Chronicles, and *Sheva* in the parallel passage 2Sa. 20:25. Whether the last name is merely a mistake for Shavsha, occasioned by the dropping of *s*, or an abbreviated form of Shisha and Shavsha, cannot be decided. *Shavsha* is not a copyist's error, for in 1Ki. 4: 3 the same man is unquestionably mentioned again under the name of Shisha, who is called Shavsha in the Chronicles, *Sheva* (שֵׁוָה) in the text of 2Sa. 20:25, and here *Seraiah*. *Seraiah* also is hardly a copyist's error, but another form for Shavsha or Shisha. The *scribe* was a secretary of state; not a military officer, whose duty it was to raise and muster the troops, for the technical expression for mustering the people was not סָפַר, but פָּקַד (cf. 2Sa. 24: 2, 4, 9; 1Ch. 21: 5, 6, etc.).

**2Sa. 8:18.** *Benaiah* the son of Jehoiada, a very brave hero of Kabzeel (see at 2Sa. 23:20ff.), was over the *Crethi* and *Plethi*. Instead of הַחֲבַרְתִּי, which gives no sense, and must be connected in some way with 1Ki. 1:38, 44, we must read עַל הַחֲבַרְתִּי according to the parallel passage 2Sa. 20:23, and the corresponding text of the Chronicles. The *Crethi* and *Plethi* were the king's body-guard, σωματοφύλακες (Josephus, *Ant.* vii. 5, 4). The words are adjectives in form, but with a substantive meaning, and were used to indicate a certain rank, *lit.* the executioners and runners, like הַשְּׁלִישִׁי (2Sa. 23: 8). חֲבַרְתִּי, from חָבַר, to cut down or exterminate, signifies *confessor*, because among the Israelites (see at 1Ki. 2:25), as in fact throughout the East generally, the royal halberdiers had to execute the sentence of death upon criminals. פְּלֵתִי, from פָּלַח (to fly, or be swift), is related to פָּלַט, and signifies *runners*. It is equivalent to רָץ, a courier, as one portion of the halberdiers, like the ἄγγαροι of the Persians, had to convey the king's orders to distant places (vid., 2Ch. 30: 6). This explanation is confirmed by the fact that the epithet הַחֲבַרְתִּי וְהַרְצִים was afterwards applied to the king's body-guard (2Ki. 11: 4, 19), and that חֲבַרְתִּי for הַחֲבַרְתִּי occurs as early as 2Sa. 20:23. חֲבַרְתִּי, from חָבַר, *fodit, perfodit*, is used in the same sense.

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And David's sons were פְּהַנִּים ("confidants"); not priests, domestic priests, court chaplains, or spiritual advisers, as Gesenius, De Wette, and others maintain, but, as the title is explained in the corresponding text of the Chronicles, when the title had become obsolete, "the first at the hand (or side) of the king." The correctness of this explanation is placed beyond the reach of doubt by 1Ki. 4: 5, where the *cohen* is called, by way of explanation, "the

king's friend." The title *cohen* may be explained from the primary signification of the verb כָּהֵן, as shown in the corresponding verb and noun in Arabic ("res alicujus gerere," and "administrator alieni negotii"). These *cohanim*, therefore, were the king's confidential advisers.

## David's Kindness towards Mephibosheth. — Ch. 9.

**2Sa. 9.** When David was exalted to be king over all Israel, he sought to show compassion to the house of the fallen king, and to repay the love which his noble-minded friend Jonathan had once sworn to him before the Lord (1Sa. 20:13ff.; comp. 1Sa. 23:17, 18). The account of this forms the conclusion of, or rather an appendix to, the first section of the history of his reign, and was intended to show how David was mindful of the duty of gratitude and loving fidelity, even when he reached the highest point of his regal authority and glory. The date when this occurred was about the middle of David's reign, as we may see from the fact, that Mephibosheth, who was five years old when Saul died (2Sa. 4: 4), had a young son at the time (v. 12).

**2Sa. 9: 1-8.** When David inquired whether there was any one left of the house of Saul to whom he could show favour for Jonathan's sake (הֲכִי יֵשׁ-עוֹד: *is it so that there is any one?* = there is certainly some one left), a servant of Saul named *Ziba* was summoned, who told the king that there was a son of Jonathan living in the house of Machir at Lodebar, and that he was lame in his feet. אִישׁ עוֹד הָאֶפֶס עוֹד, "is there no one at all besides?" The ל before בֵּית is a roundabout way of expressing the genitive, as in 1Sa. 16:18, etc., and is obviously not to be altered into מִבֵּית, as Thenius proposes. "The kindness of God" is love and kindness shown in God, and for God's sake (Luke 6:36). *Machir* the son of Ammiel was a rich man, judging from 2Sa. 17:27, who, after the death of Saul and Jonathan, had received the lame son of the latter into his house. *Lodebar* (לֹדְבָר, written לֹאֲדָבָר in 2Sa. 17:27, but erroneously divided by the Masoretes into two words in both passages) was a town on the east of Mahanaim, towards Rabbath Amman, probably the same place as Lidbir (Jos. 13:26); but it is not further known.

**2Sa. 9: 5ff.** David sent for this son of Jonathan (*Mephibosheth*: cf. 2Sa. 4: 4), and not only restored his father's possessions in land, but took him to his own royal table for the rest of his life. "Fear not," said David to Mephibosheth, when he came before him with the deepest obeisance, to take away any anxiety lest the king should intend to slay the descendants of the fallen king, according to the custom of eastern usurpers. It is evident from the words, "I will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father," that the landed property belonging to Saul had either fallen to David as crown lands, or had been taken possession of by

distant relations after the death of Saul. *“Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually,”* i.e., eat at my table all thy life long, or receive thy food from my table.

**2Sa. 9: 8.** Mephibosheth expressed his thanks for this manifestation of favour with the deepest obeisance, and a confession of his unworthiness of any such favour. On his comparison of himself to a *“dead dog,”* see at 1Sa. 24:15.

**2Sa. 9: 9-13.** David then summoned Ziba the servant of Saul, told him of the restoration of Saul’s possessions to his son Mephibosheth, and ordered him, with his sons and servants, to cultivate the land for the son of his lord. The words, *“that thy master’s son may have food to eat,”* are not at variance with the next clause, *“Mephibosheth shall eat bread alway at my table,”* as bread is a general expression, including all the necessaries of life. Although Mephibosheth himself ate daily as a guest at the king’s table, he had to make provision as a royal prince for the maintenance of his own family and servants, as he had children according to v. 12 and 1Ch. 8:34ff. Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants (v. 10), with whom he had probably been living in Gibeah, Saul’s native place, and may perhaps have hitherto farmed Saul’s land.

**2Sa. 9:11.** Ziba promised to obey the king’s command. The last clause of this verse is a circumstantial clause in form, with which the writer passes over to the conclusion of his account. But the words **עַל שְׁלֻחָנִי**, *“at my table,”* do not tally with this, as they require that the words should be taken as David’s own. This is precluded, however, not only by the omission of any intimation that David spoke again after Ziba, and repeated what he had said once already, and that without any occasion whatever, but also by the form of the sentence, more especially the participle **אֹכֵל**. There is no other course left, therefore, than to regard **שְׁלֻחָנִי** (my table) as written by mistake for **שְׁלֻחַן דָּוִד**: *“but Mephibosheth ate at David’s table as one of the king’s sons.”* The further notices in vv. 12 and 13 follow this in a very simple manner. **כָּל מְוֹשְׁבֵי בֵית**, *“all the dwelling,”* i.e., all the inhabitants of Ziba’s house, namely his sons and servants, were servants of Mephibosheth, i.e., worked for him and cultivated his land, whilst he himself took up his abode at Jerusalem, to eat daily at the king’s table, although he was lamed in both his feet.

### III. David’s Reign in its Decline.

**2Sa. 10-20.** In the first half of David’s reign he had strengthened and fortified the kingdom of Israel, both within and without, and exalted the covenant nation into a kingdom of God, before which all its enemies were obliged to bow; but in the second half a series of heavy judgments fell upon him and his house, which

cast a deep shadow upon the glory of his reign. David had brought these judgments upon himself by his grievous sin with Bathsheba. The success of all his undertakings, and the strength of his government, which increased year by year, had made him feel so secure, that in the excitement of undisturbed prosperity, he allowed himself to be carried away by evil lusts, so as to stain his soul not only with adultery, but also with murder, and fell all the deeper because of the height to which his God had exalted him. This took place during the war with the Ammonites and Syrians, when Joab was besieging the capital of the Ammonites, after the defeat and subjugation of the Syrians (2Sa. 10), and when David had remained behind in Jerusalem (2Sa. 11: 1). For this double sin, the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, the Lord announced as a punishment, that the sword should not depart from David's house, and that his wives should be openly violated; and notwithstanding the sincere sorrow and repentance of the king, when brought to see his sin, He not only caused the fruit of his sin, the child that was born of Bathsheba, to die (2Sa. 12), but very soon afterwards allowed the threatened judgments to fall upon his house, inasmuch as Amnon, his first-born son, violated his half-sister Tamar, and was murdered in consequence by her own brother Absalom (2Sa. 13), whereupon Absalom fled to his father-in-law at Geshur; and when at length the king restored him to favour (2Sa. 14), he set on foot a rebellion, which nearly cost David his life and throne (2Sa. 15-17:23). And even after Absalom himself was dead (2Sa. 17:24-19: 1), and David had been reinstated in his kingdom (2Sa. 19: 2-40), there arose the conspiracy set on foot by the Benjaminite Sheba, which was only stopped by the death of the chief conspirator, in the fortified city of Abel-Beth-Maachah (2Sa. 19:41-20:26).

The period and duration of these divine visitations are not stated; and all that we are able to determine from the different data as to time, given in 2Sa. 13:23, 38; 14:28; 15: 7, when taken in connection with the supposed ages of the sons of David, is that Amnon's sin in the case of Tamar did not take place earlier than the twentieth year of David's reign, and the Absalom's rebellion broke out seven or eight years later. Consequently the assumption cannot be far from the truth, that the events described in this section occupied the whole time between the twentieth and thirtieth years of David's reign. We are prevented from placing it earlier, by the fact that Amnon was not born till after David became king over Judah, and therefore was probably about twenty years old when he violated his half-sister Tamar. At the same time it cannot be placed later than this, because Solomon was not born till about two years after David's adultery; and he must have been eighteen or twenty years old when he ascended the throne on the death of his father, after a reign of forty years and a half, since, according to 1Ki. 14:21, compared with vv. 11 and 42, 43, he had a son a year old, named Rehoboam, at the time when he began to reign.

## War with the Ammonites and Syrians. — Ch. 10.

This war, the occasion and early success of which are described in the present chapter and the parallel passage in 1Ch. 19, was the fiercest struggle, and, so far as the Israelitish kingdom of God was concerned, the most dangerous, that it ever had to sustain during the reign of David. The amount of distress which fell upon Israel in consequence of this war, and still more because the first successful battles with the Syrians of the south were no sooner over than the Edomites invaded the land, and went about plundering and devastating, in the hope of destroying the people of God, is shown very clearly in the two psalms which date from this period (the 44th and 60th), in which a pious Korahite and David himself pour out their lamentations before the Lord on account of the distress of their nation, and pray for His assistance; and not less clearly in Psa. 68, in which David foretels the victory of the God of Israel over all the hostile powers of the world.

**2Sa. 10: 1-5.** OCCASION OF THE WAR WITH THE AMMONITES. — V. 1. On the expression “*it came to pass after this,*” see the remarks on 2Sa. 8: 1. When *Nahash*, the king of the Ammonites, died, and *Hanun* his son reigned in his stead, David thought that he would show him the same kindness that Nahash had formerly shown to him. We are not told in what the love shown to David by Nahash consisted. He had most likely rendered him some assistance during the time of his flight from Saul. *Nahash* was no doubt the king of the Ammonites mentioned in 1Sa. 11: 1, whom Saul had smitten at Jabesh. David therefore sent an embassy to Hanun, “*to comfort him for his father,*” i.e., to show his sympathy with him on the occasion of his father’s death, and at the same time to congratulate him upon his ascent of the throne.

**2Sa. 10: 3.** On the arrival of David’s ambassadors, however, the chiefs of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, “*Doth David indeed honour thy father in thine eyes* (i.e., dost thou really suppose that David intends to do honour to thy father), *because he has sent comforters to thee? Has David not sent his servants to thee with the intention of exploring and spying out the town, and (then) destroying it?*” The first question is introduced with ׀, because a negative answer is expected; the second with הלא, because it requires an affirmative reply. הַעִיר is the capital *Rabbah*, a strongly fortified city (see at 2Sa. 11: 1). The suspicion expressed by the chiefs was founded upon national hatred and enmity, which had probably been increased by David’s treatment of Moab, as the subjugation and severe punishment of the Moabites (2Sa. 8: 2) had certainly taken place a short time before. King Hanun therefore gave credence to the suspicions expressed as to David’s honourable intentions, and had his ambassadors treated in the most insulting manner.

**2Sa. 10: 4.** He had the half of their beard shaved off, and their clothes cut off up to the seat, and in this state he sent them away. “*The half of the beard,*” i.e., the beard on one side. With the value universally set upon the beard by the Hebrews and other oriental nations, as being a man’s greatest ornament,<sup>f18</sup>

the cutting off of one-half of it was the greatest insult that could have been offered to the ambassadors, and through them to David their king. The insult was still further increased by cutting off the long dress which covered the body; so that as the ancient Israelites wore no trousers, the lower half of the body was quite exposed. מְדוּיָהָם, from מְדוּ or מְדוּהָ, the long robe reaching down to the feet, from the root מְדָה = מְדָד, to stretch, spread out, or measure.

**2Sa. 10: 5.** When David received information of the insults that had been heaped upon his ambassadors, he sent messengers to meet them, and direct them to remain in Jericho until their beard had grown again, that he might not have to set his eyes upon the insult they had received.

**2Sa. 10: 6.** When the Ammonites saw that they had made themselves stinking before David, and therefore that David would avenge the insult offered to the people of Israel in the persons of their ambassadors, they looked round for help among the powerful kings of Syria. They hired as auxiliaries (with a thousand talents of silver, i.e., nearly half a million of pounds sterling, according to 1Ch. 19: 6) twenty thousand foot from *Aram-Beth-Rehob* and *Aram-Zoba*, and one thousand men from the king of *Maacah*, and twelve thousand troops from the men of *Tob*. *Aram-Beth-Rehob* was the Aramaean kingdom, the capital of which was *Beth-Rehob*. This *Beth-Rehob*, which is simply called *Rehob* in v. 8, is in all probability the city of this name mentioned in Num. 13:21 and Jud. 18:28, which lay to the south of Hamath, but the exact position of which has not yet been discovered: for the castle of *Hunin*, in the ruins of which Robinson imagines that he has found *Beth-Rehob* *Bibl. Researches*, p. 370), is to the south-west of Tell el Kadi, the ancient Laish-Da, the northern boundary of the Israelitish territory; so that the capital of this Aramaean kingdom would have been within the limits of the land of Israel, — a thing which is inconceivable. *Aram-Naharaim* is also mentioned in the corresponding text of the Chronicles, and for that reason many have identified *Beth-Rehob* with *Rehoboth*, on “the river” (Euphrates), mentioned in Gen. 36:37. But this association is precluded by the fact, that in all probability the latter place is to be found in *Rachabe*, which is upon the Euphrates and not more than half a mile from the river (see Ritter, *Erdk.* xv. p. 128), so that from its situation it can hardly have been the capital of a separate Aramaean kingdom, as the government of the king of *Zoba* extended, according to v. 16, beyond the Euphrates into Mesopotamia. On *Aram-Zoba*, see at 2Sa. 8: 3; and for *Maacah*

at Deu. 3:14. **אִישׁ-טוֹב** is not to be taken as one word and rendered as a proper name, *Ish-Tob*, as it has been by most of the earlier translators; but **אִישׁ** is a common noun used in a collective sense (as it frequently is in the expression **אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל**), “*the men of Tob.*” *Tob* was the district between Syria and Ammonitis, where Jephthah had formerly taken refuge (Jud. 11: 5). The corresponding text of the Chronicles (1Ch. 19: 6, 7) is fuller, and differs in several respects from the text before us. According to the Chronicles, Hanun sent a thousand talents of silver to hire chariots and horsemen from Aram-Naharaim, Aram-Maacah, and Zobah. With this the Ammonites hired thirty-two thousand *receb* (i.e., chariots and horsemen: see at 2Sa. 8: 4), and the king of Maacah and his people. They came and encamped before *Medeba*, the present ruin of *Medaba*, two hours to the south-east of Heshbon, in the tribe of Reuben (see at Num. 21:30, compared with Jos. 13:16), and the Ammonites gathered together out of their cities, and went to the war. The Chronicles therefore mention Aram-Naharaim (i.e., Mesopotamia) as hired by the Ammonites instead of Aram-Beth-Rehob, and leave out the men of Tob. The first of these differences is not to be explained, as Bertheau suggests, on the supposition that the author of the Chronicles took *Beth-Rehob* to be the same city as *Rehoboth of the river* in Gen. 36:37, and therefore substituted the well-known “*Aram of the two rivers*” as an interpretation of the rarer name *Beth-Rehob*, though hardly on good ground. For this conjecture does not help to explain the omission of “*the men of Tob.*” It is a much simpler explanation, that the writer of the Chronicles omitted *Beth-Rehob* and *Tob* as being names that were less known, this being the only place in the Old Testament in which they occur as separate kingdoms, and simply mentioned the kingdoms of *Maacah* and *Zoba*, which frequently occur; and that he included “*Aram of the two rivers,*” and placed it at the head, because the Syrians obtained succour from Mesopotamia after their first defeat. The account in the Chronicles agrees with the one before us, so far as the number of auxiliary troops is concerned. For twenty thousand men of *Zoba* and twelve thousand of *Tob* amount to thirty-two thousand, besides the people of the king of *Maacah*, who sent a thousand men according to the text of Samuel. But according to that of the Chronicles, the auxiliary troops consisted of chariots and horsemen, whereas only foot-soldiers are mentioned in our text, which appears all the more remarkable, because according to 2Sa. 8: 4, and 1Ch. 18: 4, the king of *Zoba* fought against David with a considerable force of chariots and horsemen. It is very evident, therefore, that there are copyists’ errors in both texts; for the troops of the Syrians did not consist of infantry only, nor of chariots and horsemen alone, but of foot-soldiers, cavalry, and war-chariots, as we may see very clearly not only from the passages already quoted in 2Sa. 8: 4 and 1Ch. 18: 4, but also from the conclusion to the account before us. According to v. 18 of this chapter, when

Hadarezer had reinforced his army with auxiliaries from Mesopotamia, after losing the first battle, David smote seven hundred *receb* and forty thousand *parashim* of Aram, whilst according to the parallel text (1Ch. 19:18) he smote seven thousand *receb* and forty thousand foot. Now, apart from the difference between seven thousand and seven hundred in the case of the *receb*, which is to be interpreted in the same way as a similar difference in 2Sa. 8: 4, the Chronicles do not mention any *parashim* at all in v. 18, but foot-soldiers only, whereas in v. 7 they mention only *receb* and *parashim*; and, on the other hand, there are no foot-soldiers given in v. 18 of the text before us, but riders only, whereas in v. 6 there are none but foot-soldiers mentioned, without any riders at all. It is evident that in both engagements the Syrians fought with all three (infantry, cavalry, and chariots), so that in both of them David smote chariots, horsemen, and foot.

**2Sa. 10: 7-14.** When David heard of these preparations and the advance of the Syrians into the land, he sent Joab and his brave army against the foe.

**הַגִּבּוֹרִים** (*the mighty men*) is in apposition to **כָּל־הַצֶּבָא** (*all the host*): the whole army, namely the heroes or mighty men, i.e., the brave troops that were well used to war. It is quite arbitrary on the part of Thenius to supply *vav* before **הַגִּבּוֹרִים**; for, as Bertheau has observed, as never find a distinction drawn between the *gibborim* and the whole army.

**2Sa. 10: 8.** On the other hand, the Ammonites came out (from the capital, where they had assembled), and put themselves in battle array before the gate. The Syrians were alone on the field, i.e., they had taken up a separate position on the broad treeless table-land (cf. Jos. 13:16) by Medeba. *Medeba* lay about four geographical miles in a straight line to the south-west of *Rabbath-Ammon*.

**2Sa. 10: 9.** When Joab saw that “the front of the war was (directed) against him both before and behind,” he selected a picked body out of the Israelitish army, and posted them (the picked men) against the children of Aram (i.e., the Syrians). The rest of the men he gave to his brother Abishai, and stationed them against the Ammonites. “*The front of the battle:*” i.e., the face or front of the hostile army, when placed in battle array. Joab had this in front and behind, as the Ammonites had taken their stand before Rabbah at the back of the Israelitish army, and the Syrians by *Medeba* in their front, so that Joab was attacked both before and behind. This compelled him to divide his army. *He chose out*, i.e., made a selection. Instead of **בְּחֹרֵי בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל** (the picked men in Israel) the Chronicles have **בְּחֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל** (the men in Israel), the singular **בְּחֹר** being more commonly employed than the plural to denote the men of war. The **בְּ** before **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is not to be regarded as suspicious, although the early translators have not expressed it, and the Masoretes wanted to expunge it. “The choice of



Israel” signifies those who were selected in Israel for the war, i.e., the Israelitish soldiers. Joab himself took up his station opposite to the Syrians with a picked body of men, because they were the stronger force of the two. He then made this arrangement with Abishai (v. 11): “*If Aram becomes stronger than I (i.e., overpowers me), come to my help; and if the Ammonites should overpower thee, I will go to help thee.*” Consequently the attack was not to be made upon both the armies of the enemy simultaneously; but Joab proposed to attack the Aramaeans (Syrians) first (cf. v. 13), and Abishai was merely to keep the Ammonites in check, though there was still a possibility that the two bodies of the enemy might make their attack simultaneously.

### *2Sa. 10:12.*

*“Be firm, and let us be firm (strong) for our people, and for the towns of our God: and Jehovah will do what seemeth Him good.”*

Joab calls the towns of Israel the towns of our God, inasmuch as the God of Israel had given the land to the people of Israel, as being His own property. Joab and Abishai were about to fight, in order that Jehovah’s possessions might not fall into the hands of the heathen, and become subject to their gods.

*2Sa. 10:13, 14.* Joab then advanced with his army to battle against Aram, and “*they fled before him.*” — V. 14. When the Ammonites perceived this, they also fled before Abishai, and drew back into the city (Rabbah); whereupon Joab returned to Jerusalem, probably because as we may infer from 2Sa. 11: 1, it was too late in the year for the siege and capture of Rabbah.

*2Sa. 10:15-19.* The Aramaeans, however, gathered together again after the first defeat, to continue the war; and Hadarezer, the most powerful of the Aramaean kings, sent messengers to Mesopotamia, and summoned it to war. It is very evident, not only from the words “he sent and brought out Aram, which was beyond the river,” but also from the fact that Shobach, Hadarezer’s general (*Shophach* according to the Chronicles), was at the head of the Mesopotamian troops, that the Mesopotamian troops who were summoned to help were under the supreme ruler of Hadarezer. This is placed beyond all possible doubt by v. 19, where the kings who had fought with Hadarezer against the Israelites are called his “servants,” or vassals. **וַיָּבֹאוּ חֵילָם** (v. 16) might be translated “and their army came;” but when we compare with this the **וַיָּבֹאוּ חֵיל־אֲמָה** of v. 17, we are compelled to render it as a proper name (as in the Septuagint, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic) — “*and they (the men from beyond the Euphrates) came (marched) to Helam*” — and to take **חֵילָם** as a contracted form of **חֵיל־אֲמָם**. The situation of this place has not yet been discovered. Ewald supposes it to be connected with the Syrian town *Alamatha* upon the Euphrates (Ptol. *Geogr.* v.

15); but this is not to be thought of for a moment, if only because it cannot be supposed that the Aramaeans would fall back to the Euphrates, and wait for the Israelites to follow them thither before they gave them battle; and also on account of 2Sa. 8: 4 and 1Ch. 18: 3, from which it is evident that *Helam* is to be sought for somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hamath (see p. 608). For **וַיָּבֹא חֶלְאִמָּה** we find **וַיָּבֹא אֶל־יָהוּדָה**, “David came to them” (The Aramaeans), in the Chronicles: so that the author of the Chronicles has omitted the unknown place, unless indeed **אֶל־יָהוּדָה** has been written by mistake for **חֶלְאִמָּה**.

**2Sa. 10:17ff.** David went with all Israel (all the Israelitish forces) against the foe, and smote the Aramaeans at *Helam*, where they had placed themselves in battle array, slaying seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen, and so smiting (or wounding) the general *Shobach* that he died there, i.e., that he did not survive the battle (Thenius). With regard to the different account given in the corresponding text of the Chronicles as to the number of the slain, see the remarks on v. 6 (pp. 619f.). It is a fact worthy of notice, that the number of men who fell in the battle (seven hundred *receb* and forty thousand *parashim*, according to the text before us; seven thousand *receb* and forty thousand *ragli*, according to the Chronicles) agrees quite as well with the number of Aramaeans reported to be taken prisoners or slain, according to 2Sa. 8: 4 and 1Ch. 18: 4, 5 (viz., seventeen hundred *parashim* or a thousand *receb*, and seven thousand *parashim* and twenty thousand *ragli* of Aram-Zoba, and twenty-two thousand of Aram-Damascus), as could possibly be expected considering the notorious corruption in the numbers as we possess them; so that there is scarcely any doubt that the number of Aramaeans who fell was the same in both accounts (2Sa. 8 and 10), and that in the chapter before us we have simply a more circumstantial account of the very same war of which the result is given in 2Sa. 8 and 1Ch. 13.

### **2Sa. 10:19.**

*“And when all the kings, the vassals of Hadarezer, saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and became subject to them; and Aram was afraid to render any further help to the Ammonites.”*

It might appear from the first half of this verse, that it was only the vassals of Hadarezer who made peace with Israel, and became subject to it, and that Hadarezer himself did not. But the last clause, “and the Aramaeans were afraid,” etc., shows very clearly that Hadarezer also made peace with the Israelites, and submitted to their rule; so that the expression in the first half of the verse is not a very exact one.

## **Siege of Rabbah. David’s Adultery. — Ch. 11.**

2Sa. 11: 1. (cf. 1Ch. 20: 1). SIEGE OF RABBAH. —

“And it came to pass at the return of the year, at the time when the kings marched out, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah: but David remained in Jerusalem.”

This verse is connected with 2Sa. 10:14, where it was stated that after Joab had put to flight the Aramaeans who came to the help of the Ammonites, and when the Ammonites also had fallen back before Abishai in consequence of this victory, and retreated into their fortified capital, Joab himself returned to Jerusalem. He remained there during the winter or rainy season, in which it was impossible that war should be carried on. At the return of the year, i.e., at the commencement of spring, with which the new years began in the month Abib (Nisan), the time when kings who were engaged in war were accustomed to open their campaign, David sent Joab his commander-in-chief with the whole of the Israelitish forces to attack the Ammonites once more, for the purpose of chastising them and conquering their capital. The *Chethibh* **הַמְּלָאכִים** should be changed into **הַמְּלָכִים**, according to the *Keri* and the text of the Chronicles. The **ס** interpolated is a perfectly superfluous *mater lectionis*, and probably crept into the text from a simple oversight. The “servants” of David with Joab were not the men performing military service, or soldiers, (in which case “all Israel” could only signify the people called out to war in extraordinary circumstances), but the king’s military officers, the military commanders; and “all Israel,” the whole of the military forces of Israel. Instead of “the children of Ammon” we find “the country of the children of Ammon,” which explains the meaning more fully. But there was no necessity to insert **אֶרֶץ** (the land or country), as **הַשְׁחִית** is applied to men in other passages in the sense of “cast to the ground,” or destroy (e.g., 1Sa. 26:15). *Rabbah* was the capital of Ammonitis (as in Jos. 13:25): the fuller name was *Rabbath* of the children of Ammon. It has been preserved in the ruins which still exist under the ancient name of *Rabbat-Ammân*, on the Nahr *Ammân*, i.e., the upper Jabbok (see at Deu. 3:11). The last clause, “but David sat (remained) in Jerusalem,” leads on to the account which follows of David’s adultery with Bathsheba (vv. 2-27 and 2Sa. 12: 1-25), which took place at that time, and is therefore inserted here, so that the conquest of Rabbah is not related till afterwards (2Sa. 12:26-31).

2Sa. 11: 2-27. DAVID’S ADULTERY. — David’s deep fall forms a turning-point not only in the inner life of the great king, but also in the history of his reign. Hitherto David had kept free from the grosser sins, and had only exhibited such infirmities and failings as simulation, prevarication, etc., which clung to all the saints of the Old Covenant, and were hardly regarded as sins in the existing stage of religious culture at that time, although God never left them unpunished, but invariably visited them upon His servants with humiliations and

chastisements of various kinds. Among the unacknowledged sins which God tolerated because of the hardness of Israel's heart was polygamy, which encouraged licentiousness and the tendency to sensual excesses, and to which but a weak barrier had been presented by the warning that had been given for the Israelitish kings against taking many wives (Deu. 17:17), opposed as such a warning was to the notion so prevalent in the East both in ancient and modern times, that a well-filled harem is essential to the splendour of a princely court. The custom to which this notion gave rise opened a dangerous precipice in David's way, and led to a most grievous fall, that can only be explained, as O. v. Gerlach has said, from the intoxication consequent upon undisturbed prosperity and power, which grew with every year of his reign, and occasioned a long series of most severe humiliations and divine chastisements that marred the splendour of his reign, notwithstanding the fact that the great sin was followed by deep and sincere repentance.

*2Sa. 11: 2-5.* Towards evening David walked upon the roof of his palace, after rising from his couch, i.e., after taking his mid-day rest, and saw from the roof a woman bathing, namely in the uncovered court of a neighbouring house, where there was a spring with a pool of water, such as you still frequently meet with in the East. "*The woman was beautiful to look upon.*" Her outward charms excited sensual desires.

*2Sa. 11: 3.* David ordered inquiry to be made about her, and found (וַיִּאמְרוּ, "he, i.e., the messenger, said;" or indefinitely, "they said") that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hethite. הַלֹּוֹא, *nonne*, is used, as it frequently is, in the sense of an affirmation, "it is indeed so." Instead of *Bathsheba* the daughter of Eliam, we find the name given in the Chronicles (1Ch. 3: 5) as *Bathshua* the daughter of Ammiel. The form בַּת־שׁוּעַ may be derived from בַּת־שׁוּעַ, in which ב is softened into ו; for Bathsheba (with *beth*) is the correct and original form, as we may see from 1Ki. 1:11, 15, 28. *Eliam* and *Ammiel* have the same signification; the difference simply consists in the transposition of the component parts of the name. It is impossible to determine, however, which of the two forms was the original one.

*2Sa. 11: 4.* The information brought to him, that the beautiful woman was married, was not enough to stifle the sensual desires which arose in David's soul. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (Jam. 1:15). David sent for the woman, and lay with her. In the expression "he took her, and she came to him," there is no intimation whatever that David brought Bathsheba into his palace through craft or violence, but rather that she came at his request without any hesitation, and offered no resistance to his desires. Consequently Bathsheba is not to be regarded as free from blame. The very act of bathing in the

uncovered court of a house in the heart of the city, into which it was possible for any one to look down from the roofs of the houses on higher ground, does not say much for her feminine modesty, even if it was not done with an ulterior purpose, as some commentators suppose. Nevertheless in any case the greatest guilt rests upon David, that he, a man upon whom the Lord had bestowed such grace, did not resist the temptation to the lust of the flesh, but sent to fetch the woman. *“When she had sanctified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.”* Defilement from sexual intercourse rendered unclean till the evening (Lev. 15:18). Bathsheba thought it her duty to observe this statute most scrupulously, though she did not shrink from committing the sin of adultery.

**2Sa. 11: 5.** When she discovered that she was with child, she sent word to David. This involved an appeal to him to take the necessary steps to avert the evil consequences of the sin, inasmuch as the law required that both adulterer and adulteress should be put to death (Lev. 20:10).

**2Sa. 11: 6-13.** David had Uriah the husband of Bathsheba sent to him by Joab, under whom he was serving in the army before Rabbah, upon some pretext or other, and asked him as soon as he arrived how it fared with Joab and the people (i.e., the army) and the war. This was probably the pretext under which David had had him sent to him. According to 2Sa. 23:39, Uriah was one of the *gibborim* (“mighty men”) of David, and therefore held some post of command in the army, although there is no historical foundation for the statement made by Josephus, viz., that he was Joab’s armour-bearer or aide-de-camp. The king then said to him, *“Go down to thy house (from the palace upon Mount Zion down to the lower city, where Uriah’s house was situated), and wash thy feet;”* and when he had gone out of the palace, he sent a royal present after him. The Israelites were accustomed to wash their feet when they returned home from work or from a journey, to take refreshment and rest themselves. Consequently these words contained an intimation that he was to go and refresh himself in his own home. David’s wish was that Uriah should spend a night at home with his wife, that he might afterwards be regarded as the father of the child that had been begotten in adultery. מַשְׁאֵה, a present, as in Amo. 5:11, Jer. 50: 4, Est. 2:18.

**2Sa. 11: 9.** But Uriah had his suspicions aroused. The connection between his wife and David may not have remained altogether a secret, so that it may have reached his ears as soon as he arrived in Jerusalem. *“He lay down to sleep before the king’s house with all the servants of his lord (i.e., the retainers of the court), and went not down to his house.”* “Before, or at, the door of the king’s

house,” i.e., in the court of the palace, or in a building adjoining the king’s palace, where the court servants lived.

**2Sa. 11:10.** When this was told to David (the next morning), he said to Uriah, “*Didst thou not come from the way (i.e., from a journey)? why didst thou not go down (as men generally do when they return from a journey)?*” Uriah replied (v. 11),

*“The ark (ark of the covenant), and Israel, and Judah, dwell in the huts, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord encamp in the field; and should I go to my house to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? By thy life, and by the life of thy soul, I do no such thing!”*

**יָשַׁב בַּסֹּכֹת**, to sit or sojourn in huts, is the same practically as being encamped in the field. Uriah meant to say: Whereas the ark, i.e., Jehovah with the ark, and all Israel, were engaged in conflict with the enemies of God and of His kingdom, and therefore encamped in the open country, it did not become a warrior to seek rest and pleasure in his own home. This answer expressed the feelings and the consciousness of duty which ought to animate one who was fighting for the cause of God, in such plain and unmistakeable terms, that it was well adapted to prick the king to the heart. But David’s soul was so beclouded by the wish to keep clear of the consequences of his sin in the eyes of the world, that he did not feel the sting, but simply made a still further attempt to attain his purpose with Uriah. He commanded him to stop in Jerusalem all that day, as he did not intend to send him away till the morrow.

**2Sa. 11:13.** The next day he invited him to his table and made him drunken, with the hope that when in this state he would give up his intention of not going home to his wife. But Uriah lay down again the next night to sleep with the king’s servants, without going down to his house; for, according to the counsel and providence of God, David’s sin was to be brought to light to his deep humiliation.

**2Sa. 11:14-27.** When the king saw that his plan was frustrated through Uriah’s obstinacy, he resolved upon a fresh and still greater crime. He wrote a letter to Joab, with which he sent Uriah back to the army, and the contents of which were these: “Set ye Uriah opposite to the strongest contest, and then turn away behind him, that he may be slain, and die.”<sup>n9</sup>

David was so sure that his orders would be executed, that he did not think it necessary to specify any particular crime of which Uriah had been guilty.

**2Sa. 11:16.** The king’s wishes were fully carried out by Joab. “*When Joab watched (i.e., blockaded) the city, he stationed Uriah just where he knew that there were brave men*” (in the city).

## 2Sa. 11:17.

*“And the men of the city came out (i.e., made a sally) and fought with Joab, and some of the people of the servants of David fell, and Uriah the Hethite died also.”*

The literal fulfilment of the king’s command does not warrant us in assuming that Joab suspected how the matter stood, or had heard a rumour concerning it. As a general, who was not accustomed to spare human life, he would be a faithful servant of his lord in this point, in order that his own interests might be served another time.

**2Sa. 11:18-21.** Joab immediately despatched a messenger to the king, to give him a report of the events of the war, and with these instructions: “When thou hast told all the things of the war to the king to the end, in case the anger of the king should be excited (תַּעֲלֶה, ascend), and he should say to thee, Why did ye advance so near to the city to fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbosheth (i.e., Gideon, see at Jud. 6:32)? did not a woman throw down a millstone from the wall, that he died in Thebez (Jud. 9:53)? why went ye so nigh to the wall? then only say, Thy servant Uriah the Hethite has perished.” Joab assumed that David might possibly be angry at what had occurred, or at any rate that he might express his displeasure at the fact that Joab had sacrificed a number of warriors by imprudently approaching close to the wall: he therefore instructed the messenger, if such should be the case, to announce Uriah’s death to the king, for the purpose of mitigating his wrath. The messenger seems to have known that Uriah was in disgrace with the king. At the same time, the words “thy servant Uriah is dead also” might be understood or interpreted as meaning that it was without, or even in opposition to, Joab’s command, that Uriah went so far with his men, and that he was therefore chargeable with his own death and that of the other warriors who had fallen.

**2Sa. 11:22ff.** The messenger brought to David all the information with which Joab had charged him (שָׁלַח with a double accusative, to send or charge a person with anything), but he so far condensed it as to mention Uriah’s death at the same time. “When the men (of Rabbah) became strong against us, and came out to us into the field, and we prevailed against them even to the gate, the archers shot at thy servants down from the wall, so that some of the servants of the king died, and thy servant Uriah the Hethite is dead also.” The **ס** in the forms **נִירָאוּ הַמּוֹרָאִים** instead of **נִירוּ הַמּוֹרָאִים** is an Aramaic mode of writing the words.

**2Sa. 11:25.** David received with apparent composure the intelligence which he was naturally so anxious to hear, and sent this message back to Joab:

*“Let not this thing depress thee, for the sword devours thus and thus. Keep on with the battle against the city, and destroy it.”*

The construction of אֶל־יָרֵעַ with אַתְּ *obj.* is analogous to the combination of a passive verb with אַתְּ: “Do not look upon this affair as evil” (disastrous). David then sent the messenger away, saying, “Encourage thou him” (*lit.* strengthen him, put courage into him), to show his entire confidence in the bravery and steadfastness of Joab and the army, and their ultimate success in the capture of Rabbah. — In v. 26 the account goes back to its starting-point. When Uriah’s wife heard of her husband’s death, she mourned for her husband. When her mourning was over, David took her home as his wife, after which she bore him a son (the one begotten in adultery). The ordinary mourning of the Israelites lasted seven days (Gen. 50:10; 1Sa. 31:13). Whether widows mourned any longer we do not know. In the case before us Bathsheba would hardly prolong her mourning beyond the ordinary period, and David would certainly not delay taking her as his wife, in order that she might be married to the king as long as possible before the time of childbirth. The account of these two grievous sins on the part of David is then closed with the assurance that “the thing that David had done displeased the Lord,” which prepares the way for the following chapter.

### **Nathan’s Reproof and David’s Repentance. Conquest of Rabbah. — Ch. 12.**

*2Sa. 12.* The Lord left David almost a whole year in his sin, before sending a prophet to charge the haughty sinner with his misdeeds, and to announce the punishment that would follow. He did this at length through Nathan, but not till after the birth of Bathsheba’s child, that had been begotten in adultery (compare vv. 14, 15 with 2Sa. 11:27). Not only was the fruit of the sin to be first of all brought to light, and the hardened sinner to be deprived of the possibility of either denying or concealing his crimes, but God would first of all break his unbroken heart by the torture of his own conscience, and prepare it to feel the reproaches of His prophet. The reason for this delay on the part of God in the threatening of judgment is set forth very clearly in Psa. 32, where David describes most vividly the state of his heart during this period, and the sufferings that he endured as long as he was trying to conceal his crime. And whilst in this Psalm he extols the blessedness of a pardoned sinner, and admonishes all who fear God, on the ground of his own inmost experience after his soul had tasted once more the joy and confidence arising from the full forgiveness of his iniquities; in the fifty-first Psalm, which was composed after Nathan had been to him, he shows clearly enough that the promise of divine forgiveness, which the prophet had given him in consequence of his confession of his guilt, did not take immediate possession of his soul, but simply kept him



from despair at first, and gave him strength to attain to a thorough knowledge of the depth of his guilt through prayer and supplication, and to pray for its entire removal, that his heart might be renewed and fortified through the Holy Ghost. But Nathan's reproof could not possibly have borne this saving fruit, if David had still been living in utter blindness as to the character of his sin at the time when the prophet went to him.

**2Sa. 12: 1-14.** NATHAN'S REPROOF. — Vv. 1ff. To ensure the success of his mission, viz., to charge the king with his crimes, Nathan resorted to a parable by which he led on the king to pronounce sentence of death upon himself. The parable is a very simple one, and drawn from life. Two men were living in a certain city: the one was rich, and had many sheep and oxen; the other was poor, and possessed nothing at all but one small lamb which he had bought and nourished (לִיָּוֵן, *lit.* kept alive), so that it grew up in his house along with his son, and was treated most tenderly and loved like a daughter. The custom of keeping pet-sheep in the house, as we keep lap-dogs, is still met with among the Arabs (vid., Bochart, *Hieroz.* i. p. 594). There came a traveller (הַלֵּךְ, a journey, for a traveller) to the rich man (לְאִישׁ without an article, the express definition being introduced afterwards in connection with the adjective הָעֶשֶׂיר; vid., Ewald, § 293a, p. 741), and he grudged to take of his own sheep and oxen to prepare (sc., a meal) for the traveller who had come to his house; "and he took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that had come to him."

**2Sa. 12: 5, 6.** David was so enraged at this act of violence on the part of the rich man, that in the heat of his anger he pronounced this sentence at once: "*As the Lord liveth, the man who did this deserves to die; and the lamb he shall restore fourfold.*" The fourfold restoration corresponds to the law in Exo. 21:37. The culprit himself was also to be put to death, because the forcible robbery of a poor man's pet-lamb was almost as bad as man-stealing.

**2Sa. 12: 7ff.** The parable was so selected that David could not suspect that it had reference to him and to his son. With all the greater shock therefore did the words of the prophet, "*Thou art the man,*" come upon the king. Just as in the parable the sin is traced to its root — namely, insatiable covetousness — so now, in the words of Jehovah which follow, and in which the prophet charges the king directly with his crime, he brings out again in the most unsparing manner this hidden background of all sins, for the purpose of bringing thoroughly home to his heart the greatness of his iniquity, and the condemnation it deserved. "*Jehovah the God of Israel hath said, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, and I gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives into thy bosom.*" These words refer to the fact that, according to the general custom in the East, when a king

died, his successor upon the throne also succeeded to his harem, so that David was at liberty to take his predecessor's wives; though we cannot infer from this that he actually did so: in fact this is by no means probable, since, according to 1Sa. 14:50, Saul had but one wife, and according to 2Sa. 3: 7 only one concubine, whom Abner appropriated to himself. *“And gave thee the house of Israel and Judah;”* i.e., I handed over the whole nation to thee as king, so that thou couldst have chosen young virgins as wives from all the daughters of Judah and Israel. **וְאִם מְעַט**, *“and if (all this was) too little, I would have added to thee this and that.”*

### **2Sa. 12: 9.**

*“Why hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do evil in His eyes? Thou hast slain Uriah the Hethite with the sword, and taken his wife to be thy wife, and slain him with the sword of the Ammonites.”*

The last clause does not contain any tautology, but serves to strengthen the thought by defining more sharply the manner in which David destroyed Uriah. **הִרְגוּ**, to murder, is stronger than **הִכָּהוּ**; and the fact that it was by the sword of *the Ammonites*, the enemies of the people of God, that the deed was done, added to the wickedness.

**2Sa. 12:10-12.** The punishment answers to the sin. There is first of all (v. 10) the punishment for the murder of Uriah: *“The sword shall not depart from thy house for ever, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife,”* etc. *“For ever”* must not be toned down to the indefinite idea of a long period, but must be held firmly in its literal signification. the expression *“thy house,”* however, does not refer to the house of David as continued in his descendants, but simply as existing under David himself until it was broken up by his death. The fulfilment of this threat commenced with the murder of Amnon by Absalom (2Sa. 13:29); it was continued in the death of Absalom the rebel (2Sa. 18:14), and was consummated in the execution of Adonijah (1Ki. 2:24, 25).

**2Sa. 12:11, 12.** But David had also sinned in committing adultery. It was therefore announced to him by Jehovah,

*“Behold, I raise up mischief over thee out of thine own house, and will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them to thy neighbour, that he may lie with thy wives before the eyes of this sun (for the fulfilment of this by Absalom, see 2Sa. 16:21, 22). “For thou hast done it in secret; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before (in the face of) the sun.”*

David's twofold sin was to be followed by a twofold punishment. For his murder he would have to witness the commission of murder in his own family, and for his adultery the violation of his wives, and both of them in an intensified

form. As his sin began with adultery, and was consummated in murder, so the law of just retribution was also carried out in the punishment, in the fact that the judgments which fell upon his house commenced with Amnon's incest, whilst Absalom's rebellion culminated in the open violation of his father's concubines, and even Adonijah lost his life, simply because he asked for Abishag the Shunammite, who had lain in David's bosom to warm and cherish him in his old age (1Ki. 2:23, 24).

**2Sa. 12:13.** These words went to David's heart, and removed the ban of hardening which pressed upon it. He confessed to the prophet, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" "The words are very few, just as in the case of the publican in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 18:13). But that is a good sign of a thoroughly broken spirit.... There is no excuse, no cloaking, no palliation of the sin. There is no searching for a loophole,...no pretext put forward, no human weakness pleaded. He acknowledges his guilt openly, candidly, and without prevarication" (*Berleb. Bible*). In response to this candid confession of his sin, Nathan announced to him,

*"The Lord also hath let thy sin pass by (i.e., forgiven it). Thou wilt not die. Only because by this deed thou hast given the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme, the son that is born unto thee shall die."*

**נָשָׂא**, *inf. abs. Piel*, with chirek, because of its similarity in sound to the following perfect (see Ewald, § 240, c.). **וְאֵל**, with which the apodosis commences, belongs to the **וְאֵל** which follows, and serves to give emphasis to the expression: "Nevertheless the son" (vid., Ges. § 155, 2, a.). David himself had deserved to die as an adulterer and murderer. The Lord remitted the punishment of death, not so much because of his heartfelt repentance, as from His own fatherly grace and compassion, and because of the promise that He had given to David (2Sa. 7:11, 12), — a promise which rested upon the assumption that David would not altogether fall away from a state of grace, or commit a mortal sin, but that even in the worst cases he would turn to the Lord again and seek forgiveness. The Lord therefore punished him for this sin with the judgments announced in vv. 10-12, as about to break upon him and his house. But as his sin had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord — i.e., not only to the heathen, but also to the unbelieving among the Israelites themselves — to blaspheme or ridicule his religion and that of all other believers also, the child that was begotten in adultery and had just been born should die; in order, on the one hand, that the father should atone for his adultery in the death of the son, and, on the other hand, that the visible occasion for any further blasphemy should be taken away: so that David was not only to feel the pain of punishment in the death of his son, but was also to discern in it a distinct token of the grace of God.

**2Sa. 12:15-25.** DAVID'S PENITENTIAL GRIEF, AND THE BIRTH OF SOLOMON. — V. 15. The last-mentioned punishment was inflicted without delay. When Nathan had gone home, the Lord smote the child, so that it became very ill.

**2Sa. 12:16, 17.** Then David sought God (in prayer) for the boy, and fasted, and went and lay all night upon the earth. **סָבַר**, “he came,” not into the sanctuary of the Lord (v. 20 is proof to the contrary), but into his house, or into his chamber, to pour out his heart before God, and bend beneath His chastising hand, and refused the appeal of his most confidential servants, who tried to raise him up, and strengthen him with food. “*The elders of his house,*” judging from Gen. 24: 2, were the oldest and most confidential servants, “the most highly honoured of his servants, and those who had the greatest influence with him” (Clericus).

**2Sa. 12:18.** On the seventh day, when the child died, the servants of David were afraid to tell him of its death; for they said (to one another), “Behold, while the child was still living, we spoke to him, and he did not hearken to our voice; how should we say to him, now the child is dead, that he should do harm?” (i.e., do himself an injury in the depth of his anguish.)

**2Sa. 12:19, 20.** David saw at once what had happened from their whispering conversation, and asked whether the child was dead. When they answered in the affirmative, he rose up from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; that is to say, he laid aside all the signs of penitential grief and mourning, went into the house of the Lord (the holy tent upon Mount Zion) and worshipped, and then returned to his house, and had food set before him.

**2Sa. 12:21ff.** When his servants expressed their astonishment at all this, David replied,

*“As long as the boy lived, I fasted and wept: for I thought (said), Perhaps (who knows) the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may remain alive. But now he is dead, why should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”*

On this O. v. Gerlach has the following admirable remarks: “In the case of a man whose penitence was so earnest and so deep, the prayer for the preservation of his child must have sprung from some other source than excessive love of any created object. His great desire was to avert the stroke, as a sign of the wrath of God, in the hope that he might be able to discern, in the preservation of the child, a proof of divine favour consequent upon the restoration of his fellowship with God. But when the child was dead, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, and rested satisfied with His grace, without giving himself up to fruitless pain.” This state of mind is fully

explained in Psa. 51, though his servants could not comprehend it. The form **יִחַנְנִי** is the imperfect *Kal*, **יִחַנְנִי** according to the *Chethibh*, though the Masorettes have substituted as the *Keri* **יִחַנְנִי**, the perfect with *vav consec.*

**2Sa. 12:23b.** V. 23b is paraphrased very correctly by Clericus: “I shall go to the dead, the dead will not come to me.” — V. 24. David then comforted his wife Bathsheba, and lived with her again; and she bare a son, whom he called *Solomon*, the man of peace (cf. 1Ch. 22: 9). David gave the child this name, because he regarded his birth as a pledge that he should now become a partaker again of peace with God, and not from any reference to the fact that the war with the Ammonites was over, and peace prevailed when he was born; although in all probability Solomon was not born till after the capture of Rabbah and the termination of the Ammonitish war. His birth is mentioned here simply because of its connection with what immediately precedes. The writer adds (in vv. 24, 25), “*And Jehovah loved him, and sent by the hand (through the medium) of Nathan the prophet; and he called his son Jedidiah (i.e., beloved of Jehovah), for Jehovah’s sake.*” The subject to **וַיִּשְׁלַח** (he sent) cannot be David, because this would not yield any appropriate sense, but must be *Jehovah*, the subject of the clause immediately preceding. “To send by the hand,” i.e., to make a mission by a person (vid., Exo. 4:13, etc.), is equivalent to having a commission performed by a person, or entrusting a person with a commission to another. We learn from what follows, in what the commission with which Jehovah entrusted Nathan consisted: “*And he (Nathan, not Jehovah) called his (the boy’s) name Jedidiah.*” And if Nathan is the subject to “called,” there is nothing to astonish in the expression “because of the Lord.” The idea is this: Nathan came to David according to Jehovah’s instructions, and gave Solomon the name *Jedidiah* for Jehovah’s sake, i.e., because Jehovah loved him. The giving of such a name was a practical declaration on the part of Jehovah that He loved Solomon, from which David could and was intended to discern that the Lord had blessed his marriage with Bathsheba. *Jedidiah*, therefore, was not actually adopted as Solomon’s name.

**2Sa. 12:26-31.** CONQUEST OF RABBAH, AND PUNISHMENT OF THE AMMONITES (comp. 1Ch. 20: 1-3). — “*Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the king’s city.*” **עִיר הַמְּלוּכָה**, the capital of the kingdom, is the city with the exception of the acropolis, as v. 27 clearly shows, where the captured city is called “the water-city.” *Rabbah* was situated, as the ruins of *Ammân* show, on both banks of the river (*Moiet*) *Ammân* (the upper Jabbok), in a valley which is shut in upon the north and south by two bare ranges of hills of moderate height, and is not more than 200 paces in breadth. “The northern height is crowned by the castle, the ancient acropolis, which stands on the north-western side of the city, and commands the whole city” (see

Burckhardt, *Syria* ii. pp. 612ff., and Ritter, *Erdkunde* xv. pp. 1145ff.). After taking the water-city, Joab sent messengers to David, to inform him of the result of the siege, and say to him, “*Gather the rest of the people together, and besiege the city* (i.e., the acropolis, which may have been peculiarly strong), *and take it, that I may not take the city* (also), *and my name be named upon it,*” i.e., the glory of the conquest be ascribed to me. Luther adopts this explanation in his free rendering, “and I have a name from it.”

**2Sa. 12:29.** Accordingly David “*gathered together all the people,*” — i.e., all the men of war who had remained behind in the land; from which we may see that Joab’s besieging army had been considerably weakened during the long siege, and at the capture of the water-city, — “*and fought against the acropolis, and took it.*”

**2Sa. 12:30.** He then took their king’s crown (“*their king,*” viz., the king of the Ammonites) from off his (the king’s) head; so that he had either been taken prisoner or slain at the capture of the city. The weight of the crown was “*a talent of gold, and precious stones*” (sc., were upon it): as the writer of the Chronicles has correctly explained it by supplying **בַּה**. The Hebrew talent (equal to 3000 shekels) was 83 1/2 Dresden pounds. But the strongest man could hardly have borne a crown of this weight upon his head for however short a time; and David could scarcely have placed it upon his own head. We must therefore assume that the account of the weight is not founded upon actual weighing, but simply upon an approximative estimate, which is somewhat too high. David also took a great quantity of booty out of the city.

**2Sa. 12:31.** He also had the inhabitants executed, and that with cruel tortures. “*He sawed them in pieces with the saw and with iron harrows.*” **וַיִּשֶׂם בַּמַּגְרָה**, “he put them into the saw,” does not give any appropriate sense; and there can be no doubt, that instead of **וַיִּשֶׂם** we should read **וַיִּשַׁר** (from **שָׁר**): “he cut (sawed) them in pieces.” **וּבַמְגִזְרֵת הַבְּרִזָּל**, “and with iron cutting tools.” The meaning of the **ἀπ. λεγ. מַגְרֹת** cannot be more precisely determined. The current rendering, “axes or hatchets,” is simply founded upon the circumstance that **גָּזַר**, to cut, is applied in 2Ki. 6: 4 to the felling of trees. The reading in the Chronicles, **וּבַמְגִרֹת**, is evidently a copyist’s error, as we have already had **בַּמַּגְרָה**, “with the saw.” The meaning of the next clause is a disputed point, as the reading itself varies, and the Masoretes read **בַּמְלִבָּן** instead of the *Chethibh* **בַּמְלָכָן**, “he made them go through brick-kilns,” i.e., burnt them in brick-kilns, as the LXX and Vulgate render it. On the other hand, Thenius takes the *Chethibh* under his protection, and adopts Kimchi’s explanation: “he led them through *Malchan*, i.e., through the place where the Ammonites burned their

children in honour of their idol.” Thenius would therefore alter **בַּמִּלְכָן** into **בַּמִּלְכָם** or **בַּמִּלְכָם**: “he offered them as sacrifices in their image of Moloch.” But this explanation cannot be even grammatically sustained, to say nothing of the arbitrary character of the alteration proposed; for the technical expression **הָעֵבִיר בְּאֵשׁ לַמִּלְכָּה**, “to cause to go through the fire for Moloch” (Lev. 18:21), is essentially different from **הָעֵבִיר בַּמִּלְכָּה**, to cause to pass through Moloch, an expression that we never meet with. Moreover, it is impossible to see how burning the Ammonites in the image of Moloch could possibly be “an obvious mode of punishing idolatry,” since the idolatry itself consisted in the fact that the Ammonites burned their children to Moloch. So far as the circumstances themselves are concerned, the cruelties inflicted upon the prisoners are not to be softened down, as Daaz and others propose, by an arbitrary perversion of the words into a mere sentence to hard labour, such as sawing wood, burning bricks, etc. At the same time, the words of the text do not affirm that *all* the inhabitants of Rabbah were put to death in this cruel manner. **הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בָּהָה** (without **כָּל**) refers no doubt simply to the fighting men that were taken prisoners, or at the most to the male population of the acropolis of Rabbah, who probably consisted of fighting men only. In doing this, David merely retaliated upon the Ammonites the cruelties with which they had treated their foes; since according to Amo. 1:13 they ripped up women who were with child, and according to 1Sa. 11: 2 their king Nahash would only make peace with the inhabitants of Jabesh upon the condition that the right eye of every one of them should be put out. It is sufficiently evident from this, that the Ammonites had aimed at the most shameful extermination of the Israelites. “*Thus did he unto all the cities of the Ammonites,*” i.e., to all the fortified cities that resisted the Israelites. After the close of this war, David returned to Jerusalem with all the men of war. The war with the Syrians and Ammonites, including as it did the Edomitish war as well, was the fiercest in which David was ever engaged, and was also the last great war of his life.

### **Amnon’s Incest, and Absalom’s Fratricide. — Ch. 13.**

**2Sa. 13.** The judgments threatened to king David in consequence of his sin with Bathsheba soon began to fall upon him and upon his house, and were brought about by sins and crimes on the part of his own sons, for which David was himself to blame, partly because of his own indulgence and want of discipline, and partly because of the bad example that he had set them. Having grown up without strict paternal discipline, simply under the care of their different mothers, who were jealous of one another, his sons fancied that they might gratify their own fleshly lusts, and carry out their own ambitious plans; and from this there arose a series of crimes, which nearly cost the king his life

and throne. Amnon, David's eldest son, led the way with his forcible violation of his step-sister Tamar (vv. 1-22). The crime was avenged by her own brother Absalom, who treacherously assassinated Amnon, in consequence of which he was obliged to flee to Geshur and take refuge with his father-in-law (vv. 23-39).

**2Sa. 13: 1-22.** AMNON'S INCEST. — Vv. 1-14. The following occurrences are assigned in a general manner to the times succeeding the Ammonitish war, by the words "*And it came to pass after this;*" and as David did not marry Maacah the mother of Absalom and Tamar till after he had been made king at Hebron (see 2Sa. 3: 3), they cannot well have taken place before the twentieth year of his reign. *Amnon*, the eldest son of David by *Ahinoam* the Jezreelite (2Sa. 3: 2), loved Tamar, the beautiful sister of his step-brother Absalom, so passionately that he became ill in consequence, because he could not get near to her as she was a virgin. Vv. 1 and 2 form one period. אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיֵּצֵר is a continuation of אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיֵּדִי; and the words from וְלֹא־בָשָׁלוּם to בְּיָדָד are a circumstantial clause. וַיֵּצֵר: literally "it became narrow (anxious) to Amnon, even to making himself ill," i.e., he quite pined away, not "he pretended to be ill" (Luther), for it was not till afterwards that he did this according to Jonadab's advice (v. 5). הִתְחַלְלוֹת: to make one's self ill, here to become ill, in v. 5 to pretend to be ill. The clause כִּי בְתוּלָה הִיא is to be joined to the one which follows: "*because she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to him to do anything to her.*" The maidenly modesty of Tamar evidently raised an insuperable barrier to the gratification of his lusts.

**2Sa. 13: 3-5.** Amnon's miserable appearance was observed by his cousin Jonadab, a very crafty man, who asked him what was the reason, and then gave him advice as to the way in which he might succeed in gratifying his desires. *Shimeah* is called *Shammah* in 1Sa. 16: 9.

**2Sa. 13: 4.** "*Why art thou so wasting away (דָּל, thin, spare, here equivalent to wasting away, looking miserable), king's son, from morning to morning?*" i.e., day by day. "The morning" is mentioned because sick persons look worst in the morning. The advice given in v. 5, — viz., "Lay thee down upon thy bed, and pretend to be ill; and when thy father comes to visit thee, say to him, May my sister Tamar come to me, and give me to eat?" etc., — was very craftily devised, as Amnon's wretched appearance would favour his pretence that he was ill, and it might be hoped that an affectionate father would gratify him, since even if the wish seemed a strange one, it might easily be accounted for from the marvellous desires of persons who are ill, particularly with regard to food, — desires which it is often very difficult to gratify.



**2Sa. 13: 6ff.** Amnon acted upon the advice, and begged his father, when he came to ask him how he was, to allow his sister Tamar to come and bake two heart-cakes for him before his eyes, which she very speedily did. **לִבֵּב** is a *denom.* from **לִבְבֹת**, to make or bake heart-cakes. **לִבְבֹת** is a heart-strengthening kind of pastry, a kind of pancake, which could be very quickly made. It is evident from these verses that the king's children lived in different houses. Probably each of the king's wives lived with her children in one particular compartment of the palace.

**2Sa. 13: 9ff.** “And she took the pan and shook out (what she had prepared) before him. The **אֵפ. לֵעַ. מִשְׁרֵת** signifies a frying-pan or sauce-pan, according to the ancient versions. The etymology is uncertain. But Amnon refused to eat, and, like a whimsical patient, he then ordered all the men that were with him to go out; and when this had been done, he told Tamar to bring the food into the chamber, that he might eat it from her hand; and when she handed him the food, he laid hold of her, and said, “Come, lie with me, my sister!”

**2Sa. 13:12, 13.** Tamar attempted to escape by pointing to the wickedness of such a desire: “Pray, do not, my brother, do not humble me; for they do not such things in Israel: do not this folly.” The words recall Gen. 34: 7, where the expression “folly” (*nebalah*) is first used to denote a want of chastity. Such a sin was altogether out of keeping with the calling and holiness of Israel (vid., Lev. 20: 8ff.). “*And I, whither should I carry my shame?*” i.e., shame and contempt would meet me everywhere. “*And thou wouldst be as one of the fools in Israel.*” We should both of us reap nothing but shame from it. What Tamar still further said, “*Now therefore, I pray thee, speak to the king, for he will not refuse me to thee,*” is no doubt at variance with the law which prohibits marriage between step-brothers and sisters (Lev. 18: 9, 11; 20:17); but it by no means proves that the laws of Leviticus were not in existence at the time, nor does it even presuppose that Tamar was ignorant of any such law. She simply said this, as Clericus observes, “that she might escape from his hands by any means in her power, and to avoid inflaming him still more and driving him to sin by precluding all hope of marriage.”<sup>120</sup>

We cannot therefore even infer from these words of hers, that she really thought the king could grant a dispensation from the existing hindrances to their marriage.

**2Sa. 13:14.** Amnon would not listen to her, however, but overpowered her, forced her, and lay with her.

**2Sa. 13:15-22.** Amnon had no sooner gratified his animal passion, than his love to the humbled sister turned into hatred, which was even greater than his

(previous) love, so that he commanded her to get up and go. This sudden change, which may be fully explained from a psychological point of view, and is frequently exemplified still in actual life, furnishes a striking proof that lust is not love, but simply the gratification of the animal passions.

**2Sa. 13:16.** Tamar replied, “Do not become the cause of this great evil, (which is) *greater than another that thou hast done to me, to thrust me away,*” i.e., do not add to the great wrong which thou hast done me the still greater one of thrusting me away. This is apparently the only admissible explanation of the difficult expression אֶל-אִוֹדֶת, as nothing more is needed than to supply תְּהִי. Tamar calls his sending her away a greater evil than the one already done to her, because it would inevitably be supposed that she had been guilty of some shameful conduct herself, that the seduction had come from her; whereas she was perfectly innocent, and had done nothing but what affection towards a sick brother dictated, whilst it was impossible for her to call for help (as prescribed in Deu. 22:27), because Amnon had sent the servants away, and Tamar could not in any case expect assistance from them.

**2Sa. 13:17.** Amnon then called the boy who waited upon him, and ordered him to put out this person (the sister he had humbled), and to bolt the door behind her, so that it had the appearance of her having made a shameful proposal to him.

**2Sa. 13:18.** Before stating that this command was obeyed, the writer inserts this remark: “*She (Tamar) wore a long dress with sleeves (see Gen. 37: 3); for in this manner did the virgin daughters of the king dress themselves with mantles.*” מְעִילִים is an accusative belonging to תִּלְבָּשָׁנָה, and the meaning is that the king’s daughters, who were virgins, wore long dresses with sleeves as cloaks. The *cetoneth passim* was not an ordinary under-garment, but was worn over the plain *cetoneth* or tunic, and took the place of the ordinary מְעִיל without sleeves. Notwithstanding this dress, by which a king’s daughter could at once be recognised, Amnon’s servant treated Tamar like a common woman, and turned her out of the house.

**2Sa. 13:19.** And Tamar took ashes upon her head, rent her sleeve-dress (as a sign of grief and pain at the disgrace inflicted upon her), laid her hand upon her head (as a sign that a grievous trouble had come upon her, that the hand of God was resting as it were upon her: vid., Jer. 2:37), and “*went going and cried,*” i.e., crying aloud as she went along.

**2Sa. 13:20.** Then Absalom said to her, namely when she came home mourning in this manner, “*Has Amnon thy brother been with thee?*” This was a euphemism for what had taken place (cf. Gen. 39:10), as Absalom immediately

conjectures. “*And now, my sister, be silent; it is thy brother, do not take this thing to heart.*” Absalom quieted the sister, because he was determined to take revenge, but wished to conceal his plan of vengeance for the time. So Tamar remained in her brother’s house, “*and indeed desolate,*” i.e., as one laid waste, with the joy of her life hopelessly destroyed. It cannot be proved that אָחִישׁ ever means single or solitary.

**2Sa. 13:21, 22.** When David heard “all these things,” he became very wrathful; but Absalom did not speak to Amnon “*from good to evil*” (i.e., either good or evil, not a single word: Gen. 24:50), because he hated him for having humbled his sister. The LXX add to the words “he (David) was very wroth,” the following clause: “He did not trouble the spirit of Amnon his son, because he loved him, for he was his first-born.” This probably gives the true reason why David let such a crime as Amnon’s go unpunished, when the law enjoined that incest should be punished with death (Lev. 20:17); at the same time it is nothing but a subjective conjecture of the translators, and does not warrant us in altering the text. The fact that David was contented to be simply angry is probably to be accounted for partly from his own consciousness of guilt, since he himself had been guilty of adultery; but it arose chiefly from his indulgent affection towards his sons, and his consequent want of discipline. This weakness in his character bore very bitter fruit.

**2Sa. 13:23-39.** ABSALOM’S REVENGE AND FLIGHT. — Vv. 23, 24. Absalom postponed his revenge for two full years. He then “*kept sheep-shearing,*” which was celebrated as a joyous festival (see 1Sa. 25: 2, 8), “*at Baal-Hazor, near Ephraim,*” where he must therefore have had some property. The situation of *Baal-Hazor* cannot be precisely determined. The clause “*which (was) beside Ephraim*” points to a situation on the border of the tribe-territory of Ephraim (*juxta Ephraim*, according to the *Onom. s.v. Baalazor*); for the Old Testament never mentions any city of that name. This definition does not exactly tally with v. Raumer’s conjecture (*Pal. p. 149*), that *Baal-Hazor* may have been preserved in *Tell Asûr* ((*Rob. Pal. ii. p. 151, iii. p. 79*); for this Tell is about five Roman miles to the north-east of Bethel, i.e., within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim. There is greater probability in the suggestion made by Ewald and others, that *Baal-Hazor* is connected with the *Hazor* of Benjamin (Neh. 11:33), though the situation of *Hazor* has not yet been thoroughly decided; and it is merely a conjecture of Robinson’s that it is to be found in *Tell Asûr*. The following statement, that “*Absalom invited all the king’s sons*” (sc., to the feast), somewhat anticipates the course of events: for, according to v. 24, Absalom invited the king himself, together with his courtiers; and it was not till the king declined the invitation for himself, that Absalom restricted his invitation to the royal princes.

**2Sa. 13:25.** The king declined the invitation that he might not be burdensome to Absalom. Absalom pressed him indeed, but he would not go, and blessed him, i.e., wished him a pleasant and successful feast (see 1Sa. 25:14).

**2Sa. 13:26.** Then Absalom said, “*And not (i.e., if thou doest not go), may my brother Amnon go with me?*” The king would not give his consent to this; whether from suspicion cannot be determined with certainty, as he eventually yielded to Absalom’s entreaties and let Amnon and all the other king’s sons go. From the length of time that had elapsed since Amnon’s crime was committed, without Absalom showing any wish for revenge, David might have felt quite sure that he had nothing more to fear. But this long postponement of revenge, for the purpose of carrying it out with all the more certainty, is quite in the spirit of the East.

**2Sa. 13:28.** Absalom then commanded his servants to put Amnon to death without fear, as he had commanded, as soon as his heart should become merry with wine and he (Absalom) should tell them to smite him. The arrangement of the meal is passed over as being quite subordinate to the main purpose of the narrative; and the clause added by the LXX at the close of v. 27, *καὶ ἐποίησεν Ἀβεσσαλὼν πότον κατὰ τὸν πότον τοῦ βασιλέως*, is nothing more than an explanatory gloss, formed according to 1Sa. 25:36. The words “Have not I commanded you?” implied that Absalom would take the responsibility upon himself.

**2Sa. 13:29.** The servants did as he commanded, whereupon the other king’s sons all fled upon their mules. — V. 30. But whilst they were on the road, the report of what Absalom had done reached the ears of the king, and, as generally happens in such cases, with very great exaggeration: “*Absalom hath slain all the king’s sons, and there is not one of them left.*”

**2Sa. 13:31.** The king rent his clothes with horror at such a deed, and sat down upon the ground, and all his servants (courtiers) stood motionless by, with their clothes rent as well. This is the rendering adopted by Böttcher, as *נִצְּבִי* has frequently the idea of standing perfectly motionless (e.g., Num. 22:23, 24; Exo. 5:20, etc.).

**2Sa. 13:32.** Then Jonadab, the same person who had helped Amnon to commit his crime, said,

*“Let not my lord say (or think) that they have slain all the young men the king’s sons, but Amnon alone is dead; for it was laid upon the mouth of Absalom from the day that he forced his sister Tamar.”*

The meaning is either “they might see it (the murder of Amnon) by his mouth,” or “they might gather it from what he said.” **הִיָּתָה שִׁמָּה**: it was a thing laid down, i.e., determined (vid., Exo. 21:13). The subject, viz., the thing itself, or the intended murder of Amnon, may easily be supplied from the context. **כִּי אִם** is undoubtedly used in the sense of “*no but*.” The negation is implied in the thought: Let the king not lay it to heart, that they say all the king’s sons are dead; it is not so, but only Amnon is dead. Jonadab does not seem to speak from mere conjecture; he is much too sure of what he says. He might possibly have heard expressions from Absalom’s lips which made him certain as to how the matter stood.

**2Sa. 13:34.** “And Absalom fled.” This statement follows upon v. 29. When the king’s sons fled upon their mules, Absalom also took to flight.

**2Sa. 13:30-33.** Vv. 30-33 are a parenthesis, in which the writer describes at once the impression made upon the king and his court by the report of what Absalom had done. The apparently unsuitable position in which this statement is placed may be fully explained from the fact, that the flight of Absalom preceded the arrival of the rest of the sons at the king’s palace. The alteration which Böttcher proposes to make in the text, so as to remove this statement altogether on account of its unsuitable position, is proved to be inadmissible by the fact that the account of Absalom’s flight cannot possibly be left out, as reference is made to it again afterwards (vv. 37, 38, “Absalom had fled”). The other alterations proposed by Thenius in the text of vv. 34, 37, 38, are just as arbitrary and out of place, and simply show that this critic was ignorant of the plan adopted by the historian. His plan is the following: To the account of the murder of Amnon, and the consequent flight of the rest of the king’s sons whom Absalom had invited to the feast (v. 29), there is first of all appended a notice of the report which preceded the fugitives and reached the king’s ears in an exaggerated form, together with the impression which it made upon the king, and the rectification of that report by Jonadab (vv. 30-33). Then follows the statement that Absalom fled, also the account of the arrival of the king’s sons (vv. 34-36). After this we have a statement as to the direction in which Absalom fled, the king’s continued mourning, and the length of time that Absalom’s banishment lasted (vv. 37, 38), and finally a remark as to David’s feelings towards Absalom (v. 39).

Jonadab’s assertion, that Amnon only had been slain, was very speedily confirmed (v. 34). The young man, the spy, i.e., the young man who was looking out for the return of those who had been invited to the feast, “lifted up his eyes and saw,” i.e., saw as he looked out into the distance, “much people (a crowd of men) coming from the way behind him along the side of the

mountain.” מִדֶּרֶךְ אֲחֵרִי׃, ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἄλλοισθεν αὐτοῦ (LXX), *per iter devium* (Vulg.), is obscure; and אַחֵר, “behind,” is probably to be understood as meaning “to the west:” from the way at the back of the spy, i.e., to the west of his station. The following words, מִצַּד הַהָר, also remain obscure, as the position of the spy is not given, so that the allusion may be to a mountain in the north-west of Jerusalem quite as well as to one on the west.<sup>121</sup>

When the spy observed the crowd of men approaching, Jonadab said to the king (v. 35), “Behold, the king’s sons are coming: as thy servant said, so has it come to pass.”

**2Sa. 13:36.** Jonadab had hardly said this when the king’s sons arrived and wept aloud, sc., as they related what had occurred; whereupon the king and all his retainers broke out in loud weeping.

**2Sa. 13:37.** “Only Absalom had fled and gone to Talmai the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur.” These words form a circumstantial clause, which the writer has inserted as a parenthesis, to define the expression “the king’s sons” more particularly. If we take these words as a parenthesis, there will be no difficulty in explaining the following word “mourned,” as the subject (David) may very easily be supplied from the preceding words “the king,” etc. (v. 36). To the remark that David mourned all his life for his son (Amnon), there is attached, just as simply and quite in accordance with the facts, the more precise information concerning Absalom’s flight, that he remained in Geshur three years. The repetition of the words “Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur” may be accounted for from the general diffuseness of the Hebrew style. *Talmi* the king of *Geshur* was the father of *Maacah*, Absalom’s mother (2Sa. 3: 3). The LXX thought it necessary expressly to indicate this by inserting εἰς γῆν Μαχαάδ (*al. γῆν Μαχαάδ*).

**2Sa. 13:39.** “And it (this) held king David back from going out to Absalom, for he comforted himself concerning Amnon, because he was dead.” In adopting this translation of the difficult clause with which the verse commences, we take וְנִתְבַּל in the sense of בָּלַא, as the verbs כָּלָה and כָּלָא frequently exchange their forms; we also take the third pers. fem. as the neuter impersonal, so that the subject is left indefinite, and is to be gathered from the context. Absalom’s flight to Geshur, and his stay there, were what chiefly prevented David from going out to Absalom. Moreover, David’s grief on account of Amnon’s death gradually diminished as time rolled on. צָאָה אֶל אִבְשׁ׃ is used in a hostile sense, as in Deu. 28: 7, to go out and punish him for his wickedness. The כִּי before וְנִתְבַּל might also be rendered “but,” as after a negative clause, as the principal sentence implies a negation: “He did not go out against Absalom,

*but comforted himself.*” There is not only no grammatical difficulty in the way of this explanation of the verse, but it also suits the context, both before and after. All the other explanations proposed are either at variance with the rules of the language, or contain an unsuitable thought. The old Jewish interpretation (adopted in the Chaldee version, and also by the Rabbins), viz., David longed (his soul pined) to go out to Absalom (i.e., to see or visit him), is opposed, as Gusset has shown (in his *Lex.* pp. 731-2), to the conduct of David towards Absalom as described in 2Sa. 14, — namely, that after Joab had succeeded by craft in bringing him back to Jerusalem, David would not allow him to come into his presence for two whole years (2Sa. 14:24, 28). Luther’s rendering, “and king David left off going out against Absalom,” is not only precluded by the feminine **תִּכְבַּל**, but also by the fact that nothing has been said about any pursuit of Absalom on the part of David. Other attempts at emendations there is no need whatever to refute.

### **Absalom’s Return, and Reconciliation to the King. — Ch. 14.**

*2Sa. 14.* As David did not repeal the banishment of Absalom, even after he had comforted himself for Amnon’s death, Joab endeavoured to bring him back to Jerusalem by stratagem (vv. 1-20); and when this succeeded, he proceeded to effect his reconciliation to the king (vv. 21-33). He may have been induced to take these steps partly by his personal attachment to Absalom, but the principal reason no doubt was that Absalom had the best prospect of succeeding to the throne, and Joab thought this the best way to secure himself from punishment for the murder which he had committed. But the issue of events frustrated all such hopes. Absalom did not succeed to the throne, Joab did not escape punishment, and David was severely chastised for his weakness and injustice.

*2Sa. 14: 1-20.* When Joab perceived that the king’s heart was against Absalom, he sent for a cunning woman from Tekoah, to work upon the king and change his mind, so that he might grant forgiveness to Absalom. V. 1 is understood by the majority of commentators, in accordance with the Syriac and Vulgate, as signifying that Joab learned that the king’s heart was inclined towards Absalom, was well disposed towards him again. But this explanation is neither philologically sustained, nor in accordance with the context. **לִב**, written with **עַל** and without any verb, so that **הָיָה** has to be supplied, only occurs again in Dan. 11:28, where the preposition has the meaning “*against.*” It is no argument against this meaning here, that if David had been ill disposed towards Absalom, there would have been no necessity to state that Joab perceived it; for we cannot see why Joab should only have perceived or noticed David’s friendly feelings, and not his unfriendly feelings as well. If, however, Joab had noticed the re-awakening of David’s good feelings towards Absalom, there would have

been no necessity for him to bring the cunning woman from Tekoah to induce him to consent to Absalom's return. Moreover, David would not in that case have refused to allow Absalom to see his face for two whole years after his return to Jerusalem (v. 24). *Tekoah*, the home of the prophet Amos, the present *Tekua*, two hours to the south of Bethlehem (see at Jos. 15:59, LXX). The "wise woman" was to put on mourning, as a woman who had been mourning for a long while for some one that was dead (הִתְאַבֵּל, to set or show herself mourning), and to go to the king in this attire, and say what Joab had put into her mouth.

**2Sa. 14: 4.** The woman did this. All the old translators have given as the rendering of וַתֵּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה "the woman came (went) to the king," as if they had read וַתָּבֵא. This reading is actually found in some thirty *Codd.* of De Rossi, and is therefore regarded by Thenius and the majority of critics as the original one. But Böttcher has very justly urged, in opposition to this, that וַתֵּאמֶר cannot possibly be an accidental corruption of וַתָּבֵא, and that it is still less likely that such an alteration should have been intentionally made. But this remark, which is correct enough in itself, cannot sustain the conjecture which Böttcher has founded upon it, namely that two whole lines have dropt out of the Hebrew text, containing the answer which the woman of Tekoah gave to Joab before she went to the king, since there is not one of the ancient versions which contains a single word more than the Masoretic text. Consequently we must regard וַתֵּאמֶר as the original reading, and interpret it as a *hysteron-proteron*, which arose from the fact that the historian was about to relate at once what the woman said to the king, but thought it desirable to mention her falling down at the feet of the king before giving her actual words, "Help, O king," which he introduces by repeating the word וַתֵּאמֶר.

**2Sa. 14: 5ff.** When the king asked her, "What aileth thee?" the woman described the pretended calamity which had befallen her, saying that she was a widow, and her two sons had quarrelled in the field; and as no one interposed, one of them had killed the other. The whole family had then risen up and demanded that the survivor should be given up, that they might carry out the avenging of blood upon him. Thus they sought to destroy the heir also, and extinguish the only spark that remained to her, so as to leave her husband neither name nor posterity upon the earth. The suffix attached to וַיִּכּוּ, with the object following ("he smote him, the other," v. 6), may be explained from the diffuseness of the style of ordinary conversation (see at 1Sa. 21:14). There is no reason whatever for changing the reading into וַיִּכּוּ, as the suffix וּ, though unusual with verbs לִי"ה, is not without parallel; not to mention the fact that the plural וַיִּכּוּ is quite unsuitable. There is also quite as little reason for changing



וַיִּשְׁמְדוּ into וַיִּשְׁמִידוּ, in accordance with the Syriac and Arabic, as Michaelis and Thenius propose, on the ground that “the woman would have described her relatives as diabolically malicious men, if she had put into their mouths such words as these, ‘We will destroy the heir also.’” It was the woman’s intention to describe the conduct of the relations and their pursuit of blood-revenge in the harshest terms possible, in order that she might obtain help from the king. She begins to speak in her own name at the word וַיִּכְבְּרוּ (“and so they shall quench and”), where she resorts to a figure, for the purpose of appealing to the heart of the king to defend her from the threatened destruction of her family, saying, “And so they shall quench the burning coal which is left.” נִחְלָה is used figuratively, like τὸ ζῶπυρον, the burning coal with which one kindles a fresh fire, to denote the last remnant. לְבִלְתִּי שׁוּם: “so as not to set,” i.e., to preserve or leave name and remnant (i.e., posterity) to my husband.

This account differed, no doubt, from the case of Absalom, inasmuch as in his case no murder had taken place in the heat of a quarrel, and no avenger of blood demanded his death; so that the only resemblance was in the fact that there existed an intention to punish a murderer. But it was necessary to disguise the affair in this manner, in order that David might not detect her purpose, but might pronounce a decision out of pity for the poor widow which could be applied to his own conduct towards Absalom.

*2Sa. 14: 8.* The plan succeeded. The king replied to the woman, “Go home, I will give charge concerning thee,” i.e., I will give the necessary commands that thy son may not be slain by the avenger of blood. This declaration on the part of the king was perfectly just. If the brothers had quarrelled, and one had killed the other in the heat of the quarrel, it was right that he should be defended from the avenger of blood, because it could not be assumed that there was any previous intention to murder. This declaration therefore could not be applied as yet to David’s conduct towards Absalom. But the woman consequently proceeded to say (v. 9), “My lord, O king, let the guilt be upon me and upon my father’s house, and let the king and his throne be guiltless.” בַּסֵּא, the throne, for the government or reign. The meaning of the words is this: but if there should be anything wrong in the fact that this bloodshed is not punished, let the guilt fall upon me and my family. The king replied (v. 10), “Whosoever speaketh to thee, bring him to me; he shall not touch thee any more.” אֵלַיִךְ does not stand for עֲלֶיךָ, “against thee;” but the meaning is, whoever speaks to thee any more about this, i.e., demands thy son of thee again.

*2Sa. 14:11.* The crafty woman was not yet satisfied with this, and sought by repeating her petition to induce the king to confirm his promise on oath, that she might bind him the more firmly. She therefore said still further:

*“I pray thee, let the king remember Jehovah thy God, that the avenger of blood may no more prepare destruction, and that they may not destroy my son.”*

The *Chethib* הַרְבִּית is probably a copyist’s error for הַרְבּוֹת, for which the Masoretes would write הַרְבַּת, the construct state of הַרְבָּה, — a form of the inf. abs. which is not commonly used, and which may possibly have been chosen because הַרְבָּה had become altogether an adverb (vid., Ewald, § 240, e.). The context requires the inf. constr. הַרְבּוֹת: that the avenger of blood may not multiply (make much) to destroy, i.e., may not add to the destruction; and הַרְבִּית is probably only a verbal noun used instead of the infinitive. The king immediately promised on oath that her son should not suffer the least harm.

**2Sa. 14:12, 13.** When the woman had accomplished so much, she asked permission to speak one word more; and having obtained it, proceeded to the point she wanted to reach:

*“And wherefore thinkest thou such things against people of God? And because the king speaketh this word, he is as one inculpating himself, since the king does not let his own rejected one return.”*

בְּאָשָׁם, “like one who has laden himself with guilt,” is the predicate to the clause וּמִדְבַר וְגו'. These words of the woman were intentionally kept indefinite, rather hinting at what she wished to place before the king, than expressing it distinctly. This is more particularly applicable to the first clause, which needs the words that follow to render it intelligible, as הַשְׁבֵּתָה בְּזוֹאת is ambiguous; so that Dathe and Thenius are wrong in rendering it, “Why dost thou propose such things towards the people of God?” and understanding it as relating to the protection which the king was willing to extend to her and to her son. הַשֵּׁב with עַל does not mean to think or reflect “with regard to,” but “against” a person. Ewald is quite correct in referring the word בְּזוֹאת to what follows: such things, i.e., such thoughts as thou hast towards thy son, whose blood-guiltiness thou wilt not forgive. עַל-עַם אֱלֹהִים, without the article, is intentionally indefinite, “against people of God,” i.e., against members of the congregation of God. “This word” refers to the decision which the king had pronounced in favour of the widow. לְבַלְתִּי הָשִׁיב, literally, in not letting him return.

In order to persuade the king to forgive, the crafty woman reminded him (v. 14) of the brevity of human life and of the mercy of God:

*“For we must die, and (are) as water spilt upon the ground, which is not (cannot be) gathered up, and God does not take a soul away, but thinks thoughts, that He may not thrust from Him one expelled.”*

Although these thoughts are intentionally expressed quite generally, their special allusion to the case in hand can easily be detected. We must all die, and when dead our life is irrevocably gone. Thou mightest soon experience this in the case of Absalom, if thou shouldst suffer him to continue in exile. God does not act thus; He does not deprive the sinner of life, but is merciful, and does not cast off for ever.

**2Sa. 14:15.** After these allusions to David's treatment of Absalom, the woman returned again to her own affairs, to make the king believe that nothing but her own distress had led her to speak thus:

*“And now that I have come to speak this word to the king my lord, was (took place) because the people have put me in fear (sc., by their demand that I should give up my son to the avenger of blood); thy handmaid said (i.e., thought), I will indeed go to the king, perhaps the king will do his handmaid's word,”*

i.e., grant her request.

**2Sa. 14:16.** *“Yea, the king will hear, to save his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son from the inheritance of God.”* אֲשֶׁר must be supplied before לְהַשְׁמִיד: who is to destroy, i.e., who is seeking to destroy (vid., Gesenius, § 132, 3). “The inheritance of God” was the nation of Israel (as in 1Sa. 26:19; cf. Deu. 32: 9).

**2Sa. 14:17.**

*“Then thine handmaid thought, may the word of my lord the king be for rest (i.e., tend to give me rest); for as the angel of God (the angel of the covenant, the mediator of the blessings of divine grace to the covenant-nation), so is my lord the king to hear good and evil (i.e., listening to every just complaint on the part of his subjects, and granting help to the oppressed), and Jehovah thy God be with thee!”*

**2Sa. 14:18ff.** These words of the woman were so well considered and so crafty, that the king could not fail to see both what she really meant, and also that she had not come with her petition of her own accord. He therefore told her to answer the question without disguise: whether the hand of Joab was with her in all this. She replied, *“Truly there is not (אֵין) anything to the right hand or to the left of all that my lord the king saith,”* i.e., the king always hits the right point in everything that he said. *“Yea, thy servant Joab, he hath commanded me, and he hath put all these words into thy servant's mouth.”* אֵשׁ is not a copyist's error, but a softer form of אֵשׁ, as in Micah 6:10 (vid., Ewald, § 53c, and Olshausen, *Gramm.* p. 425).

**2Sa. 14:20.**

*“To turn the appearance of the king (i.e., to disguise the affair in the finest way) Joab hath done this; my lord (i.e., the king), however, is wise, like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know all that is (happens) upon earth.”*

She hoped by these flattering words to gain the king completely over.

**2Sa. 14:21-33.** David then promised Joab, that the request which he had presented through the medium of the woman of Tekoah should be fulfilled, and commanded him to fetch Absalom back. The *Chethib* עֲשִׂיתִי (v. 21) is the correct reading, and the *Keri* עָשִׂיתָ has arisen from a misunderstanding.

**2Sa. 14:22.** Joab thanked the king for this, and blessed him:

*“To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.”*

It is pretty evident from this, that Joab had frequently applied to David for Absalom’s return, without any attention being paid to his application. David therefore suspected that Joab had instructed the woman of Tekoah. The *Chethib* עֲבָדוּ is not to be exchanged for the *Keri* עֲבָדְךָ.

**2Sa. 14:23.** Joab then went to *Geshur* (see 2Sa. 13:37), and fetched Absalom back to Jerusalem.

**2Sa. 14:24.** But David could not forgive Absalom altogether. He said to Joab, *“Let him turn to his own house, and my face he shall not see.”* This half forgiveness was an imprudent measure, and bore very bitter fruit. The further account of Absalom is introduced in vv. 25-27 with a description of his personal appearance and family affairs.

**2Sa. 14:25.** There was no man in all Israel so handsome as Absalom. מֵאֵד לְהִלָּל, “to much praising,” i.e., so that he was greatly praised. from the sole of the foot even to the crown of his head, there was no fault (מוֹם, bodily blemish) in him.

**2Sa. 14:26.**

*“When he polled his head, and it took place from year to year that he polled it; for it became heavy upon him (too heavy for him), and so he polled it: they weighed the hair of his head, two hundred shekels by the king’s weight.”*

A strong growth of hair was a sign of great manly power, and so far a proof of Absalom’s beauty. The statement as to the weight of the hair cut off, viz., two hundred shekels, is in any case a round number, and much too high, although we do not know what the difference between the royal and the sacred shekel really was. According to the sacred reckoning, two hundred shekels would be

about six pounds; so that if we were to assume that the royal shekel was about half the other, the number would be still much too high. It is evident, therefore, that there is an error in the text, such as we frequently meet with in the case of numbers, though we have no means of rectifying it, as all the ancient versions contain the same number.

**2Sa. 14:27.** Unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter named Tamar, who was beautiful in figure. Contrary to general usage, the names of the sons are not given, in all probability for no other reason than because they died in infancy. Consequently, as Absalom had no sons, he afterwards erected a pillar to preserve his name (2Sa. 18:18). The daughter's name is probably given as a proof of Absalom's great affection for his sister Tamar, whom Amnon had violated.<sup>122</sup>

**2Sa. 14:28-30.** After Absalom had sat for two whole years in his house at Jerusalem without seeing the king's face, he sent to Joab that he might obtain for him the king's full forgiveness. But as Joab would not come to him, even after he had sent for him twice, Absalom commanded his servants to set fire to one of Joab's fields which adjoined his own and was then full of barley, for the purpose of compelling him to come, as he foresaw that Joab would not take this destruction of his property quietly, but would come to him to complain. **יָדִי אֶל**, literally "at my hand," i.e., by the side of my field or property. The *Chethib* **וְהוֹצִיתִיהָ** ("come, I will set it on fire") is a *Hiphil* formation, according to verbs **פָּוֵר**, for which the *Keri* has **וְהִצִּיתוּהָ**, the ordinary *Hiphil* form of **נָצַת** in the second person plural, "go and set it one fire."

**2Sa. 14:31, 32.** When Joab came to Absalom's house in consequence of this, and complained of it, Absalom said to him, "See, I have sent to thee, to say to thee, Come hither, and I will send thee to the king, to say to him, Wherefore have I come from Geshur? it were better for me that I were there still: and now I will see the king's face; and if there is any iniquity in me, let him put me to death." This half forgiving was really worse than no forgiveness at all. Absalom might indeed very properly desire to be punished according to the law, if the king could not or might not forgive him; although the manner in which he sought to obtain forgiveness by force manifested an evident spirit of defiance, by which, with the well-known mildness of David's temper, he hoped to attain his object, and in fact did attain it. For (v. 33) when Joab went to the king, and announced this to him, the king sent for Absalom, and kissed him, as a sign of his restoration to favour. Nothing was said by Absalom about forgiveness; for his falling down before the king when he came into his presence, was nothing more than the ordinary manifestation of reverence with which a subject in the East approaches his king.

## **Absalom's Rebellion and David's Flight. — Ch. 15-16:14.**

*2Sa. 15: 1-16:14.* After this restoration to favour, Absalom soon began to aspire to the throne, setting up a princely court, and endeavouring to turn the hearts of the people towards himself, by addressing in a friendly manner any who came to seek redress from the king in matters in dispute, and by saying things adapted to throw suspicion upon his father's rule (vv. 1-6). When he had succeeded in this, he asked permission from the king to take a journey to Hebron, under the pretence of wanting to fulfil a vow which he had made during his banishment; and when once there, he soon proceeded with his rebellious intentions (vv. 7-12). As soon as David heard of it, he determined to fly from Jerusalem, and crossed the Kidron with his faithful adherents. Having sent the priests with the ark of the covenant back to the city, he went up to the Mount of Olives, amidst the loud lamentations of the people. Hushai, who came to meet him, he sent to the city, to frustrate the counsel of Ahithophel, who was one of the conspirators, and to send information to him of what was going forward (vv. 13-37). When he reached the top, Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, came to meet him with provisions and succour (2Sa. 16: 1-4) whilst Shimei, a relation of the house of Saul, followed him with curses and stones (vv. 5-14).

With this rebellion the calamities which Nathan had predicted to David on account of his sin with Bathsheba began to burst upon him in all their fulness. The success of the rebellion itself may be accounted for, from the fact that the consciousness of his own fault not only made David weak towards his sons, but produced a want of firmness in his resolutions; whilst the imperfections and defects in the internal administration of the kingdom, when the time of the brilliant victories was past, became more and more perceptible to the people, and furnished occasion for dissatisfaction with his government, which Absalom was skilful enough to bend to his own purposes. During the time that this rebellion was in progress, David poured out his lamentations to the Lord (in Psa. 41 and 55) as to the faithlessness of his most confidential councillors, and prayed for the judgment of retribution upon the conduct of this wicked band. After it had broken out, he uttered his longings to return to the sanctuary at Jerusalem, and his firm confidence that he should be delivered out of his distresses and reinstated in his kingdom, first of all in Psa. 3 and 63 during his flight in the desert of Judah, and in Psa. 61 and 62 during his stay in the land to the east of the Jordan.

*2Sa. 15: 1-6.* ABSALOM SEEKS TO SECURE THE PEOPLE'S FAVOUR. — V. 1. Soon afterwards (this seems to be the meaning of **מֵאַחֲרַי בֶּן** as distinguished from **אַחֲרַי בֶּן**; cf. 2Sa. 3:28) Absalom set up a carriage (i.e., a state-carriage; cf. 1Sa. 8:11) and horses, and fifty men as runners before him, i.e., to run

before him when he drove out, and attract the attention of the people by a display of princely pomp, as Adonijah afterwards did (1Ki. 1: 5). He then went early in the morning to the side of the road to the gate of the palace, and called out to every one who was about to go to the king “for judgment,” i.e., seek justice in connection with any matter in dispute, and asked him, “Of what city art thou?” and also, as we may see from the reply in v. 3, inquired into his feelings towards the king, and then said, “Thy matters are good and right, but there is no hearer for thee with the king.” שֹׁמֵעַ signifies the judicial officer, who heard complainants and examined into their different causes, for the purpose of laying them before the king for settlement. Of course the king himself could not give a hearing to every complainant, and make a personal investigation of his cause; nor could his judges procure justice for every complainant, however justly they might act, though it is possible that they may not always have performed their duty conscientiously.

**2Sa. 15: 4.** Absalom also said,

*“Oh that I might be judge in the land, and every one who had a cause might come before me; I would procure him justice!”*

מִי יִשְׁמָעֵי is a wish: “who might (i.e., oh that one might) appoint me judge,” an analogous expression to מִי יִתֵּן (vid., Gesenius, § 136, 1, and Ewald, § 329, c.). עָלַי placed before יָבֵא for the sake of emphasis, may be explained from the fact that a judge sat, so that the person who stood before him rose above him (comp. Exo. 18:13 with Gen. 18: 8). הִצְדִּיק, to speak justly, or help to justice.

**2Sa. 15: 5.** And when any one came near to him to prostrate himself before him, he took him by the hand and kissed him. It was by conduct of this kind that Agamemnon is said to have secured the command of the Grecian army (Euripid. *Iphig. Aul.* v. 337ff.).

**2Sa. 15: 6.** Thus Absalom stole the heart of the men of Israel. גָּנַב לֵב does not mean to deceive or cheat, like גָּנַב לֵב in the *Kal* in Gen. 31:20, but to steal the heart, i.e., to bring a person over to his side secretly and by stratagem.

**2Sa. 15: 7-12.** ABSALOM'S REBELLION. — Vv. 7, 8. After the lapse of forty (?) years Absalom said to the king,

*“Pray I will go (i.e., pray allow me to go) and perform a vow in Hebron which I vowed to the Lord during my stay at Geshur”* (v. 8).

The number forty is altogether unsuitable, as it cannot possibly be understood either as relating to the age of Absalom or to the year of David's reign: for Absalom was born at Hebron after David had begun to reign, and David only

reigned forty years and a half in all, and Absalom's rebellion certainly did not take place in the last few weeks of his reign. It is quite as inappropriate to assume, as the *terminus a quo* of the forty years, either the commencement of Saul's reign, as several of the Rabbins have done, as well as the author of the marginal note in *Cod.* 380 of De Rossi (למלכות שאול), or the anointing of David at Bethlehem, as Luther (in the marginal note) and Lightfoot do; for the word "after" evidently refers to some event in the life of Absalom, to which allusion has previously been made, namely, either to the time of his reconciliation with David (2Sa. 14:33), or (what is not so probable) to the period of his return from Geshur to Jerusalem (2Sa. 14:23). Consequently the reading adopted by the Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate, also by Theodoret and others, viz., "four years," must certainly be the correct one, and not "forty days," which we find in *Codd.* 70 and 96 in Kennicott, since forty days would be far too short a time for maturing the rebellion. It is true, that with the reading אַרְבַּע we should expect, as a rule, the plural שָׁנִים. At the same time, the numbers from two to ten are sometimes construed with a singular noun (e.g., 2Ki. 22: 1; cf. Gesenius, § 120, 2). The pretended vow was, that if Jehovah would bring him back to Jerusalem, he would serve Jehovah. עָבַד אֶת־יְהוָה, "to do a service to Jehovah," can only mean to offer a sacrifice, which is the explanation given by Josephus. The *Chethib* יָשִׁיב is not the infinitive, but the imperfect *Hiphil*: *si reduxerit, reduxerit me*, which is employed in an unusual manner instead of the *inf. absol.*, for the sake of emphasis. The *Keri* יָשׁוּב would have to be taken as an adverb "again;" but this is quite unnecessary.

**2Sa. 15: 9.** The king consented, and Absalom went to Hebron. Absalom had selected this city, probably assigning as the reason that he was born there, but really because his father David had been made king there, and also possibly because there may have been many persons there who had been displeased by the removal of the court to Jerusalem.

**2Sa. 15:10.** When Absalom went to Hebron, he sent spies into all the tribes of Israel to say, "When ye hear the sound of the trumpet, say, Absalom has become king in Hebron." We must suppose the sending the spies to have been contemporaneous with the removal of Absalom to Hebron, so that וַיִּשְׁלַח is used quite regularly, and there is no reason for translating it as a pluperfect. The messengers sent out are called "spies," because they were first of all to ascertain the feelings of the people in the different tribes, and were only to execute their commission in places where they could reckon upon support. The conspiracy had hitherto been kept very secret, as we may see from the statement in v. 11: "With Absalom there had gone two hundred men out of Jerusalem, invited (to



the sacrificial festival), *and going in their simplicity, who knew nothing at all of the affair.*” (לֹא בְלִי-דָבָר): nothing at all.)

**2Sa. 15:12.** Moreover, Absalom sent for Ahithophel, David’s councillor, to come from his own town Giloh, when he offered the sacrifices. The unusual construction of יִשְׁלַח אֹתוֹ with מְעִירוֹ may be explained from the pregnant character of the expression: he sent and bade come, i.e., he summoned Ahithophel out of his city. *Giloh*, Ahithophel’s home, was upon the mountains of Judah, to the south or south-west of Hebron (see at Jos. 15:51). Ahithophel had no doubt been previously initiated into Absalom’s plans, and had probably gone to his native city, merely that he might come to him with the greater ease; since his general place of abode, as king’s councillor, must have been in Jerusalem. “*And the conspiracy became strong; for the people multiplied continually with Absalom*” (the latter is a circumstantial clause). These words give a condensed summary of the result of the enterprise.

**2Sa. 15:13-21.** DAVID’S FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM. — Vv. 13, 14. When this intelligence reached David, “*The heart of the men of Israel is after Absalom*” (הֲיָה אַחֲרָי, as in 2Sa. 2:10, to be attached to a person as king; see at 1Sa. 12:14), he said to his servants that were with him in Jerusalem,

*“Arise, let us flee, for there will be no escape for us from Absalom! Make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and drive the calamity (the judgment threatened in 2Sa. 12:10, 11) over us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.”*

David was perhaps afraid that Jerusalem might fall into Absalom’s power through treachery, and therefore resolved to fly as speedily as possible, not only in order to prevent a terrible massacre, but also to give his own faithful adherents time to assemble.

**2Sa. 15:15, 16.** As his servants declared themselves ready to follow him, the king went out of the city with all his family in his train (*lit.* at his feet, as in Jud. 4:10, 15, etc.), but left ten concubines behind to keep the palace.

**2Sa. 15:17.** When outside the city the king and all the people in his suite (i.e., the royal family and their servants) halted at “the house of the distance.” הַמֵּרְחֵק is probably a proper name given to a house in the neighbourhood of the city and on the road to Jericho, which was called “the farthest house,” viz., from the city.

**2Sa. 15:18.** And all his servants, i.e., his state officers and attendants, went along by his side, and the whole body-guard (the *Crethi* and *Plethi*: see at 2Sa. 8:18); and all the Gathites, namely the six hundred men who had come in his train from Gath, went along in front of the king. David directed the fugitives

to all into rank, the servants going by his side, and the body-guard and the six hundred old companions in arms, who probably also formed a kind of body-guard, marching in front. The verb עָבַר (passed on) cannot be understood as signifying to file past on account of its connection with עַל-יָדוֹ (beside him, or by his side). The expression *Gittim* is strange, as we cannot possibly think of actual Gathites or Philistines from Gath. The apposition (the six hundred men, etc.) shows clearly enough that the six hundred old companions in arms are intended, the men who gathered round David on his flight from Saul and emigrated with him to Gath (1Sa. 27: 2, 3), who afterwards lived with him in Ziklag (1Sa. 27: 8; 29: 2; 30: 1, 9), and eventually followed him to Hebron and Jerusalem (2Sa. 2: 3; 5: 6). In all probability they formed a separate company of well-trying veterans or a kind of body-guard in Jerusalem, and were commonly known as *Gathites*.<sup>123</sup>

**2Sa. 15:19.** A military commander named *Ittai*, who had emigrated from Gath and come over to David not long before, also accompanied the king from the city. It is evident from 2Sa. 18: 2, where Ittai is said to have commanded a third part of the army sent against Absalom, and to have been placed on an equality with Joab and Abishai the most experienced generals, that Ittai was a Philistian general who had entered David's service. The reason for his going over to David is not known. According to v. 22 of this chapter, Ittai did not come alone, but brought all his family with him (*taph*: the little ones). The opinion expressed by Thenius, that he had come to Jerusalem as a hostage, is merely founded upon a false interpretation of the last two clauses of the verse before us. David said to Ittai, "*Wherefore goest thou also with us? return and stay with the king; for thou art a stranger, and also emigrating to thy place.*" There is no irony in the words "stay with the king," as Thenius and Clericus suppose (viz., "with the man who behaves as if he were king"); nor is there an acknowledgment of Absalom as king, which certainly could never have emanated from David. The words contain nothing more than the simple thought: Do you remain with whoever is or shall be king, since there is no necessity for you as a stranger to take sides at all. This is the explanation given by Seb. Schmidt: "It is not your place to decide this context as to who ought to be king; but you may remain quiet and see whom God shall appoint as king, and whether it be I or Absalom, you can serve the one that God shall choose." This is the only way in which we can explain the reason assigned for the admonition, viz., "Thou art a stranger," and not an Israelite. There is some difficulty connected with the following words (rendered in the Eng. version "and also an exile"). In the Septuagint and Vulgate they are rendered *καὶ ὅτι μετώκησας σὺ ἐκ τοῦ τόπου σου*, *et egressus es de loco tuo* (and thou hast gone out from thine own place); but in adopting this rendering the translators have not only passed over

the **גַּם** (also), but have taken **לְמִקְוֵי** for **מִמִּקְוֵי**. Nevertheless Thenius proposes to bring the text into harmony with these versions for the purpose of bringing out the meaning, “and moreover thou art one carried away from his own home.” But this is decidedly a mistake; for David would never have made a Philistine — who had just before been carried away from his own home, or, as Thenius understands it, who had been brought to Jerusalem as a hostage — the commander of a third of his army. The meaning is rather the following: “And thou hast still no fatherland,” i.e., thou art still wandering about through the earth like an exile from his country: wherever thou findest a place, and art allowed to settle, there only canst thou dwell.

**2Sa. 15:20.** “Thy coming is yesterday (from yesterday), and should I disturb thee to-day to go with us, when I am going just where I go?” i.e., wherever my way may lie (I go I know not whither; Chald.: cf. 1Sa. 23:13). The *Chethib* **אֲנִיעֶךָ** is a copyist’s error. The thought requires the *Hiphil* **אֲנִיעֶךָ** (*Keri*), as **נִיעַ** in the *Kal* has the intransitive meaning, to totter, sway about, or move hither and thither. “Return and take thy brethren back; grace and truth be with thee.” It is evidently more in accordance with the train of thought to separate **עִמָּךְ** from the previous clause and connect it with **חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה**, though this is opposed to the accents, than to adopt the adverbial interpretation, “take back thy brethren with thee in grace and truth,” as Maurer proposes. (For the thought itself, see Pro. 3: 3). The reference is to the grace and truth (faithfulness) of God, which David desired that Ittai should receive upon his way. In the Septuagint and Vulgate the passage is paraphrased thus: “Jehovah show thee grace and truth,” after 2Sa. 2: 6; but it by no means follows from this that **יְהוָה וַעֲשֵׂה עִמָּךְ** has fallen out of the Hebrew text.

**2Sa. 15:21.** But Ittai replied with a solemn oath, “Assuredly at the place where my lord the king shall be (stay), whether for death or life, there will thy servant be.” **כִּי אִם** means “only,” as in Gen. 40:14, Job. 42: 8; here, in a declaration on oath, it is equivalent to *assuredly* (vid., Ewald, § 356, *b.*). The *Chethib* is therefore correct, and the erasure of **אִם** in the *Keri* is a bad emendation. The **כִּי** in the apodosis is either an emphatic declaration, *yea*, or like **וַאֲזַי** merely introduces a distinct assertion.

**2Sa. 15:22.** After this assurance of his devotedness, David let Ittai do as he pleased. **לֵךְ וְעָבַר**, “go and pass on.” **עָבַר** does not mean to pass by, but to go forward. Thus Ittai and his men and all his family that was with him went forward with the king. By “the little ones” (*taph*) we are to understand a man’s whole family, as in many other instances (see at Exo. 12:37).

**2Sa. 15:22-29.** THE KING CROSSES THE KIDRON, AND SENDS THE PRIESTS BACK WITH THE ARK TO JERUSALEM. — V. 23. All the land (as in 1Sa. 14:25) wept aloud when all the people went forward; and the king went over the brook Kidron, and all the people went over in the direction of (*lit.* in the face of) the way to the desert. The brook *Kidron* is a winter torrent, i.e., a mountain torrent which only flows during the heavy rains of winter (χεῖμα ἄβρος τοῦ Κεδρών, John 18: 1). It is on the eastern side of Jerusalem, between the city and the Mount of Olives, and derives its name from the appearance of the water when rendered muddy through the melting of the snow (cf. Job. 6:16). In summer it is nothing more than a dry channel in the valley of Jehoshaphat (see Robinson, *Pal.* i. 396, and v. Raumer, *Pal.* p. 309, note 81). “*The wilderness*” (*midbar*) is the northern part of the desert of Judah, through which the road to Jericho and the Jordan lay.

**2Sa. 15:24.** Zadok the priest and all the Levites (who were in Jerusalem) left the city with the fugitive king, bearing the ark of the covenant:

*“And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar came up, till all the people had come completely over from the city.”*

וַיַּעַל, ἀνέβη, *ascendit* (LXX, Vulg.), may probably be accounted for from the fact that Abiathar did not come to join the fugitives till the procession halted at the Mount of Olives; so that עָלָה, like ἀναβαίνειν, merely refers to his actually going up, and וַיַּעַל affirms that Abiathar joined them until all the people from the city had arrived. The rendering proposed by Michaelis and Böttcher (“he offered sacrifices”) is precluded by the fact that עָלָה never means to sacrifice when written without עוֹלָה, or unless the context points distinctly to sacrifices, as in 2Sa. 24:22, 1Sa. 2:28. The ark of the covenant was put down, because those who went out with the king made a halt, to give the people who were still coming time to join the procession.

**2Sa. 15:25ff.** Then the king said to Zadok,

*“Take back the ark of God into the city! If I find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, He will bring me back and let me see Him (i.e., himself: the reference is to God) and His dwelling (i.e., the ark of the covenant as the throne of the divine glory in the tent that had been set up for it). But if He thus say, I have not delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him.”*

Thus David put his fate in believing confidence into the hand of the Lord, because he felt that it was the Lord who was chastising him for his sons through this rebellion.

**2Sa. 15:27.** He also said still further to Zadok, “Thou seer! return into the city in peace.” **הָרֹאֶה אֶתָּה**, with **הָ** interrog., does not yield any appropriate sense, as **הָ** cannot stand for **הָלֹאֵה** here, simply because it does not relate to a thing which the person addressed could not deny. Consequently the word must be pointed thus, **הָרֹאֶה** (with the article), and rendered as a vocative, as it has been by Jerome and Luther. **רֹאֶה**, seer, is equivalent to prophet. He applies this epithet to Zadok, as the high priest who received divine revelations by means of the Urim. The meaning is, Thou Zadok art equal to a prophet; therefore thy proper place is in Jerusalem (O. v. Gerlach). Zadok was to stand as it were upon the watch there with Abiathar, and the sons of both to observe the events that occurred, and send him word through their sons into the plain of the Jordan. “Behold, I will tarry by the ferries of the desert, till a word comes from you to show me,” sc., what has taken place, or how the things shape themselves in Jerusalem. Instead of **בְּעֵרְבוֹת**, the earlier translators as well as the Masoretes adopted the reading **בְּעֵרְבוֹת**, “in the steppes of the desert.” The allusion in this case would be to the steppes of Jericho (2Ki. 25: 5). But Böttcher has very properly defended the *Chethib* on the strength of 2Sa. 17:16, where the *Keri* has **עֵרְבוֹת** again, though **עֵבְרוֹת** is the true reading (cf. 2Sa. 19:19). The “ferries of the desert” are the places where the Jordan could be crossed, the fords of the Jordan (Jos. 2: 7; Jud. 3:28).

**2Sa. 15:29.** Zadok and Abiathar then returned to the city with the ark of God.

**2Sa. 15:30-37.** AHITHOPHEL AND HUSHAI. — Vv. 30, 31. When David was going by the height of the olive-trees, i.e., the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, with his head covered, and barefooted, as a sign of grief and mourning (see Esther 6:12; Eze. 24:17), and with the people who accompanied him also mourning, he received intelligence that Ahithophel (see at v. 12) was with Absalom, and among the conspirators. **וַיְדַבֵּר הַגִּיד** gives no sense; for David cannot be the subject, because the next clause, “and David said,” etc., contains most distinctly an expression of David’s on receiving some information. Thenius would therefore alter **הַגִּיד** into the *Hophal* **הִגִּיד**, whilst Ewald (§ 131, a) would change it into **הִגִּיד**, an unusual form of the *Hophal*, “David was informed,” according to the construction of the *Hiphil* with the accusative. But although this construction of the *Hiphil* is placed beyond all doubt by Job. 31:37; 26: 4, and Eze. 43:10, the *Hiphil* is construed as a rule, as the *Hophal* always is, with **לְ** of the person who receives information. Consequently **וַיְדַבֵּר** must be altered into **לְדַבֵּר**, and **הַגִּיד** taken as impersonal, “they announced to David.” Upon receipt of this intelligence David prayed to the Lord, that He would “turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,” make it

appear as folly, i.e., frustrate it, — a prayer which God answered (vid., 2Sa. 17: 1ff.).

**2Sa. 15:32, 33.** On David's arrival at the height where people were accustomed to worship, i.e., upon the top of the Mount of Olives, the Archite *Hushai* came to meet him with his clothes rent and earth upon his head, that is to say, in the deepest mourning (see 1Sa. 4:12). It is evident from the words אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וְגַר that there was a place of worship upon the top of the Mount of Olives, probably a *bamah*, such as continued to exist in different places throughout the land, even after the building of the temple. According to v. 37, 2Sa. 16:16, and 1Ch. 27:33, *Hushai* was רֵעֵה, a friend of David, i.e., one of his privy councillors. הָאֲרָכִי (the Archite), if we may judge from Jos. 16: 2, was the name of a family whose possessions were upon the southern boundary of the tribe of Ephraim, between Bethel and Ataroth. *Hushai* was probably a very old man, as David said to him (vv. 33, 34), "If thou goest with me, thou wilt be a burden to me. But if thou returnest to the city and offerest Absalom thy services, thou canst bring for me the counsel of Ahithophel to nought. If thou sayest to Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; servant of thy father (i.e., as regards this) I was that of old, but now I am thy servant." The ו before אֲנִי introduces the apodosis both times (vid., Ewald, § 348, a.).

**2Sa. 15:35, 36.** David then commissioned him to communicate to the priests Zadok and Abiathar all that he should hear of the king's house, and send word to him through their sons.

**2Sa. 15:37.** So Hushai went into the city when Absalom came to Jerusalem. The ו before the second clause, followed by the imperfect בֹּא, indicates contemporaneous occurrence (vid., Ewald, § 346, b.).

**2Sa. 16: 1-4.** ZIBA'S FAITHLESS CONDUCT TOWARDS MEPHIBOSHETH. — V. 1. When David had gone a little over the height (of the Mount of Olives: הַר־אֵשׁ points back to 2Sa. 15:32), Mephibosheth's servant Ziba came to meet him, with a couple of asses saddled, and laden with two hundred loaves, a hundred raisin-cakes, a hundred date or fig-cakes, and a skin of wine. The word קִיץ corresponds to the Greek ὀπώρα, as the LXX have rendered it in Jer. 40:10, 12, and is used to signify summer fruits, both here and in Amo. 8: 1 (Symm.). The early translators rendered it lumps of figs in the present passage (παλάθαι; cf. Ges. *Thes.* p. 1209). The Septuagint only has ἑκατὸν φοίνικες. The latter is certainly the more correct, as the dried lumps of figs or fig-cakes were called דְּבָלִים (1Sa. 25:18); and even at the present day ripe dates, pressed together in

lumps like cakes, are used in journeys through the desert, as a satisfying and refreshing food (vid., Winer, *bibl. Realwörterbuch*, i. 253).

**2Sa. 16: 2.** When the king asked him, “*What are these for thee?*” i.e., what art thou going to do with them? Ziba replied, “The asses are for the king’s family to ride upon (to ride upon in turn), the bread and summer fruits for the young men (the king’s servants) to eat, and the wine for those that are faint in the desert to drink” (see at 2Sa. 15:23). The *Chethib* **וְהַלְחֵם** is evidently a copyist’s error for **וְהַלְחֵם**.

**2Sa. 16: 3.** To the further question put by the king, “Where is thy lord (Mephibosheth)?” Ziba replied, “Behold, he sits (is staying) in Jerusalem; for he said, To-day will the house of Israel restore the kingship (government) of my father.” The “*kingship of my father*,” inasmuch as the throne would have passed to Jonathan if he had outlived Saul. It is obvious enough, apart altogether from 2Sa. 19:25ff., the Ziba was calumniating his master Mephibosheth, in the hope of getting possession of the lands that he was farming for him. A cripple like Mephibosheth, lame in both feet, who had never put in any claim to the throne before, could not possibly have got the idea now that the people of Israel, who had just chosen Absalom as king, would give the throne of Saul to such a cripple as he was. It is true that Ziba’s calumny was very improbable; nevertheless, in the general confusion of affairs, it was not altogether an inconceivable thing that the oppressed party of Saul might avail themselves of this opportunity to make an attempt to restore the power of that house, which many greatly preferred to that of David, under the name of Mephibosheth.

**2Sa. 16: 4.** And in the excited state in which David then was, he was weak enough to give credence to Ziba’s words, and to commit the injustice of promising the calumniator all that belonged to Mephibosheth, — a promise for which he most politely thanked him. **הִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתִי**, “*I bow myself*,” equivalent to, I lay myself at thy feet. “*May I find favour in the eyes of my lord the king!*” i.e., may the king grant me his favour (vid., 1Sa. 1:18).

**2Sa. 16: 5-14. Shimei’s cursing.** — Vv. 5, 6. When the king had come to *Bahurim*, on the other side of the Mount of Olives, but not far off (see at 2Sa. 3:16), there came out of that place a man of the family of the house of Saul, i.e., a distant relation of Saul, cursing him; and he pelted David and all his servants with stones, although all the people and all the heroes (the household troops and body-guard: 2Sa. 15:17, 18) were (marking) on the right and left of the king. The words “all the people,” etc., are a circumstantial clause.

**2Sa. 16: 7, 8.** Shimei cursed thus:

“*Out, out* (away, away), thou man of blood, and worthless man! Jehovah hath repaid thee (now) for all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast become king, and hath given the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son. Behold, now thou art in thy misfortune, for thou art a man of blood.”

אִישׁ דְּמַיִם, a man of drops of blood, i.e., one who has shed blood or committed murder. What Shimei meant by “*all the blood of the house of Saul*,” which David had shed, and because of which he was a man of blood, it is impossible to determine with certainty. He may possibly have attributed to David the murder of Ishbosheth and Abner, notwithstanding the fact that David was innocent of the death of both (see 2Sa. 3:27ff., and 4, 6ff.). By “*in whose stead thou hast reigned*,” he meant whose throne thou hast forcibly usurped; and by בְּרַעַתְךָ אֲנִי, “it is for this that punishment hath overtaken thee now.”

2Sa. 16: 9, 10. Abishai wanted to put an end to this cursing (on the expression “dead dog,” see 2Sa. 9: 8). “Let me go,” said he to David, “and take away his head,” i.e., chop off his head. But David replied, “What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?” Joab probably joined with Abishai. The formula “what to me and you?” signifies that a person did not wish to have anything in common with the feelings and views of another (cf. 1Ki. 17:18, Jos. 22:24; and τὶ ἔμοι καὶ σοί, John 2: 4. For the thing itself, comp. Luke 9:52-56). “If he curses, and if Jehovah hath said to him, Curse David, who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?” For כִּי יִקְלַל וְכִי יֵה (Chethib), the Masoretes give us the Keri, כִּה יִקְלַל כִּי יֵה, “so let him curse, for Jehovah,” etc. This thought lies at the foundation of the rendering adopted by the LXX, who have inserted, by way of explanation, καὶ ἄφετε αὐτὸν καὶ: so let him go, and so may he curse. The Vulgate is just the same: *dimittite eum ut maledicat*. This interpolation is taken from v. 11, and, like the Keri, is nothing more than a conjecture, which was adopted simply because כִּי was taken as a causal particle, and then offence was taken at וְכִי. But כִּי signifies if, *quando*, in this passage, and the ו before the following וְכִי introduces the apodosis.

2Sa. 16:11, 12. David said still further to Abishai and all his servants: “Behold, my own son seeketh after my life; how much more then the Benjaminite! (who belongs to a hostile race.) Let him curse, for Jehovah hath bidden him. Perhaps Jehovah will look upon my guilt, and Jehovah will requite me good for the curse which befalls me this day.” בְּעֵינַי (Chethib) has been altered by the Masoretes into בְּעֵינַי, “upon mine eye,” probably in the sense of “upon my tears;” and קָלַלְתָּו into קָלַלְתִּי, — from pure misapprehension. בְּעֵינַי does not mean “upon my misery,” for עֵינַי never has this meaning, but upon the guilt which really belongs to me, in contrast with that with which



Shimei charges me; and קללתי is the curse that has come upon me. Although David had committed no murder upon the house of Saul, and therefore Shimei's cursing was nothing but malicious blasphemy, he felt that it came upon him because of his sins, though not for the sin imputed to him. He therefore forbade their putting the blasphemer to death, and said Jehovah had commanded him to curse; regarding the cursing as the consequence of the wrath of God that was bringing him low (comp. the remarks on 1Sa. 26:19). But this consciousness of guilt also excited the assurance that the Lord would look upon his sin. When God looks upon the guilt of a humble sinner, He will also, as a just and merciful God, avert the evil, and change the suffering into a blessing. David founded upon this the hope, that the Lord would repay him with good for the curse with which Shimei was pursuing him now.

### 2Sa. 16:13.

“So David went with his men on the way, whilst Shimei went on the slope of the hill opposite to him, cursing continually, and pelted with stones over against him, and with earth.”

לעמרו means over against him in both instances. It is not expressly stated that Shimei threw stones and earth at David, but this is implied in the context.

2Sa. 16:14. The king came with his train, pursued in this manner, to Ayephim, and refreshed himself there. The context requires that *Ayephim* should be taken as the name of a place. If it were an appellative, signifying weary, there would be no information as to the place to which David came, and to which the word עש (there) distinctly refers. Bahurim cannot be the place alluded to, for the simple reason that, according to 2Sa. 17:18, the place where David rested was a considerable distance beyond Bahurim, towards the Jordan, as we may see from the fact that it is stated there that the priests' sons, who were sent to carry information to David of what was occurring in Jerusalem, hid themselves in a well at Bahurim from the officers who were following them, and consequently had to go still further in order to convey the news to David; so that it is out of the question to supply this name from v. 5. It is true that we never meet with the name *Ayephim* again; but this applies to many other places whose existence is not called in question.<sup>124</sup>

### **Absalom's Entrance into Jerusalem. Advice of Ahithophel and Hushai. — Ch. 16:15-17:23.**

2Sa. 16:15-23. When Absalom and “all the people, the men of Israel,” i.e., the people who had joined him out of all the tribes of Israel (2Sa. 15:10), came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him, Hushai the Archite also came and

greeted him warmly as king, by exclaiming again and again, “Long live the king!”

*2Sa. 16:17ff.* Absalom, apparently astonished at this, said to him, “Is this thy love to thy friend (David)? why wentest thou not with thy friend?” But Hushai replied, “No; but whom Jehovah hath chosen, and this people (i.e., the people who had entered Jerusalem with Absalom), and all the men of Israel (i.e., the whole nation), to him (לָאֵלֹהִים for לָאֵל, *Keri*) will I belong, and will remain with him. And again, whom should I serve? Is it not before his son? As I have served thy father, so will I be before thee” (i.e., serve thee). With great craftiness, Hushai declared at the very outset that Jehovah had chosen Absalom — at least he could not come to any other conclusion, judging from the results. And under such circumstances he could not have any doubt as to whom it was his duty to serve. As he had formerly served the father, so now he would serve his son Absalom. In this way he succeeded in completely deceiving Absalom, so that he placed unbounded confidence in him.

*2Sa. 16:20.* After taking possession of the capital of the kingdom, the next thing to do was to form the resolution to take and keep the throne. Absalom therefore turned to Ahithophel, and said, “Give ye counsel what we are to do.” The plural דְּבַר (give ye) may be explained on the supposition that the other persons present were addressed as well as Ahithophel, as being capable of giving advice.

*2Sa. 16:21.* Ahithophel gave the following counsel: “Go to thy father’s concubines, whom he hath left behind to keep the house (i.e., lie with them: for בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ, compare 2Sa. 3: 7, etc.); so will all Israel hear that thou hast made thyself stinking with thy father, and the hands of all those who are with thee will strengthen themselves.” This advice was sagacious enough. Lying with the king’s concubines was an appropriation of the royal harem, and, as such, a complete usurpation of the throne (see at 2Sa. 3: 7), which would render any reconciliation between Absalom and his father utterly impossible, and therefore would of necessity instigate the followers of Absalom to maintain his cause with all the greater firmness. This was what Ahithophel hoped to attain through his advice. For unless the breach was too great to be healed, with the affection of David towards his sons, which might in reality be called weakness, it was always a possible thing that he should forgive Absalom; and in that case Ahithophel would be the one to suffer. But under the superintendence of God this advice of Ahithophel was to effect the fulfilment, without any such intention on his part, of the threat held over David in 2Sa. 12: 8.

**2Sa. 16:22.** Absalom had a tent put up on the roof of the king's palace, that his going in to the concubines might be done publicly in the sight of all Israel. For (as the historian adds in v. 23 by way of explanation) the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was like a divine oracle both with David and with Absalom. The words from **וַעֲצַת** to **הָהֵם** are placed at the commencement absolutely: "and (as for) the counsel of Ahithophel,...as if one inquired the word of God, so was every counsel of Ahithophel." The Masoretetes have supplied **אִישׁ** as the *Keri* to **יִשְׂאֵל**. This is correct so far as the sense is concerned, but it is quite unnecessary, as **יִשְׂאֵל** may be taken impersonally. **שָׂאֵל בְּאֵלֵהֶם** is to be explained from the formula **שָׂאֵל בְּדַבַּר הָאֱלֹהִים** (see at Jud. 1: 1).

**2Sa. 17: 1-14.** AHITHOPHEL'S ADVICE FRUSTRATED BY HUSHAI. — Vv. 1-3. Ahithophel said still further to Absalom, "I will choose out twelve thousand men, and arise, and pursue after David this night; and fall upon him when he is exhausted and weak, and fill him with alarm: so shall all the people that are with him flee; and I will smite the king alone (when he is alone), and will bring back all the people to thee." **הַלַּיְלָה**, *the night*, is the night following the day of David's flight and Absalom's entrance into Jerusalem, as we may see very clearly from v. 16. This advice was sagaciously conceived; for if David had been attacked that night by a powerful army, he might possibly have been defeated. **אָשִׁיבָה**, *to bring back*, may be explained on the supposition that Ahithophel regarded Absalom as king, and those who had fled with David as rebels, who were to be brought back under Absalom's sceptre. The following words, **וְגַם כָּל הָעָם יָשׁוּבִים**, "*as the return of the whole (the whole nation) is the man,*" i.e., the return of all is dependent upon David, for whom thou liest in wait, are somewhat difficult, though the meaning of Ahithophel is evident enough from what precedes: viz., if he is beaten, they will all come over to thee; "the whole nation will be at peace" (**שְׁלוֹם** is used adverbially).<sup>125</sup>

**2Sa. 17: 4, 5.** Although this advice pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel (present), Absalom sent for Hushai the Archite to hear his opinion. **גַּם־הוּא** serves to strengthen the suffix in **בְּפִיו** (cf. Ewald, § 311, a.).

**2Sa. 17: 6, 7.** In answer to Absalom's inquiry, "Shall we do his word (i.e., follow Ahithophel's advice) or not?" Hushai said, "The advice is not good that Ahithophel hath given this time;" and then still further explained (v. 8): "Thou knowest thy father and his men, that they are heroes, and of a ferocious disposition (like Jud. 18:25), like a bear in the field robbed of her young; and thy father is a man of war, and will not pass the night with the people," sc., so that it would be possible to come upon him unawares and slay him (**לִי** with

אָת, as in Job. 19: 4). The idea that גָּלִין is to be taken as a *Hiphil*, in the sense of “and does not let the people lodge for the night” (Böttcher), is quite untenable, since it does not tally with v. 9, “Behold, he is hid now in one of the pits, or one of the places (פְּתָתִים are hiding-places that are strong by nature, מְקוֹמֹת are places rendered strong by art); and it comes to pass that he falls upon them at the first: so will men hear it, and say a defeat has taken place among the people that follow Absalom.” נָפַל with בָּ, as in Jos. 11: 7, to fall upon a person. The subject to נָפַל is David, but it is not mentioned as being evident enough from the context; so that there is no necessity for the emendation נָפְלוּ, which Thenius proposes. The suffix בָּדָם relates to those making the attack, the hosts of Absalom. Thenius has given the meaning correctly: “The report that David has made an attack will be sufficient to give rise to the belief that our men have sustained a severe defeat.”

**2Sa. 17:10.** “And even if he (the hearer, v. 9) be a brave man, who has a lion’s heart (lion-like courage), he will be thrown into despair; for all Israel knows that thy father is a hero, and brave men (are those) who are with him.”

**2Sa. 17:11.** “Yea (כִּי, *profecto*), I advise: let all Israel be gathered round thee from Dan to Beersheba (see at Jud. 20: 1), numerous as the sand by the sea; and thou thyself go into the war.” פָּנִיךָ, thy person, i.e., thou thyself be marching. The plural הַלְכִים is used because of פָּנִיךָ. For הִלְךָ בָּ, to enter into anything, see 1Ki. 19: 4, Isa. 45:16; 46: 2. קָרַב, war, the early translators have confounded with קָרַב.

**2Sa. 17:12.** “And come we to him (if we come upon him) in one of the places where he is found, we let ourselves down upon him, as the dew falls upon the earth; and of him and all the men with him there will not be one left.” נָחֲנוּ might be a contraction of אֲנַחֲנוּ, as in Gen. 42:11, Exo. 16: 7, 8, etc.: “so we upon him,” equivalent to “so shall we come upon him.” But if this were the meaning, we should expect וְנַחֲנוּ עָלָיו. It is more correct, therefore, to take נָחֲנוּ as the first pers. perf. of נָחַח, as the early translators have done: so do we let ourselves down upon him. (For נָחַח as applied to an army encamping, see Isa. 7: 2, 19; and as denoting the swarming of flies and grasshoppers, Isa. 7:19 and Exo. 10:14.) In Ahithophel’s opinion, it would be possible with a very small army to crush David and his little band, however brave his followers might be, and in fact to annihilate them altogether.

**2Sa. 17:13.** “And if he draw back into a city, all Israel lays ropes to that city, and we drag it to the brook, till there is not even a little stone found there.”

**עַד־הַיְּפֹחַל**: inasmuch as fortified cities were generally built upon mountains.

**צִרוֹר** signifies a little stone, according to the ancient versions. Hushai speaks in hyperboles of the irresistible power which the whole nation would put forth when summoned together for battle, in order to make his advice appear the more plausible.

**2Sa. 17:14.** And he secured his end. Absalom and all Israel thought his advice better than that of Ahithophel; for it was intended to commend itself to Absalom and his supporters. “The counsel appeared safe; at the same time it was full of a certain kind of boasting, which pleased the younger men” (Clericus). All that Hushai had said about the bravery and heroism of David and his followers, was well founded. The deception lay in the assumption that all the people from Dan to Beersheba would crowd around Absalom as one man; whereas it might easily be foreseen, that after the first excitement of the revolution was over, and great calmness ensued, a large part of the nation and army would gather round David. But such a possibility as this never entered the minds of Absalom and his supporters. It was in this that the divine sentence referred to in v. 14b was seen: “The Lord had commanded (appointed) it, to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, that he might bring the evil (intended) upon Absalom.”

**2Sa. 17:15-23.** DAVID IS INFORMED OF WHAT HAS OCCURRED. — Vv. 15, 16. Hushai communicated without delay to the priests Zadok and Abiathar the advice which had been given to Absalom both by Ahithophel and himself, and requested them to make it known to David as quickly as possible. “*Stay not the night,*” he said, “*by the ferries (עֲבֵרוֹת, as in 2Sa. 15:28) of the desert; but rather go over, lest the king and all the people with him be destroyed.*” וְגַם, “and indeed,” or after a negative clause, “but rather.” וְיִבְלַע לְמֶלֶךְ is either “there will be a devouring,” i.e., destruction, to the king, it will fall upon him; or if we supply the subject from the previous clause עֲבוֹר תֵּעָבֹר as Böttcher proposes, “that it (the crossing over) may not be swallowed up or cut off from the king.” There is nothing to justify Ewald’s explanation, “it (misfortune) is swallowed by him.” Hushai recommended of course an immediate crossing of the Jordan; because he did not know whether Absalom would really act upon his advice, although he had expressed his approval of it, or whether he might not change his mind and follow Ahithophel’s counsel.

**2Sa. 17:17.**

“Jonathan and Ahimaaz (the sons of the priests: 2Sa. 15:27) stood at the *Rogel* spring (the present well of Job or Nehemiah, at the south-east corner of Jerusalem: see at Job. 15: 7), and the maid-servant (of one of the high priests) went and told

them (Hushai's message), and they went and told it to king David; for they durst not let themselves be seen to come into the city."

They had therefore been staying at the Rogel spring outside the city. After what had taken place publicly, according to 2Sa. 15:24ff., Absalom could not be in any doubt as to the views of the high priests. Consequently their sons could not come into the city, with the intention of leaving it again directly, to inform David of the occurrences that had taken place there as he had requested (2Sa. 15:28). The clause "*and they went and told David*" anticipates the course of the affair, according to the general plan adopted by Hebrew historians, of communicating the result at the very outset wherever they possibly could.

**2Sa. 17:18.** "*And a lad (servant) saw them, and told Absalom.*" Absalom had most likely set spies to watch the priests and their sons. But the two sons who had noticed the spy hurried into the house of a man at Bahurim, who had a well (or cistern that was dry at the time) in his court, and went down into the well.

**2Sa. 17:19.** And the man's wife spread a covering (הַמָּסָךְ, the covering which she had close at hand) over the well (over the opening into the cistern), and scattered groats (רִיפּוֹת, peeled barley: Pro. 27:22) upon it, so that nothing was noticed. The Vulgate explanation is a very good one: "*quasi siccans ptisanas*" (as if drying peeled barley).

**2Sa. 17:20.** When Absalom's servants came and asked for the priest's sons, the woman said, They have gone over the little water-brook (מִיבֹל הַמַּיִם, ἄπ. λεγ.), and thus led them wrong, so that they did not find them.

**2Sa. 17:21, 22.** When they had gone away, the priest's sons came up out of the well and brought David the news, saying, "Go quickly over the water, for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you;" whereupon David and all the people with him went hastily over the Jordan. "Till the morning dawn not one was missed who had not gone over." עַד אֲחַד, *lit.* even to one there was not any one missed.

**2Sa. 17:23.** It is still further stated in conclusion, that when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not carried out, he saddled his ass and returned to his home, and there set his house in order and hanged himself, because he could foresee that Absalom would lose his cause through not taking his advice, and it would then be all over with himself. Thus was David's prayer (2Sa. 15:31) fulfilled.

### **Absalom's Defeat and Death. — Ch. 17:24-19: 1.**

**2Sa. 17:24-19: 1.** The account of the civil war, which terminated with Absalom's defeat and death, is introduced in vv. 24-26 with a description of the

relative position of the two hostile parties. David had come to Mahanaim, a city probably a fortified one, on the east of the Jordan, not far from the ford of the Jabbok (see at 2Sa. 2: 8). Absalom had also gone over the Jordan, “he and all the men with him,” i.e., all the fighting men that he had gathered together according to Hushai’s advice, and encamped in the land of Gilead.

**2Sa. 17:25.** Absalom had made Amasa captain over his army instead of Joab, who had remained true to David, and had gone with his king to Mahanaim. Amasa was the son of a man named *Jithra*, **הִישְׁרָאֵלִי**, who had gone in to (i.e., had seduced) Abigail, the daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah, Joab’s mother. He was therefore an illegitimate cousin of Joab. The description given of *Jithra* as **יִשְׂרָאֵלִי** is very striking, since there was no reason whatever why it should be stated that Amasa’s father was an *Israelite*. The Seventy have therefore given **ὁ Ἰεζραηλίτης**, i.e., sprung from Jezreel, where David’s wife Ahinoam came from (1Sa. 27: 3); but they have done so apparently from mere conjecture. The true reading is evidently **הִישְׁמַעֵאֵלִי**, an Ishmaelite, according to 1Ch. 2:17, where the name is written Jether, a contracted form of *Jithra*. From the description given of Abigail as a daughter of Nahash and sister of Zeruiah, not of David, some of the earlier commentators have very justly concluded that Abigail and Zeruiah were only step-sisters of David, i.e., daughters of his mother by Nahash and not by Jesse.

**2Sa. 17:27-29.** When David came to Mahanaim, some of the wealthier citizens of the land to the east of the Jordan supplied the men who were with him with provisions. This is mentioned as the first sign that the people had not all fallen away from David, but that some of the more distinguished men were still firm in their adherence. *Shobi*, the son of Nahash or *Rabbah*, the capital of the Ammonites (see 2Sa. 11: 1), was possibly a son of Nahash the deceased king of the Ammonites, and brother of Hanun, who was defeated by David (2Sa. 10: 1, 2), and one of those to whom David had shown favour and kindness when *Rabbah* was taken. At the same time, it is also quite possible that *Shobi* may have been an Israelite, who was merely living in the capital of the Ammonites, which had been incorporated into the kingdom of David, as it is evident from v. 25 that Nahash was not an uncommon name among the Israelites. *Machir* the son of Ammiel of *Lodebar* (see at 2Sa. 9: 4), and *Barsillai* of *Roglim* the Gileadite. *Roglim* was a town in Gilead, which is only mentioned once again, viz., in 2Sa. 19:32, and of which nothing further is known. They brought “bedding, basins, earthenware, and wheat, barley, meal, and parched grains, beans, lentils and *parched*.” The position of the verb, which is not placed between the subject and the object of the sentence, but only at the close of the whole series of objects, is certainly unusual; but this does not warrant any alteration of the text. For if we were to supply a verb before

מִשְׁכָּב, as having fallen out of the text, it would be necessary, since הִגִּישׁוּ follows without a copula, to divide the things enumerated into two classes, so as to connect one portion of the objects with הִגִּישׁוּ, which is obviously unnatural. The early translators who interpolate a verb before the objects have therefore also supplied the copula ו before הִגִּישׁוּ. There is still less ground for supplying the number 10, as having dropped out before מִשְׁכָּב and סְפוֹת, as the LXX have done, since none of the translators of the other ancient versions had any such reading. מִשְׁכָּב, couch or bed, is used here for bedding. סְפוֹת, basins, probably field-kettles. The repetition of וְקָלִי is very striking; nevertheless the second must not be struck out without further ground as a supposed copyist's error. As they not only ate parched ears or grains of wheat (see at Lev. 2:14), but were also in the habit of drying pulse, pease, and lentils before eating them (vid., Harmer, *Beobachtungen*, i. pp. 255-6), the second וְקָלִי may be understood as referring to parched pulse. The ἀπ. λεγ. שְׁפוֹת בְּקָר. signifies, according to the Chaldee and the Rabbins, cheese of oxen (i.e., of cows), and according to the conjecture of Roediger (*Ges. Thes.* p. 1462), a peculiar kind of cheese, such as the *Aeneze* in the province of Nedjid still make,<sup>126</sup>

and for which the term σαφῶθ βοῶν retained by the LXX was probably the technical name. Theodotus, on the other hand, has γαλαθηνὰ μοσχάρια, milch-calves; and the Vulgate *pingues vitulos*, — both of them renderings which can certainly be sustained from the Arabic usage of speech, and would be more in accordance with the situation of the words, viz., after בִּי אָמְרוּ. צָאן, “for they said (or thought) the people have become hungry and faint and thirty in the desert,” i.e., in their flight to Mahanaim.

**2Sa. 18: 1-5.** PREPARATION FOR WAR. — Vv. 1, 2. David mustered the people that were with him, and placed over them captains of thousands and hundreds, and divided them into three companies, under the generals Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gathite, who had given such decided proofs, according to 2Sa. 15:21, 22, of his fidelity to David. שָׁלַח בְּיַד, to leave to the hand of a person, i.e., to his power, is used here in the sense of placing under his direction. The people opposed in the most decided manner the wish of the king to go with them to the war, saying (v. 3), “Thou shalt not go out: for if we flee, they will take no heed of us (i.e., attach no importance to this); and if half of us die, they will take no heed of us: for thou art as ten thousand of us (we must evidently read אַתָּה for עֲתָה, and עֲתָה has merely got into the text in consequence of וְעֲתָה following): and now it is good that thou be ready to give us help from the city” (the *Chethib* לְעִזֵּיר, *inf. Hiphil* for לְהַעֲזִיר, is not to be



disputed). David was to stay behind in the city with a reserve, that he might be able to come to their relief in case of need.

**2Sa. 18: 4, 5.** The king gave his consent to these proposals, and went to the side of the gate, whilst the people went out by hundreds and thousands; but in the hearing of all he commanded the principal generals, “*Mildly for me* (i.e., deal gently for my sake) *with the boy Absalom.*” מִלִּנְיָ is not the imperative of מִלִּנְיָ, to cover over, which would not suit the connection, and could not be construed with לָּ, but an adverb from מִלִּנְיָ, as in Isa. 8: 6, 1Ki. 21:27, Job. 15:11.

**2Sa. 18: 6-18.** BATTLE IN THE WOOD OF EPHRAIM, AND DEATH OF ABSALOM. — Vv. 6, 7. When the people, i.e., David’s army, had advanced into the field against Israel (those who followed Absalom), a battle was fought “in the wood of Ephraim,” when Israel was smitten by David’s warriors and sustained a loss of 20,000 men. The question, where the “*wood of Ephraim*” was situated, is a disputed one. But both the name and the fact that, according to Jos. 17:15, 16, the tribe-land of Ephraim abounded in forests, favour the idea that it was a wood in the inheritance of Ephraim, on this side of the Jordan; and this is in perfect harmony with the statement in v. 23, that Ahimaaz took the way of the Jordan valley to bring the news of the victory to David, who was staying behind in Mahanaim. Nevertheless the majority of commentators have supposed that the place alluded to was a woody region on the other side of the Jordan, which had received the name of “wood Ephraim” probably after the defeat of the Ephraimites in the time of Jephthah (Jud. 12: 1-5). The reasons assigned are, *first*, that according to 2Sa. 17:26, Absalom had encamped in Gilead, and it is not stated that he had crossed the Jordan again; *secondly*, that v. 3 (“that thou succour us out of the city”) presupposes that the battle took place in the neighbourhood of Mahanaim (Thenius); and *thirdly*, that after the victory the army returned to Mahanaim; whereas if the battle had been fought on this side of the Jordan, it would evidently have been much better for it to remain there and occupy Jerusalem (Ewald, *Gesch.* iii. p. 237). But neither of these reasons is decisive, and there is no force in the other arguments employed by Thenius. There was no necessity for an immediate occupation of Jerusalem by David’s victorious army, since all Israel fled to their tents after the fall of Absalom and the defeat of his army (v. 17 and 2Sa. 19: 9); that is to say, such of Absalom’s followers as had not fallen in or after the battle, broke up and returned home, and therefore the revolution was at an end. Consequently there was nothing left for David’s army to do but to return to its king at Mahanaim, and fetch him back to Jerusalem, and reinstate him in his kingdom. The other two reasons might have some force in them, if the history before us contained a complete account of the whole course of the war. But even Ewald admits that it

is restricted to a notice of the principal battle, which completely crushed the rebellion. There can be no doubt, however, that this was preceded, if not by other battles, yet by such military operations as accompany every war. This is clearly indicated in v. 6, where it is stated that the army advanced into the field against Israel (v. 6), which evidently refers to such an advance on the part of David's army as might compel Absalom to draw back from Gilead across the Jordan, until at length a decisive battle was fought, which ended in the complete destruction of his army and his own death. Ewald observes still further, that "it seems impossible, at any rate so far as the name is concerned, to assume that the wood of Ephraim was on the other side of the Jordan, whilst according to 2Sa. 18:23, the messenger who reported the victory went from the field of battle towards the Jordan valley in order to get to David." But the way in which Ewald tries to set aside this important point, as bearing upon the conclusion that the battle took place on this side of the Jordan, — namely, by adopting this rendering of v. 23, "he ran after the manner of *Kikkar*, running, and therefore overtook *Kushi*," — is far too unnatural to meet with acceptance. Under all these circumstances, therefore, we decide in favour of the assumption that the wood of Ephraim is to be sought for in the tribe-territory of Ephraim.

The nature of the ground contributed a great deal to the utter defeat of Absalom.

**2Sa. 18: 8.** The conflict extended over the surface of the whole land, i.e., the whole of that region (the *Chethib* נפצות is not the plural נפצות, which would be quite unsuitable, but is most probably a noun, נפצות, signifying bursting asunder, or wild flight; the *Keri* נפצת is a *Niphal* participle, fem. gen.); "and the wood devoured more of the people than the sword ate on the same day." The woody region was most likely full of ravines, precipices, and marches, into which the flying foe was pursued, and where so many perished.

**2Sa. 18: 9.**

"And Absalom was lighted upon (אָקָרָה = אָקָרָא) by the servants of David, riding upon the mule; and the mule had come under the thick branches of the great terebinth, and his head fastened itself (remained hanging) on the terebinth, so that he was held (hung) between heaven and earth, as the mule under him went away."

The imperfects, וַיִּחַזַק, וַיִּבְא, and וַיִּתֵּן, are only a combination of the circumstantial clause וַאֲבִשׁ רֶכֶב. With regard to the fact itself, it is not clearly stated in the words that Absalom hung only by his hair, but simply that his hair entangled him in the thick branches, and his head was fastened in the terebinth, namely, by being jammed between the strong boughs.

**2Sa. 18:10.** A man (one of David's men) saw him in this situation, and told Joab, Joab replied (v. 11), "Behold, thou hast seen it, and wherefore has thou not smitten him there to the ground? and it was for me to give thee ten silverlings and a girdle;" i.e., if thou hadst slain him, it would have been my duty to reward thee.

**2Sa. 18:12.** But the man replied, "And I...not weighing a thousand shekels in my hand...might not stretch out my hand to the king's son," i.e., I could not do it for a reward of a thousand shekels. This is the meaning of the *Chethib* **וְלֹא**; the Masorettes, on the other hand, have substituted **וְלֹי**, which is the reading adopted in most of the ancient versions, and the one preferred by the majority of expositors: "if I weighed...I would not," etc. But there is no necessity for this alteration, as the *Chethib* is quite in accordance with the character of the words. "For before our ears the king commanded" (cf. v. 5): **שָׁמְרוּ מִי**, "take care whoever (it be) of the boy Absalom." On this use of **מִי**, see Ewald, § 104, d., a. The *Keri* **לֹי** is merely a conjecture, notwithstanding the fact that all the versions follow it, and that one of the Codices in Kennicott has **לִי**. "or," continued the man (v. 13), "should I have acted deceitfully towards his life (i.e., have slain him secretly, which he calls **שָׁקֵר**, cheating, because it was opposed to the king's open command): and nothing remains hidden from the king;...thou wouldst have set thyself in opposition to me," i.e., have risen up against me before the king. The middle clause is a circumstantial one, as the fact that **וְכָל-דְּבָרִי** is placed first clearly shows; so that it cannot be regarded as introducing the apodosis, which really follows in the clause commencing with **וְאִתָּה**.

**2Sa. 18:14.** Joab replied, "Not so will I wait before thee," i.e., I will not leave the thing to thee. He then took three staffs in his hand, and thrust them into Absalom's heart. **שְׁבָטִים** is rendered by the LXX and Vulgate, **βέλη**, lanceas; and Thenius would adopt **שְׁלָחִים** accordingly, as an emendation of the text. But in the earlier Hebrew **שְׁלָח** only occurs in poetical writings in the sense of a missile or dart (Job. 33:18; 36:12; Joe. 2: 8); and it is not till after the captivity that we find it used to denote a weapon generally. There is no necessity, however, for altering the text. Joab caught up in his hurry the first thing that he found, namely pointed staff, and pierced Absalom with them to the heart. This explains the reason for his taking *three*, whereas one javelin or dart would have been sufficient, and also the fact that Absalom was not slain, notwithstanding their being thrust at his heart. The last clause of the verse belongs to what follows: "Still living (i.e., as he was still alive) in the midst of the terebinth, ten young men, Joab's armour-bearers, surrounded him, and smote him to death."

**2Sa. 18:16.** Immediately afterwards Joab stopped any further pursuit, “for Joab spared the people,” i.e., he wanted to spare them.

**2Sa. 18:17.** But Absalom they cast into a great pit in the wood, and threw up over him a very large heap of stones, as an ignominious monument, like those thrown up over Achan (Jos. 7:26) and the king of Air (Jos. 8:29). This was the end of Absalom and his rebellion. “All Israel (that had crowded round him) had fled, every one to his tent” (i.e., home: see at Deu. 16: 7).

**2Sa. 18:18.** Absalom had erected a monument to himself in the king’s valley during his lifetime; “for he said, I have no son to preserve the remembrance of my name, and he called the monument by his own name; and so it was called hand (memorial) of Absalom unto this day.” The **לָקַח** before **וַיִּצַב** is apparently pleonastic; but it belongs to the diffuse and circumstantial character of the antiquated Hebrew diction (as in Num. 16: 1). **מִצְבֵּת**, a memorial of stone; whether in the form of a column, or an obelisk, or a monolith, cannot be determined (vid., Gen. 28:22; 31:52). The king’s valley, which received its name from the event narrated in Gen. 14:17, was two stadia from Jerusalem according to Josephus (*Ant.* vii. 10, 3), and therefore not “close to the Dead Sea,” or *in regione transjordanensi* (Ges. *Thes.* pp. 1045, 1377), or “in the Jordan valley in Ephraim” (Tuch and Winer). It was on the eastern side of Jerusalem, in the Kidron valley; though Absalom’s pillar, which ecclesiastical tradition has transferred thither, a monument about forty feet in height and pointed like a pyramid, is not of early Hebrew, but of Grecian origin. On the words “I have no son,” see at 2Sa. 14:27.

**2Sa. 18:19-32.** DAVID IS INFORMED OF THE VICTORY, AND OF THE DEATH OF ABSALOM. — Vv. 19, 20. Ahimaz, the son of Zadok, wanted to carry the news to David, that Jehovah had “procured the king justice out of the hand of his enemies” (**שָׁפַט** with **מִן** is a pregnant expression signifying to procure justice and deliver out of); but Joab, knowing how David would receive the tidings of the death of Absalom, replied, “Thou art no man of good tidings to-day; thou shalt take the news on another day, not on this, even because (**עַל־בֵּן**) **בִּי**, see at Gen. 18: 5) the king’s son is dead.” The *Keri* **עַל־בֵּן בִּי** is to be preferred to the *Chethib* **בִּי־עַל**; and **בֵּן** has no doubt been dropt out merely because of **בֵּן** which follows. The *Chethib* does not give any suitable sense; for the absence of the article before **מַת** is decisive against the explanation proposed by Maurer, viz., “for (tidings have to be carried) concerning the king’s son dead.” If **מַת** were to be construed as an adverb with **בֵּן מֶלֶךְ בִּי**, it would of necessity have the article.

**2Sa. 18:21.** Joab therefore entrusted *the Cushite* with the duty of conveying to David the announcement of what had occurred. It cannot be decided with certainty whether **הַכּוּשִׁי** or *Cushi* is the proper name of an Israelite, or whether it signifies the “Cushite,” i.e., a descendant of Cush. The form of the name rather favours the latter view, in which case it would suggest the idea of a Moorish slave in the service of Joab.

**2Sa. 18:22, 23.** As Ahimaaz still expressed a wish to hasten to the king, even after Cushi had been sent, and could not be induced to relinquish his purpose by the repeated expostulations of Joab, the latter at length permitted him to run. And he ran so fast, that he got before Cushi. **וַיֵּדֵי מָדָה**: let whatever will happen. **וְלֹכָה** is the pronoun “to thee,” as in Gen. 27:37, and not the imperative of **הֲלֹךְ**, “thou mayest go.” The meaning is, “and there is no striking message for thee,” no message that strikes the mark, or affects anything. We must supply “he said” in thought before v. 23. There was the less necessity to write it here (as in 1Sa. 1:20), since it is perfectly obvious from the repetition of **וַיֵּדֵי מָדָה** that it is Ahimaaz who is speaking. Ahimaaz then ran by the way of the plain, i.e., the way which lies through or across the plain of the Jordan. Now he could not possibly have taken this road, if the battle had been fought in a wood on the eastern side of the Jordan, and he had wanted to hurry from the scene of battle to Mahanaim; for in that case he would have taken a circuitous route two or three times the distance of the straight road, so that it would have been utterly impossible for him to get there before the Cushite, however quickly he might run. This notice therefore furnishes a decisive proof that the battle was fought upon the mountains of Ephraim, in the land to the west of the Jordan, since the straight road thence to Mahanaim would lie through the valley of the Jordan.

**2Sa. 18:24.** David was sitting between the two gates of Mahanaim waiting for tidings of the result of the battle. The two gates are the outer and inner gate of the fortified city wall, between which there was a small court, where David was sitting. The watchman then went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, probably the outer gate in the city wall, and as he looked he saw a man running alone.

**2Sa. 18:25.** When he announced this to the king, he said, “If he (is or comes) alone, there is good news in his mouth,” namely, because several runners would have shown themselves if it had been a flight. As the first messenger came nearer and nearer, the watchman saw another man running, and shouted this into the gate (**הַשַּׁעַר** is wrongly pointed for **הַשַּׁעַר**, according to the LXX, Syr., and Vulgate); whereupon the king replied, “This is also a good messenger.”

**2Sa. 18:27.** When the watchman saw by the running of the first that it was Ahimaaz, recognising him probably by the swiftness of his running, and announced it to the king, he replied, “He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings,” because Joab would not have selected him to bring any other than good news.

**2Sa. 18:28.** Ahimaaz then called out to the king, “*Shalom*,” i.e., *Hail!* and fell down before him to greet him reverentially, and said, “Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who hath given up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.”

**2Sa. 18:29.** In answer to the king’s inquiry, “Is it well with the young man Absalom?” Ahimaaz replied, “I saw the great tumult (that arose) when Joab sent off the king’s servant, and thy servant, and know not what” (sc., had occurred). Ahimaaz spoke as if he had been sent off before Absalom’s fate had been decided or could be known. “*The king’s servant*” is the Cushite, whom Ahimaaz saw just approaching, so that he could point to him. *Joab* is the subject, which is sometimes written after the object in the case of an infinitive construction (vid., Gesenius, § 133, 3 Anm.); and the expression “thy servant” is a conventional one for “me” (viz., Ahimaaz).

**2Sa. 18:30.** And the king said, “Turn, and stand here,” that he might hear the further news from the Cushite, who had just arrived.

**2Sa. 18:31.** The Cushite said, “Let my lord the king receive good tidings, for Jehovah hath procured thee justice to-day out of the hand of all who have risen up against thee” (cf. v. 19).

**2Sa. 18:32.** When asked about the welfare of Absalom, the Cushite replied, “May it happen to the enemies of my lord the king, and all who have risen up against thee for evil (i.e., to do thee harm), as to the young man.” The death of Absalom was indicated clearly enough in these words.

**2Sa. 18:33.** The king understood the meaning of the words. He was agitated, and went up to the balcony of the gate (the room above the entrance) and wept, and said, walking about, “My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Oh that I had died for thee, Absalom, my son, my son!” To understand this passionate utterance of anguish, we must bear in mind not only the excessive tenderness, or rather weakness, of David’s paternal affection towards his son, but also his anger that Joab and his generals should have paid so little regard to his command to deal gently with Absalom. With the king’s excitable temperament, this entirely prevented him from taking a just and correct view of the crime of

his rebel son, which merited death, and of the penal justice of God which had been manifested in his destruction.

### **David Reinstated in His Kingdom. — Ch. 19: 1-39.**

*2Sa. 19.* In his passionate and sinful sorrow on account of Absalom's death David not only forgot altogether what it was his duty to do, in order to recover the affections of the people, so that Joab was obliged to remind him of this duty which was binding upon him as king (vv. 1-8); but he even allowed himself to be carried away into the most inconsiderate measures (vv. 9-14), and into acts of imprudence and injustice (vv. 16-23, 24-30), which could not contribute to the strengthening of his throne, however much the affection with which he wished to reward the old man Barzillai for his faithful services (vv. 31-40) might show that the king was anxious to promote the welfare of his subjects.

*2Sa. 19: 1-8.* DAVID'S MOURNING, AND JOAB'S REPROOF. — Vv. 1-6. When Joab was told that the king was mourning and weeping for Absalom, he went to him into the house to expostulate with him. V. 5 introduces the continuation of v. 1; vv. 2-4 contain parenthetical sentences, describing the impression made upon the people by the king's mourning. Through the king's deep trouble, the salvation (the victory) upon that day became mourning for all the people who had fought for David, and they went by stealth in to the city (תִּתְגַּבֵּב לְבוֹא): they stole to come, came by stealth), "as people steal away who have covered themselves with shame, when they flee in battle."

*2Sa. 19: 4.* But the king had covered his face, and cried aloud, "My son Absalom," etc.

*2Sa. 19: 5.* Then Joab went into the house to the king, and said to him, "Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants who have saved thy life, and the life of thy sons and daughters, thy wives and concubines" (covered them with shame, by deceiving their hope that thou wouldest rejoice in the victory).

*2Sa. 19: 6.* לְאַהֲבָה, "to love" (i.e., in that thou lovest) "those who hate thee, and hatest those who love thee; for thou hast given to know to-day (through thy conduct) that chiefs and servants (commanders and soldiers) are nothing (are worth nothing); for I have perceived to-day (or I perceive to-day) that if (לֵאלֹהִים for לֵאֱלֹהִים) Absalom were alive, and we had all perished, that it would be right in thine eyes."

*2Sa. 19: 7.* "And now rise up, go out and speak to the heart of thy servants (i.e., speak to them in a friendly manner: Gen. 34: 3; 50:21, etc.): for I swear by Jehovah, if thou go not out, verily not a man will stay with thee to-night; and

this will be worse to thee than all the evil that has come upon thee from thy youth until now.” Joab was certainly not only justified, but bound in David’s own interests, to expostulate with him upon his conduct, and to urge him to speak in a friendly manner to the people who had exposed their lives for him, inasmuch as his present conduct would necessarily stifle the affection of the people towards their king, and might be followed by the most serious results with reference to his throne. At the same time, he did this in so heartless and lordly a manner, that the king could not fail to be deeply hurt by his words.

**2Sa. 19: 8.** Nevertheless David was obliged to yield to his representations. “*The king rose up, and sat in the gate, and...all the people came before the king,*” i.e., the troops marched before the king, who (as we may supply from the context) manifested his good-will in both looks and words. But Israel, i.e., that portion of the people which had followed Absalom, had returned to its tents (i.e., gone home: cf. 2Sa. 18:17). This sentence forms the transition to the account which follows.

**2Sa. 19: 9-14.** PRELIMINARIES TO THE RETURN OF DAVID TO JERUSALEM. — Vv. 9, 10. As the rebellion was entirely crushed by Absalom’s death, and the dispersion of his followers to their respective homes, there arose a movement among all the tribes in favour of David. “All the people were disputing (נִדְוִן, casting reproaches at one another) in all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king has saved us out of the hand of our enemies,...and now he is fled out of the land before Absalom. But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle; and now why do ye keep still, to bring back the king?” This movement arose from the consciousness of having done an injustice to the king, in rising up in support of Absalom.

**2Sa. 19:11, 12.** When these words of all Israel were reported to David, he sent to the priests Zadok and Abiathar, saying, “Speak to the elders of Judah, why will ye be the last to bring back the king to his palace?...Ye are my brethren, my bones and flesh (i.e., my blood relations): why then,” etc.? The last clause of v. 11, “*the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house,*” is a circumstantial clause inserted in the midst of David’s words, to explain the appeal to the men of Judah not to be the last. In the LXX, and some Codices of the Vulgate, this sentence occurs twice, viz., at the end of v. 10, and also of v. 11; and Thenius, Ewald, and Böttcher regard the clause at the end of v. 10 as the original one, and the repetition of it at the close of v. 11 as a gloss. But this is certainly a mistake: for if the clause, “and the speech of all Israel came to the king to his house (at Mahanaim),” ought to stand at the close of v. 10, and assigns the reason for David’s sending to Zadok and Abiathar, v. 11 would certainly, or rather necessarily, commence with וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ: “The



word of all Israel came to the king, and then king David sent,” etc. But instead of this, it commences with וַהֲמֶלֶךְ דָּוִד שָׁלַח, “But king David sent.” This construction of the sentence decidedly favour the correctness of the Hebrew text; whereas the text of the Septuagint, apart altogether from the tautological repetition of the whole of the sentence in question, shows obviously enough that it is nothing more than a conjecture, by which the attempt was made to remove the difficulty occasioned by the striking position in which the circumstantial clause occurred.

**2Sa. 19:13.** “And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not my bone and flesh? so shall God do to me, and so add, if thou shalt not be prince of the army (chief captain) before me continually in the place of Joab.”

**2Sa. 19:14.** Thus he (David) inclined the heart of all the people as of one man, and they sent to the king, saying, “Return thou, with all thy servants.” The result of David’s message to the priests is given summarily here. The subject to מַרְיָא is David, not Amasa or Zadok. So far as the fact itself is concerned, it was certainly wise of David to send to the members of his own tribe, and appeal to them not to be behind the rest of the tribes in taking part in his restoration to the kingdom, lest it should appear as though the tribe of Judah, to which David himself belonged, was dissatisfied with his victory, since it was in that tribe that the rebellion itself first broke out; and this would inevitably feed the jealousy between Judah and the rest of the tribes. But it was not only unwise, but unjust, to give to Amasa, the traitor-general of the rebels, a promise on oath that he should be commander-in-chief in the place of Joab; for even if the promise was only given privately at first, the fact that it had been given could not remain a secret from Joab very long, and would be sure to stir up his ambition, and lead him to the commission of fresh crimes, and in all probability the enmity of this powerful general would become dangerous to the throne of David. For however Joab might have excited David’s anger by slaying Absalom, and by the offensive manner in which he had reproved the king for giving way to his grief, David ought to have suppressed his anger in his existing circumstances, and ought not to have rendered evil for evil, especially as he was not only about to pardon Amasa’s crime, but even to reward him as one of his faithful servants.

**2Sa. 19:15-30.** RETURN OF THE KING; AND OCCURRENCES AT THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN. — Vv. 15-23. *Pardon of Shimei.* — Vv. 15, 16. When David reached the Jordan on his return, and Judah had come to Gilgal “to meet him, to conduct the king over the Jordan,” i.e., to form an escort at the crossing, Shimei the Benjaminite hastened down from Bahurim (see 2Sa. 16: 5ff.) with the men of Judah to meet David.

*2Sa. 19:17ff.* There also came along with Shimei a thousand men of Benjamin, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants (see 2Sa. 9:10); and they went over the Jordan before the king, viz., through a ford, and the ferry-boat had crossed over to carry over the king's family, and to do whatever seemed good to him, i.e., to be placed at the king's sole disposal. And Shimei fell down before the king, **בַּעֲבָרוֹ**, i.e., "when he (David) was about to cross over the Jordan," not "when Shimei had crossed over the Jordan;" for after what has just been stated, such a remark would be superfluous: moreover, it is very doubtful whether the infinitive with **בַּ** can express the sense of the pluperfect. Shimei said, "Let not my lord impute to me any crime, and do not remember how thy servant hath sinned."

*2Sa. 19:20.* "For thy servant knoweth (i.e., I know) that I have sinned, and behold I have come to-day the first of the whole house of Joseph, to go to meet my lord the king." By "*the whole house of Joseph*" we are to understand the rest of the tribes with the exception of Judah, who are called "*all Israel*" in v. 12. There is no reason for the objection taken by Thenius and Böttcher to the expression **בֵּית־יוֹסֵף**. This rendering of the LXX (**παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ οἴκου Ἰωσήφ**) does not prove that **בְּלִישְׁרָאֵל** was the original reading, but only that the translator thought it necessary to explain **οἴκου Ἰωσήφ** by adding the gloss **παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ**; and the assertion that it was only in the oratorical style of a later period, when the kingdom had been divided, that Joseph became the party name of all that were not included in Judah, is overthrown by 1Ki. 11:28. The designation of the tribes that opposed Judah by the name of the leading tribe (*Joseph*: Jos. 16: 1) was as old as the jealousy between these tribes and Judah, which did not commence with the division of the kingdom, but was simply confirmed thereby into a permanent distinction. Shimei's prayer for the forgiveness of his sin was no more a proof of sincere repentance than the reason which he adduced in support of his petition, namely that he was the first of all the house of Joseph to come and meet David. Shimei's only desire was to secure impunity for himself. Abishai therefore replied (v. 21), "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this (**פַּחַת זֹאת**, for this, which he has just said and done), because he hath cursed the anointed of Jehovah?" (vid., 2Sa. 16: 5ff.). But David answered (v. 22), "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah (cf. 2Sa. 16:10), for ye become opponents to me to-day?" **שָׂטָן**, *an opponent*, who places obstacles in the way (Num. 22:22); here it signifies one who would draw away to evil. "Should any one be put to death in Israel to-day? for do I not know that I am this day king over Israel?" The reason assigned by David here for not punishing the blasphemer as he had deserved, by taking away his life, would have been a very laudable one if the king had really forgiven him. But as David when upon his deathbed charged his successor to punish Shimei for this

cursing (1Ki. 2: 8, 9), the favour shown him here was only a sign of David's weakness, which was not worthy of imitation, the more especially as the king swore unto him (v. 24) that he should not die.

*2Sa. 19:24-30.* David's conduct towards Mephibosheth admits still less of justification.

*2Sa. 19:24.* Mephibosheth, the son, i.e., grandson, of Saul, had also come down (from Jerusalem to the Jordan) to meet David, and had not "*made his feet and his beard,*" i.e., had not washed his feet or arranged his beard (עָשָׂה, as in Deu. 21:12), and had not washed his clothes — all of them signs of deep mourning (cf. Eze. 24:17) — since the day that the king had gone (i.e., had fled from Jerusalem) until the day that he came (again) in peace.

*2Sa. 19:25.* "*Now when Jerusalem* (i.e., the inhabitants of the capital) *came to meet the king,*" <sup>127</sup>

David said to him (i.e., to Mephibosheth, who was with the deputation from the capital which welcomed David at the Jordan), "*Why wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?*" David was justified in putting this question after what Ziba had told him concerning Mephibosheth (2Sa. 16: 3).

*2Sa. 19:26.* Mephibosheth replied, "My lord king, my servant hath deceived me: for thy servant thought I will have the ass saddled and go to the king; for thy servant is lame." If we understand אֶחָבְשָׁה as signifying that Mephibosheth had the ass saddled by a servant, and not that he saddled it with his own hands, the meaning is obvious, and there is no ground whatever for altering the text. חָבַשׁ is certainly used in this sense in Gen. 22: 3, and it is very common for things to be said to be done by a person, even though not done with his own hands. The rendering adopted by the LXX and Vulgate, "Thy servant said to him (the servant), Saddle me the ass," is not true to the words, though correct so far as the sense is concerned.

*2Sa. 19:27, 28.* "And he (Ziba) slandered thy servant to my lord the king." Mephibosheth had not merely inferred this from David's words, and the tone in which they were spoken, but had certainly found it out long ago, since Ziba would not delay very long to put David's assurance, that all the possessions of Mephibosheth should belong to him, in force against his master, so that Mephibosheth would discover from that how Ziba had slandered him. "And my lord the king is as the angel of God," i.e., he sees all just as it really is (see at 2Sa. 14:17); "and do what is good in thy sight: for all my father's house (the whole of my family) were but men of death against my lord the king (i.e., thou mightest have had us all put to death), and thou didst set thy servant among thy

companions at table (see 2Sa. 9: 7, 11); and what right or (what) more have I still to cry (for help) to the king?" The meaning is, "I cannot assert any claims, but will yield to anything you decide concerning me." It must have been very evident to David from these words of Mephibosheth, that he had been deceived by Ziba, and that he had formed an unfounded prejudice against Mephibosheth, and committed an act of injustice in handing over his property to Ziba. He therefore replied, in evident displeasure (v. 29), "Why talkest thou still of thine affairs? I have said, thou and Ziba shall divide the field?" to which Mephibosheth answered (v. 30), "He may take the whole, since my lord the king has returned in peace to his own house." This reply shows very clearly that an injustice had been done to Mephibosheth, even if it is not regarded as an expression of wounded feeling on the part of Mephibosheth because of David's words, but, according to the view taken by Seb. Schmidt and others, as a vindication of himself, as said not to blame the king for the opinion he had formed, but simply to defend himself. But this completely overthrows the opinion held by Thenius and O. v. Gerlach, that David's words in v. 30 contain nothing more than a revocation of his hasty declaration in 2Sa. 16: 4, and a confirmation of his first decision in 2Sa. 9: 7-10, and are to be understood as signifying, "Let everything be as I settled it at first; hold the property jointly," inasmuch as Ziba and his sons had of course obtained their living from the produce of the land. Moreover, the words "thou and Ziba divide the land" are directly at variance with the promise in 2Sa. 9: 7, "I will restore thee *all* the land of Saul thy father," and the statement in 2Sa. 9: 9, "I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house." By the words, "*I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land,*" David retracted the hasty decree in 2Sa. 16: 4, so as to modify to some extent the wrong that he had done to Mephibosheth, but he had not courage enough to retract it altogether. He did not venture to dispute the fact that Mephibosheth had really been calumniated by Ziba, which was placed beyond all doubt by his mourning during the whole period of David's flight, as described in v. 24. There is no ground for Winer's statement, therefore, that "it is impossible now to determine whether Mephibosheth was really innocent or not."

**2Sa. 19:31-39.** BARZILLAI COMES TO GREET DAVID. — V. 31. Barzillai the octogenarian "had also come down from Roglim and gone across the Jordan with the king, to escort him over the river." אֶת־בִּרְדָּן is the portion in, or over, the Jordan. אֶת is the sign of the accusative, "the piece in the Jordan," and no further. This is the correct explanation as given by Böttcher, after Gesenius and Maurer; and the *Keri* הִירְדָּן is a bad emendation.

**2Sa. 19:32, 33.** As Barzillai had supplied the king with provisions during his stay in Mahanaim (שִׁבָּה for יְשִׁבָּה, like צֹאֵה for צֹאָה), and other words of

the same kind), because he was very wealthy (*lit.* great), David would gladly have taken him with him to Jerusalem, to repay him there for his kindness; but Barzillai replied (vv. 34ff.), “How many days are there of the years of my life (i.e., how long shall I have yet to live), that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am now eighty years old; can I (still) distinguish good and evil, or will thy servant taste what I eat and drink, or listen again to the voice of the singing men and singing women? and why should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant would go over the Jordan with the king for a short time (i.e., could not remain long with him), and why does the king wish to repay me this favour?” וַיִּשְׁבֶּנָּא: “Let thy servant return, that I may die in my city (my home), at the grave of my parents; and behold thy servant Chimham (i.e., according to the explanation given by Josephus, Barzillai’s son, who had come down with his father, as we may infer from 1Ki. 2: 7) may go over with my lord the king; and do to him what seemeth good to thee,” i.e., show him favours at thy pleasure.

**2Sa. 19:38.** David consented to this, and said, “All that thou desirest of me I will do to him.” בָּחַר with עַל is a pregnant construction, signifying to choose and impose, “choose upon me,” i.e., the thing for me to grant thee.

**2Sa. 19:39.** Thus all the people went over the Jordan; and when the king had crossed over, he kissed Barzillai (to take leave of him: vid., Rut. 1: 9); and he (Barzillai) blessed him, and turned to his place (returned home). Barzillai only escorted the king over the Jordan, and the conversation (vv. 31-38) probably took place as they were crossing.

## **Discontent in Israel, and Sheba’s Rebellion. — Ch. 19:40-20:26.**

**2Sa. 19:40-43.** QUARREL BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH ABOUT THE RESTORATION OF THE KING. — V. 40. David went across to Gilgal (in the plain of the Jordan: Jos. 4:19), and Chimham (*Chimhan* is a modified form for *Chimham*: v. 37) had gone over with him, and all the people of Judah had brought the king over (the *Keri* הַעֲבִירוּ is an easier reading than the *Chethib* וַיַּעֲבִירוּ, “and as for the people, they had,” etc.), and also “half the people of Israel,” namely, beside the thousand Benjaminites who came with Shimei (v. 17), other Israelites who dwelt in the neighbourhood.

**2Sa. 19:41.** *All the men of Israel*, i.e., the representatives of the other tribes of Israel, came to meet the king in Gilgal; and being annoyed at the fact that the men of Judah had anticipated them, they exclaimed, “Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away?” i.e., fetched thee thus secretly without saying

a word to us. “*All David’s men*” were all his faithful adherents who had fled with him from Jerusalem (2Sa. 15:17ff.).

**2Sa. 19:42.** The men of Judah replied against (על) the men of Israel: “The king stands near to us” (inasmuch as he belonged to their tribe), “and wherefore then art thou angry at this matter? Have we eaten from the king (i.e., derived any advantage from our tribe-relationship to him, as the Benjaminites did from Saul, according to 1Sa. 22: 7), or received anything for ourselves therefrom?” נִשְׂאֵת is an infinitive *abs. Niph.* with a feminine termination, borrowed from לָהּ; literally, “*or has taking been taken for us.*”

**2Sa. 19:43.** The Israelites were annoyed at this answer, and retorted, “I (Israel) have ten portions in the king, and also more than thou in David; and wherefore hast thou despised me?” They considered that they had ten shares in the king, because they formed ten tribes, in opposition to the one tribe of Judah, as the Levites did not come into consideration in the matter. Although David was of the tribe of Judah, he was nevertheless king of the whole nation, so that the ten tribes had a larger share than one tribe. הִקְלַתֵּנִי refers to the fact, that Judah took no notice at all of the tribes of Israel when fetching back the king. וְלֹא־הָיָה וְגוֹי, “*and was not my speech the first to fetch back my king?*” (On the fact itself, see 2Sa. 19:10, 11.) לִי is an emphatic *dat. commodi*, and is to be taken in connection with לְהַשִּׁיב, notwithstanding the accents. “And the speech of the men of Judah became fiercer (more violent) than the speech of the men of Israel.” With these words the historian sums up briefly the further progress of the dispute, for the purpose of appending the account of Sheba’s rebellion, to which it gave rise.

**2Sa. 20: 1-22.** SHEBA’S REBELLION. — V. 1. There happened to be a worthless man there, named *Sheba*, a Benjaminite. He blew the trumpet, and said, “We have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, O Israel!” “*To his tents,*” i.e., to his home, as in 2Sa. 19: 9, etc.

**2Sa. 20: 2.** All the men of Israel responded to this call, and went up (to the mountains) away from David and after Sheba; but the men of Judah adhered to their king from the Jordan to Jerusalem. The construction of דָּבַק with וְעַד ... מִן is a pregnant one: they adhered to and followed him. The expression “*from Jordan*” does not prove that Sheba’s rebellion broke out at the Jordan itself, and before David’s arrival in Gilgal, but may be accounted for from the fact that the men of Judah had already fetched the king back across the Jordan.

**2Sa. 20: 3.** As soon as David returned to his palace at Jerusalem, he brought the ten concubines whom he had left behind, and with whom Absalom had lain,

into a place of safety, and took care of them, without going in unto them any more. The masculine suffixes attached to **יָתֵּם**, **יְכַלְכֵּם**, and **אֲלֵיהֶם** are used, as they frequently are, as being the more general and indefinite, instead of the feminine, which is the more definite form. Thus were they shut up in lifelong widowhood until the day of their death. **אֶלְמָנוּת** is an adverbial accusative, and **חַיֵּיתָ** signifies “condition in life;” literally, in widowhood of life.

**2Sa. 20: 4.** David then ordered Amasa to call the men of Judah to pursue Sheba the rebel, and attack him within three days, and then to present himself to him again. This commission was intended as the commencement of the fulfilment of the promise which David had given to Amasa (2Sa. 19:14). It was no doubt his intention to give him the command over the army that marched against Sheba, and after the defeat of the rebel to make him commander-in-chief. But this first step towards the fulfilment of the promise was a very imprudent act, like the promise itself, since Joab, who had been commander of the army for so many years, was grievously offended by it; and moreover, being a well-tried general, he had incomparably more distinction in the tribe of Judah than Amasa, who had taken part in Absalom’s rebellion and even led the rebel army, could possibly have.

**2Sa. 20: 5, 6.** But when Amasa stayed out beyond the time fixed for the execution of the royal commission (the *Chethib* **וַיִּחַר** is the *Piel* **וַיִּחַר**, whilst the *Keri* is either the *Hiphil* **וַיִּזְחַר**, or the imperfect *Kal* of **יָחַר = אָחַר**, cf. **וַיִּזְחַר**, v. 9, and is quite unnecessary), probably because the men of Judah distrusted him, and were not very ready to respond to his summons, David said to Abishai, “Now will Sheba the son of Bichri be more injurious (more dangerous) to us than Absalom. Take thou the servants (soldiers) of thy lord and pursue after him, lest he reach fortified cities, and *tear out our eye*,” i.e., do us a serious injury. This is the correct explanation given by Böttcher, who refers to Deu. 32:10 and Zec. 2:12, where the apple of the eye is the figure used to signify the most valuable possession; for the general explanation, “and withdraw from our eye,” cannot be grammatically sustained.

**2Sa. 20: 7.** *Thus there went after him (Abishai) Joab’s men (the corps commanded by Joab), and the Crethi and Plethi (see at 2Sa. 8:18), out of Jerusalem, to pursue Sheba.*

**2Sa. 20: 8.** “When they were by the great stone at Gibeon, and Amasa came to meet them (there), Joab was girded with his armour-coat as his clothing, and the girdle of the sword was bound over it upon his loins in its sheath, which came out, and it fell (i.e., the sheath came out of the sword-belt in which it was fastened, and the sword fell to the ground), Joab said to Amasa,” etc. The

eighth verse contains only circumstantial clauses, the latter of which (from **וַיִּשְׁׁרְׁׁ** onwards) are subordinate to the earlier ones, so that **וַיִּשְׁׁרְׁׁ** (v. 9) is attached to the first clause, which describes the meeting between the advancing army and Amasa.

There is something striking, however, in the fact that Joab appears among them, and indeed, as we see from what follows, as the commander of the forces; for according to v. 6, David had commissioned Abishai, Joab's brother, to pursue Sheba, and even in v. 7 Joab's men only are mentioned. This difficulty can hardly be solved in any other manner than by the simple assumption that David had told Abishai to go out with Joab, and that this circumstance is passed over in the brief account in v. 6, in which the principal facts alone are given, and consequently the name of Joab does not occur there. Clericus adopts the following explanation. "Mention," he says, "has hitherto been made simply of the command given to Abishai, but this included an order to Joab to go as well; and there is nothing to preclude the supposition that Joab's name was mentioned by the king, although this is not distinctly stated in the brief account before us."<sup>28</sup>

**2Sa. 20: 9.** Joab asked Amasa how he was, and laid hold of his beard with his right hand to kiss him. And as Amasa took no heed of the sword in Joab's hand, he smote him with it in the paunch (abdomen), and shed out his bowels upon the ground, "*and repeated not (the stroke) to him*" (cf. 1Sa. 26: 8). Laying hold of the beard to kiss is still customary among Arabs and Turks as a sign of friendly welcome (vid., Arvieux, *Merkwürdige Nachrichten*, iv. p. 182, and Harmar, *Beobachtungen*, ii. p. 61). The reason for this assassination was Joab's jealousy of Amasa. Joab and Abishai then followed Sheba.

**2Sa. 20:11.** One of Joab's attendants remained standing by him (Amasa), no doubt at Joab's command, and said to the people who came thither, i.e., to the men of Judah who were collected together by Amasa (vid., v. 4), "He that favoureth Joab, and he that (is) for David, let him (go) after Joab," i.e., follow him to battle against Sheba.

**2Sa. 20:12, 13.** Amasa lay wallowing in blood in the midst of the road; and when the man (the attendant) saw that all the people stood still (by the corpse), he turned (pushed) Amasa from the road to the field, and threw a cloth over him, whereupon they all passed by and went after Joab.

**2Sa. 20:14.** But Joab "went through all the tribes of Israel to Abela, and Beth-Maacah, and all Berim." *Abela* (v. 15), or *Abel* (v. 18), has been preserved in the large Christian village of *Abil*, a place with ruins, and called *Abil-el-Kamh* on account of its excellent wheat (*Kamh*), which lies to the north-



west of Lake Huleh, upon a Tell on the eastern side of the river *Derdâra*; not in *Ibl-el-Hawa*, a place to the north of this, upon the ridge between *Merj Ayun* and *Wady et Teim* (vid., Ritter, *Erdk.* xv. pp. 240, 241; Robinson, *Bibl. Researches*, pp. 372-3; and v. de Velde, *Mem.* p. 280). *Beth-Maacah* was quite close to Abela; so that the names of the two places are connected together in v. 15, and afterwards, as *Abel-Beth-Maacah* (vid., 1Ki. 15:20, and 2Ki. 15:29), also called *Abel-Maim* in 2Ch. 16: 4. *Berim* is the name of a district which is unknown to us; and even the early translators did not know how to render it. There is nothing, however, either in the πάντες ἐν χαρρί is the LXX or the *omnes viri electi* of the Vulgate, to warrant an alteration of the text. The latter, in fact, rests upon a mere conjecture, which is altogether unsuitable; for the subject to וַיִּקְהְלוּ cannot be כָּל-הַיְבֵרִים on account of the *vav consec.*, but must be obtained from כָּל-שְׁבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. The *Chethib ויקלהו* is evidently a slip of the pen for וַיִּקְהְלוּ.

**2Sa. 20:15.** They besieged him (Sheba) in Abel-Beth-Maacah, and *piled up a rampart against the city*, so that *it rose up by the town-moat* (חַל, the moat with the low wall belonging to it); and *all the people with Joab destroyed to throw down the wall.*

**2Sa. 20:16ff.** Then a wise woman of the city desired to speak to Joab, and said (from the wall) to him (v. 18), “They were formerly accustomed to say, ask Abel; and so they brought (a thing) to pass.” These words show that Abel had formerly been celebrated for the wisdom of its inhabitants.

**2Sa. 20:19.** “I am of the peaceable, faithful in Israel: thou seekest to slay a city and mother in Israel; wherefore wilt thou destroy the inheritance of Jehovah?” The construing of אִנֹּכִי with a predicate in the plural may be explained on the simple ground that the woman spoke in the name of the city as well as in its favour, and therefore had the citizens in her mind at the time, as is very evident from the figurative expression אִמִּי (mother) for mother-city or capital.<sup>[29]</sup>

The woman gave Joab to understand, in the first place, that he ought to have asked the inhabitants of Abela whether they intended to fight for Sheba before commencing the siege and destruction of the town, according to the law laid down in Deu. 20:10ff. with reference to the siege of foreign towns; and secondly, that he ought to have taken into consideration the peaceableness and fidelity of the citizens of Abela, and not to destroy the peace-loving citizens and members of the nation of God.

**2Sa. 20:20.** The woman's words made an impression upon Joab. He felt the truthfulness of her reproaches, and replied, "Far be it, far be it from me, to swallow up or destroy." **סס**, as in the case of oaths: "*truly not.*"

**2Sa. 20:21.** "It is not so (sc., as thou sayest), but a man of the mountains of Ephraim (which extended into the tribe of Benjamin: see at 1Sa. 1: 1), Sheba the son of Bichri, hath lifted up his hand against the king David. Only give him up, and I will draw away from the city." The woman promised him this: "Behold, his head shall be thrown out to thee over the wall."

**2Sa. 20:22.** She then came to all the people (i.e., the citizens of the town) "*with her wisdom,*" i.e., with the wise counsel which she had given to Joab, and which he had accepted; whereupon the citizens cut off Sheba's head, and threw it out to Joab. Then Joab had a trumpet blown for a retreat, and the men disbanded, whilst he himself returned to Jerusalem to the king.

**2Sa. 20:23-26.** David's Ministers of State. — The second section of the history of David's reign closes, like the first (2Sa. 8:16ff.), with a list of the leading ministers of state. The author evidently found the two lists in his sources, and included them both in his work, for the simple reason that they belonged to different periods, as the difference in the names of some of the officers clearly shows, and that they supplemented on another. The list before us belongs to a later period of David's reign than the one in 2Sa. 8:16-18. In addition to the office-bearers mentioned in 2Sa. 8, we find here *Adoram* over the tribute, and *Ira* the Kairite a confidential counsellor (*cohen*: see at 2Sa. 8:18), in the place of the sons of David noticed in 2Sa. 8:18. The others are the same in both lists. The *Chethib* **הכרי** is to be read **הַכָּרִי** (cf. 2Ki. 11: 4, 19), from **כַּוֵּר**, *perfodit*, and is synonymous with **הַכָּרְתִי** (see at 2Sa. 8:18). Adoram is the same person as Adoniram, who is mentioned in 1Ki. 4: 6 and 5:28 as overseer over the tributary service in the time of Solomon; as we may see from the fact, that the latter is also called Adoram in 1Ki. 12:18, and Hadoram in 2Ch. 10:18. Hadoram is apparently only a contracted form of the name, and not merely a copyist's mistake for Adoniram. But when we find that, according to the passage cited, the same man filled this office under three kings, we must bear in mind that he did not enter upon it till the close of David's reign, as he is not mentioned in 2Sa. 8:16ff., and that his name only occurs in connection with Rehoboam's ascent of the throne; so that there is no ground for assuming that he filled the office for any length of time under that monarch. **הַמִּסֵּ** does not mean *vectigal*, i.e., tribute or tributary service, but tributary labourers. The derivation of the word is uncertain, and has been disputed. The appointment of a special prefect over the tributary labourers can hardly have taken place before the closing years of David's reign, when the king organized

the internal administration of the kingdom more firmly than before. On the tributary labourers, see at 1Ki. 5:27. Ira the Jairite is never mentioned again. There is no ground for altering *Jairi* (the Jairite) into *Jithri* (the Jithrite), as Thenius proposes, since the rendering given in the Syriac (“from Jathir”) is merely an inference from 2Sa. 23:38; and the assumption upon which this conclusion is founded, viz., that *Ira*, the hero mentioned in 2Sa. 23:38, is the same person as *Ira* the royal *cohen*, is altogether unfounded.

## IV. Close of David’s Reign.

**2Sa. 21-24.** After the suppression of the rebellion headed by Sheba, David spent the remaining years of his reign in establishing the kingdom upon a firmer basis, partly by organizing the army, the administration of justice, and the general government of the realm, and partly by making preparations for the erection of the temple, and enacting rules for the service of the Levites; that he might be able to hand over the government in a firm and satisfactory state to his youthful son Solomon, whom the Lord had appointed as his successor. The account of these regulations and enactments fills up the whole of the last section of the history of David’s reign in the first book of Chronicles. But in the book before us, several other things —

- (1) two divine punishments inflicted upon Israel, with the expiation of the sins that occasioned them (2Sa. 21: 1-14, and 2Sa. 24);
- (2) David’s psalm of praise for deliverance out of the hand of all his enemies (2Sa. 22), and his last prophetic words (2Sa. 23: 1-7); and
- (3) a few brief notices of victorious acts performed in the wars with the Philistines (2Sa. 21:15-22), and a longer list of David’s heroes (2Sa. 23: 8-39) — form, as it were, a historical framework for these poetical and prophetic portions.

Of the two divine visitations mentioned, the pestilence occasioned by the numbering of the people (2Sa. 24) occurred undoubtedly in the closing years of David’s reign; whereas the famine, and the expiation connected with it (2Sa. 21: 1-14), happened most probably at an earlier period, and are merely introduced here because no fitting opportunity had presented itself before. The kernel and centre of this last section of the history of David is to be found unquestionably in the psalm of thanksgiving in 2Sa. 22, and the prophetic announcement of an exalted and blessed king. In the psalm of thanksgiving David looks back at the close of his life upon all the mercy and faithfulness which he had experienced throughout his reign, and praises the Lord his God for the whole. In his “last words” he looks forward into the time to come, and on the strength of the promise which he has received, of the eternal duration of the dominion of his house, sees in spirit the just Ruler, who will one day arise from his seed, and take the throne of his kingdom for ever. These two lyrical

and prophetic productions of David, the ripest spiritual fruit of his life, form a worthy conclusion to this reign. To this there is appended the list of his heroes, in the form of a supplement (2Sa. 23: 8-39); and finally in 2Sa. 24 the account of the numbering of the people, and the pestilence which fell upon Israel, as a punishment for this fault on the part of David. This account is placed at the close of the books of Samuel, merely because the altar which was built to expiate the wrath of God, together with the sacrifices offered upon it, served to consecrate the site for the temple, which was to be erected after David's death, in accordance with the divine promise (2Sa. 7:13), by his son and successor Solomon.

### **Three Years' Famine. Heroic Acts Performed in the Wars with the Philistines. — Ch. 21.**

*2Sa. 21: 1-14.* THREE YEARS' FAMINE. — A three years' famine in the land, the occasion of which, as Jehovah declared to the king, was Saul's crime with regard to the Gibeonites, was expiated by David's delivering up to the Gibeonites, at their own request, seven of Saul's descendants, who were then hung by them upon a mountain before Jehovah. This occurrence certainly did not take place in the closing years of David's reign; on the other hand, it is evident from the remark in v. 7, to the effect that Mephibosheth was spared, that it happened after David had received tidings of Mephibosheth, and had taken him to his own table (2Sa. 9). This is mentioned here as a practical illustration, on the one hand of the manner in which Jehovah visited upon the house of Saul, even after the death of Saul himself, a crime which had been committed by him; and, on the other hand, of the way in which, even in such a case as this, when David had been obliged to sacrifice the descendants of Saul to expiate the guilt of their father, he showed his tenderness towards him by the honourable burial of their bones.

*2Sa. 21: 1-6a.* A famine, which lasted for three successive years, induced David to seek the face of Jehovah, i.e., to approach God in prayer and ask the cause of this judgment which had fallen upon the land. The Lord replied, "Because of Saul, and because of the house of blood-guiltiness, because he hath slain the Gibeonites." The expression "because of the house of blood-guiltiness" is in apposition to "Saul," and determines the meaning more precisely: "because of Saul, and indeed because of the blood-guiltiness which rests upon his house." **בֵּית הַדָּמִים** signifies the house upon which blood that had been shed still rested as guilt, like **עִיר הַדָּמִים** in Eze. 22: 2; 24: 6, 9, and **אִישׁ דָּמִים** in Psa. 5: 7; 27: 9, etc. Nothing further is known about the fact itself. It is simply evident from the words of the Gibeonites in v. 5, that Saul, in his pretended zeal for the children of Israel, had smitten the Gibeonites, i.e., had put them to death.

Probably some dissatisfaction with them had furnished Saul with a pretext for exterminating these Amoritish heathen from the midst of the people of God.

*2Sa. 21: 2.* In consequence of this answer from God, which merely indicated in a general manner the cause of the visitation that had come upon the land, David sent for the Gibeonites to ask them concerning the wrong that had been done them by Saul. But before the historian communicates their answer, he introduces an explanation respecting the Gibeonites, to the effect that they were not Israelites, but remnants of the Amorites, to whom Joshua had promised on oath that their lives should be preserved (vid., Jos. 9: 3ff.). They are called *Hivites* in the book of Joshua (Jos. 9: 7); whereas here they are designated *Amorites*, according to the more general name which is frequently used as comprehending all the tribes of Canaan (see at Gen. 10:16 and 15:16). David said to the Gibeonites, “What shall I do for you, and wherewith shall I expiate” (sc., the wrong done you), “that ye may bless the inheritance (i.e., the nation) of Jehovah?” On the use of the imperative **וַיְבַרְכּוּ** to denote the certain consequences, see Ewald, § 347.

*2Sa. 21: 4.* The Gibeonites answered, “I have not to do with silver and gold concerning Saul and his house” (*lit.* it is not, does not stand, to me at silver and gold with Saul and his house), i.e., I have no money to demand of Saul, require no pecuniary payment as compensation for the blood which he shed among us (vid., Num. 35:31). The *Chethib* **לֹא** is not to be touched, notwithstanding the **לָנוּ** which follows. The use of the singular may be explained on the simple ground that the speaker thought of the Gibeonites as a corporation. “And it does not pertain to us to put any one to death in Israel” (sc., of our own accord). When David inquired still further, “What do you mean, then, that I should do to you?” they replied, “(As for) the man who consumed us, and who thought against us, that we should be destroyed (**נִשְׁמְדָנוּ** without **כִּי**, subordinately to **דָּמָה**, like **אֲנֵשָׁה** in the previous verse), so as not to continue in the whole of the territory of Israel, let seven men of his sons be given us, that we may crucify them to Jehovah at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of Jehovah.” **וְגַרְשָׁנוּ אִישׁ אֶשְׁרָר** is placed at the head absolutely (cf. Gesenius, § 145, 2). On crucifixion as a capital punishment, see at Num. 25: 4, where it has already been observed that criminals were not impaled or fastened to the cross alive, but were first of all put to death. Consequently the Gibeonites desired that the massacre, which had taken place among them by the command of Saul, should be expiated by the execution of a number of his sons — blood for blood, according to Num. 35:31. They asked for the crucifixion for Jehovah, i.e., that the persons executed might be impaled, as a public exhibition of the punishment inflicted, before the face of the Lord (vid., v. 9), as the satisfaction required to

expiate His wrath. Seven was a sacred number, denoting the performance of a work of God. This was to take place in Gibeah, the home and capital of Saul, who had brought the wrath of God upon the land through his crime. There is a sacred irony in the epithet applied to Saul, “chosen of the Lord.” If Saul was the chosen of Jehovah, his actions ought to have been in accordance with his divine election.

**2Sa. 21: 6-10.** David granted the request, because, according to the law in Num. 35:33, blood-guiltiness when resting upon the land could only be expiated by the blood of the criminal; but in delivering up the members of Saul’s house for whom they asked, he spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul, for the sake of the bond of friendship which he had formed with Jonathan on oath (1Sa. 18: 3; 20: 8, 16), and gave up to the Gibeonites two sons of Rizpah, a concubine of Saul (vid., v. 11 and 2Sa. 3: 7), and five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had borne to Adriel of Meholah. The name of *Michal*, which stands in the text, is founded upon an error of memory or a copyist’s mistake; for it was not Michal, but *Merab*, Saul’s eldest daughter, who was given to Adriel the Meholathite as his wife (1Sa. 18:19). The Gibeonites crucified those who were delivered up to them upon the mountain at Gibeah before Jehovah (see the remarks on v. 6). “*Thus fell seven at once.*” The *Chethib* שִׁבְעֵתִים, at which the Masoretes took such offence that they wanted to change it into שִׁבְעָתָם, is defended by Böttcher very properly, on the ground that the dual of the numeral denotes what is uniformly repeated as if by pairing; so that here it expresses what was extraordinary in the even tin a more pictorial manner than the *Keri*: “They fell sevenfold at once,” i.e., seven in the same way. The further remark, “they were slain in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest,” belongs to what follows, for which it prepares the way. The two *Keris*, וְהָמָּה for וְהָם, and בְּתַחֲלַת for תַּחֲלַת, are needless emendations. תַּחֲלַת is an adverbial accusative (vid., Ges. § 118, 2). The harvest began with the barley harvest, about the middle of Nisan, our April.

**2Sa. 21:10.** And Rizpah took sackcloth, i.e., the coarse hairy cloth that was worn as mourning, and spread it out for herself by the rock — not as a tent, as Clericus supposes, still less as a covering over the corpses of those who had been executed, according to the exegetical handbook, but for a bed — “*from the beginning of the harvest till water was poured out upon them (the crucified) from heaven,*” i.e., till rain came as a sign that the plague of drought that had rested upon the land was appeased; after which the corpses could be openly taken down from the stakes and buried, — a fact which is passed over in the account before us, where only the principal points are given. This is the explanation which Josephus has correctly adopted; but his assumption that the

rain fell at once, and before the ordinary early rain, has no foundation in the text of the Bible. “And suffered not the birds of heaven to settle upon the corpses by day, or the wild beasts by night.” Leaving corpses without burial, to be consumed by birds of prey and wild beasts, was regarded as the greatest ignominy that could befall the dead (see at 1Sa. 17:44). According to Deu. 21:22, 23, persons executed were not to remain hanging through the night upon the stake, but to be buried before evening. This law, however, had no application whatever to the case before us, where the expiation of guilt that rested upon the whole land was concerned. In this instance the expiatory sacrifices were to remain exposed before Jehovah, till the cessation of the plague showed that His wrath had been appeased.

**2Sa. 21:11-14.** When this touching care of Rizpah for the dead was told to David, he took care that the bones of the whole of the fallen royal house should be buried in the burial-place of Saul’s family. He therefore sent for the bones of Saul and Jonathan, which the men of Jabesh had taken away secretly from the wall of Beisan, where the Philistines had fastened the bodies, and which had been buried in Jabesh (1Sa. 31:10ff.), and had the bones of the sons and grandsons of Saul who had been crucified at Gibeah collected together, and interred all these bones at Zela in the land of Benjamin, in the family grave of Kish the father of Saul. **גָּנַב**, to take away secretly. **מַרְחֵב בֵּית־שָׁן**, from the *market-place* of Bethshan, does not present any contradiction to the statement in 1Sa. 31:10, that the Philistines fastened the body to the *wall* of Bethshan, as the *rechob* or market-place in eastern towns is not in the middle of the town, but is an open place against or in front of the gate (cf. 2Ch. 32: 6; Neh. 8: 1, 3, 16). This place, as the common meeting-place of the citizens, was the most suitable spot that the Philistines could find for fastening the bodies to the wall. The *Chethib* **תְּלוּם** is the true Hebrew form from **תָּלָה**, whereas the *Keri* **תְּלוֹם** is a formation resembling the Aramaean (cf. Ewald, § 252, *a.*). The *Keri* **פְּלִשְׁתִּים** is correct, however, as **פְּלִשְׁתִּים**, being a proper name, does not take any article. In **בְּיוֹם הַכּוֹת** the literal meaning of **יוֹם** (day) must not be strictly pressed, but the expression is to be taken in the sense of “at the time of the smiting;” for the hanging up of the bodies did not take place till the day after the battle (1Sa. 31: 8ff.). — In v. 14 the account is abridged, and the bones of the crucified persons are not mentioned again. The situation of *Zela* is unknown (see at Jos. 18:28). After this had been carried out in accordance with the king’s command, God suffered himself to be entreated for the land, so that the famine ceased.

**2Sa. 21:15-22.** HEROIC ACTS PERFORMED IN THE WARS WITH THE PHILISTINES. — The brief accounts contained in these verses of different heroic

feats were probably taken from a history of David's wars drawn up in the form of chronicles, and are introduced here as practical proofs of the gracious deliverance of David out of the hand of all his foes, for which he praises the Lord his God in the psalm of thanksgiving which follows, so that the enumeration of these feats is to be regarded as supplying a historical basis for the psalm.

**2Sa. 21:15-17.** The Philistines had war with Israel again. עֹד (again) refers generally to earlier wars with the Philistines, and has probably been taken without alteration from the chronicles employed by our author, where the account which follows was attached to notices of other wars. This may be gathered from the books of the Chronicles, where three of the heroic feats mentioned here are attached to the general survey of David's wars (vid., 1Ch. 20: 4). David was exhausted in this fight, and a Philistian giant thought to slay him; but Abishai came to his help and slew the giant. He was called *Yishbobenob* (*Keri, Yishbi*), i.e., not *Yishbo* at *Nob*, but *Yishbobenob*, a proper name, the meaning of which is probably "his dwelling is on the height," and which may have been given to him because of his inaccessible castle. He was one of the descendants of Raphah, i.e., one of the gigantic race of Rephaim. *Raphah* was the tribe-father of the Rephaim, an ancient tribe of gigantic stature, of whom only a few families were left even in Moses' time (vid., Deu. 2:11; 3:11, 13, and the commentary on Gen. 14: 5). The weight of his lance, i.e., of the metal point to his lance, was three hundred shekels, or eight pounds, of brass, half as much as the spear of Goliath (1Sa. 17: 7); "and he was girded with new armour." Böttcher has no doubt given the correct explanation of the word הַדָּשָׁה; he supposes the feminine to be used in a collective sense, so that the noun ("armour," כְּלָיו) could be dispensed with. (For parallels both to the words and facts, vid., Jud. 18:11 and Deu. 1:41.) וַיֹּאמֶר, he said (sc., to himself), i.e., he thought.

**2Sa. 21:17.** The danger into which the king had been brought in this war, and out of which he had been rescued solely by Abishai's timely help, induced his attendants to make him swear that he would not go into battle any more in person. נִשְׁבַּע לוֹ, administered an oath to him, i.e., fixed him by a promise on oath. וְלֹא תִכְבֶּה, "and shalt not extinguish the light of Israel." David had become the light of Israel from the fact that Jehovah was his light (2Sa. 22:29), or, according to the parallel passage in Psa. 18:29, that Jehovah had lighted his lamp and enlightened his darkness, i.e., had lifted him out of a state of humiliation and obscurity into one of honour and glory. The light (or lamp) is a figure used to represent the light of life as continually burning, i.e., life in prosperity and honour. David's regal life and actions were the light which the



grace of God had kindled for the benefit of Israel. This light he was not to extinguish, namely by going into the midst of war and so exposing his valuable life to danger.

**2Sa. 21:18.** (compare 1Ch. 20: 4). In a second war, *Sibbechai* and Hushathite slew *Saph* the Rephaite at Gob. According to 1Ch. 27:11, *Sibbechai*, one of the *gibborim* of David (1Ch. 11:29), was the leader of the eighth division of the army (see at 2Sa. 23:27). **הַחֲשָׁתִי** is a patronymic from **חֹשָׁה** in 1Ch. 4: 4. The scene of conflict is called *Gob* in our text, and *Gezer* in the Chronicles. As *Gob* is entirely unknown. Thenius supposes it to be a slip of the pen for Gezer; but this is improbable, for the simple reason that *Gob* occurs again in v. 19. It may possibly have been a small place somewhere near to *Gezer*, which some suppose to have stood on the site of *el Kubab*, on the road from *Ramleh* to *Yalo* (see at Jos. 10:33). The name *Saph* is written *Sippai* in the Chronicles.

**2Sa. 21:19.** (vid., 1Ch. 20: 5). In another war with the Philistines at Gob, *Elhanan* the son of *Yaare-Orgrim* of Bethlehem smote *Goliath* of Gath, whose spear was like a weaver's beam. In the Chronicles, however, we find it stated that "*Elhanan* the son of *Jair* smote *Lahmi* the brother of *Goliath* of Gath, whose spear," etc. The words of our text are so similar to those of the Chronicles, if we only leave out the word **אֲרָגִים**, which probably crept in from the next line through oversight on the part of a copyist, that they presuppose the same original text, so that the difference can only have arisen from an error in copying. The majority of the expositors (e.g., Piscator, Clericus, Michaelis, Movers, and Thenius) regard the text of the Chronicles as the true and original one, and the text before us as simply corrupt. But Bertheau and Böttcher maintain the opposite opinion, because it is impossible to see how the reading in 2Sa. could grow out of that in the Chronicles; whereas the reading in the Chronicles might have arisen through conscious alteration originating in the offence taken by some reader, who recalled the account of the conflict between David and Goliath, at the statement that Elhanan smote a giant named Goliath, and who therefore altered **בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי אֶת** into **אֶת לַחְמִי אֶחָדִי**. But apart from the question whether there were two Goliaths, one of whom was slain by David and the other by Elhanan, the fact that the conjecture of Bertheau and Böttcher presupposes a deliberate alteration of the text, or rather, to speak more correctly, an intentional falsification of the historical account, is quite sufficient to overthrow it, as not a single example of anything of the kind can be adduced from the whole of the Chronicles. On the other hand, the recollection of David's celebrated officer *Elhanan* of Bethlehem (2Sa. 23:24; 1Ch. 11:26) might easily lead to an identification of the Elhanan mentioned here with that officer, and so occasion the alteration of **אֶת לַחְמִי** into **בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי**. This

alteration was then followed by that of **אחי גלית** into **את גלית**, and all the more easily from the fact that the description of Lahmi's spear corresponds word for word with that of Goliath's spear in 1Sa. 17: 7. Consequently we must regard the reading in the Chronicles as the correct one, and alter our text accordingly; since the assumption that there were two Goliaths is a very improbable one, and there is nothing at all strange in the reference to a brother of Goliath, who was also a powerful giant, and carried a spear like Goliath. Elhanan the son of *Jairi* is of course a different person from *Elhanan* the Bethlehemite, the son of Dodo (2Sa. 23:24). The Chronicles have **יעור**, instead of *Jairi* (the reading according to the *Chethib*), and the former is probably the correct way of writing the name.

**2Sa. 21:20, 21.** (cf. 1Ch. 20: 6, 7). In another war at Gath, a Philistian warrior, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot,<sup>30</sup>

defied Israel, and was slain by Jonathan the son of Shimeah, the brother of David (see at 2Sa. 13: 3). The *Chethib* **מדין** is probably to be read **מדין**, an archaic plural ("a man of measures, or extensions:" de Dieu, etc.); in the Chronicles we find the singular **מדה** instead.

**2Sa. 21:22.** (cf. 1Ch. 20: 8). This verse contains a postscript, in which the previous verses are summed up. The accusative **את־ארבעת** may be explained from a species of attraction, i.e., from the fact that the historian had **יִבְהוּ** (v. 21) still in his mind: "As for these four, they were born to *Rapha*," i.e., they were descendants of the Rephaite family at Gath, where remnants of the aboriginal Canaanitish tribes of gigantic stature were still to be found, as in other towns of the Philistines (vid., Jos. 11:22). "They fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants." "By the hand of David" refers to the fact that David had personally fought with *Yishbobenob* (v. 16).

## **David's Psalm of Thanksgiving for Victory over All His Enemies. — Ch. 22.**

**2Sa. 22.** In the following psalm of thanksgiving, David praises the Lord as his deliverer out of all dangers during his agitated life and conflicts with his foes (vv. 2-4). In the first half he pictures his marvellous deliverance out of all the troubles which he passed through, especially in the time of Saul's persecutions, under the image of an extraordinary theophany (vv. 5-20), and unfolds the ground of this deliverance (vv. 21-28). In the second half he proclaims the mighty help of the Lord, and his consequent victories over the foreign enemies of his government (vv. 29-46), and closes with renewed praise of God for all His glorious deeds (vv. 47-51). The psalm is thus arranged in two leading

divisions, with an introductory and concluding strophe. But we cannot discover any definite system of strophes in the further arrangement of the principal divisions, as the several groups of thoughts are not rounded off symmetrically.

The contents and form of this song of praise answer to the fact attested by the heading, that it was composed by David in the later years of his reign, when God had rescued him from all his foes, and helped his kingdom to victory over all the neighbouring heathen nations. The genuineness of the psalm is acknowledged to be indisputable by all the modern critics, except J. Olshausen and Hupfeld,<sup>31</sup>

who, with hypercritical scepticism, dispute the Davidic origin of the psalm on subjective grounds of aesthetic taste. This psalm is found in the Psalter as Psa. 18, though with many divergences in single words and clauses, which do not, however, essentially affect the meaning. Commentators are divided in opinion as to the relation in which the two different forms of the text stand to one another. The idea that the text of 2Sa. rests upon a careless copy and tradition must decidedly be rejected: for, on the one hand, by far the larger portion of the deviations in our text from that of the Psalter are not to be attributed to carelessness on the part of copyists, but are evidently alterations made with thoughtfulness and deliberation: e.g., the omission of the very first passage (v. 1), "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength;" the change of צוֹרִי אֱלֹהֵי (my God, my strength, or rock) into אֱלֹהֵי צוֹרִי (the God of my rock), as "the God of the rock" occurs again in v. 47 of the text before us; or the substitution of וַיֵּרָא (He was seen, v. 11) for וַיִּדָּע (He did fly), etc. On the other hand, the original reading has undoubtedly been retained in many passages of our text, whilst simpler and more common forms have been substituted in that of the Psalms; e.g., in v. 5, מְשַׁבְּרֵי מוֹת instead of חֲבָלֵי מוֹת; in v. 8, מוֹסְדֵי הַרִים (the foundations of the hills) for מוֹסְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם (the foundations of the heavens); in v. 12, חֲשֵׁרֵת־מַיִם for חֲשֵׁבֶת־מַיִם; in v. 16, יָם רְמוֹת תִּשְׁפִּיל for יָם וְעֵינֶיךָ עַל־רְמֵי תִשְׁפִּיל; in v. 28, וְעֵינֶיךָ עַל־רְמֵי תִשְׁפִּיל for וְעֵינֶיךָ עַל־רְמֵי תִשְׁפִּיל; in v. 33, וַיִּתֵּן תְּמִים דְּרָכֹו for וַיִּתֵּן תְּמִים דְּרָכֹו; and in v. 44, תִּשְׁמְרֵנִי לְרֹאשׁ for תִּשְׁמְרֵנִי לְרֹאשׁ, and several others. In general, however, the text of the Psalms bears the stamp of poetical originality more than the text before us, and the latter indicates a desire to give greater clearness and simplicity to the poetical style. Consequently neither of the two texts that have come down to us contains the original text of the psalm of David unaltered; but the two recensions have been made quite independently of each other, one for the insertion of the psalm in the Psalter intended for liturgical use, and the other when it was incorporated into the history of David's reign, which formed the groundwork of our books of Samuel. The first revision may have been made by

David himself when he arranged his Psalms for liturgical purposes; but the second was effected by the prophetic historian, whose object it was, when inserting David's psalm of praise in the history of his reign, not so much to give it with diplomatic literality, as to introduce it in a form that should be easily intelligible and true to the sense.

**2Sa. 22: 1.** The heading is formed precisely according to the introductory formula of the song of Moses in Deu. 31:30, and was no doubt taken from the larger historical work employed by the author of our books. It was probably also adopted from this into the canonical collection of the Psalter, and simply brought into conformity with the headings of the other psalms by the alteration of וַיְדַבֵּר דָּוִד (and David said) into לְעַבְדֵי יְהוָה לְדָוִד אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר (‘‘Of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake:’’ Eng. ver.), and the insertion of לְמַנְצֵחַ (‘‘to the chief musician:’’ Eng. ver.) at the head (see Delitzsch on the Psalms). ‘‘In the day,’’ i.e., at the time, ‘‘when Jehovah had delivered him.’’ Deliverance ‘‘out of the hand of Saul’’ is specially mentioned, not because this was the last, but because it was the greatest and most glorious, — a deliverance out of the deepest misery into regal might and glory. The psalm is opened by וַיֹּאמֶר in both texts.

**2Sa. 22: 2-4.** Vv. 2-4 form the introduction.

*2 Jehovah is my rock, my castle, and my deliverer to me;*

*3 My Rock-God, in whom I trust:*

*My shield and horn of my salvation, my fortress and my refuge,*

*My Saviour; from violence Thou redeemest me.*

*4 I call upon the praised one, Jehovah,*

*And I am saved from my enemies.*

This introduction contains the sum and substance of the whole psalm, inasmuch as David groups the many experiences of divine deliverance in his agitated life into a long series of predicates, in all of which he extols God as his defence, refuge, and deliverer. The heaping up of these predicates is an expression both of liveliest gratitude, and also of hope for the future. The different predicates, however, are not to be taken as in apposition to *Jehovah*, or as vocatives, but are declarations concerning God, how He had proved himself faithful to the Psalmist in all the calamities of his life, and would assuredly do so still. David calls God סֶלְעִי וּמְצַדְתִּי (my rock, and my castle) in Psa. 31: 4 as well (cf. Psa. 71: 4). The two epithets are borrowed from the natural character of Palestine, where steep and almost inaccessible rocks afford protection to the fugitive, as David had often found at the time when Saul was pursuing him (vid., 1Sa. 24:23; 22: 5). But whilst David took refuge in rocks, he placed his

hopes of safety not in their inaccessible character, but in God the Lord, the eternal spiritual rock, whom he could see in the earthly rock, so that he called Him his true castle. מִפְּלִטִי לִי (my deliverer to me) gives the real explanation of the foregoing figures. The לִי (to me) is omitted in Psa. 18: 2, and only serves to strengthen the suffix, “my, yea my deliverer.” “My Rock-God,” equivalent to, God who is my Rock: this is formed after Deu. 32: 4, where Moses calls the Lord the Rock of Israel, because of His unchangeable faithfulness; for *zur*, a rock, is a figure used to represent immoveable firmness. In Psa. 18: 3 we find אֱלֹהֵי צוּרִי, “my God” (strong one), “my rock,” two synonyms which are joined together in our text, so as to form one single predicate of God, which is repeated in v. 47. The predicates which follow, “my horn and my salvation-shield,” describe God as the mighty protector and defender of the righteous. A shield covers against hostile attacks. In this respect God was Abraham’s shield (Gen. 15: 1), and the helping shield of Israel (Deu. 33:29; cf. Psa. 3: 4; 59:12). He is the “horn of salvation,” according to Luther, because He overcomes enemies, and rescues from foes, and gives salvation. The figure is borrowed from animals, which have their strength and defensive weapons in their horns (see at 1Sa. 2: 1). “My fortress:” *misgab* is a high place, where a person is secure against hostile attacks (see at Psa. 9:10). The predicates which follow, viz., *my refuge*, etc., are not given in Psa. 18: 3, and are probably only added as a rhythmical completion to the strophe, which was shortened by the omission of the introductory lines, “I love thee heartily, Jehovah” (Psa. 18: 1). The last clause, “My Saviour, who redeemest me from violence,” corresponds to אֲחַסְדֶּךָ בִּי in the first hemistich. In v. 4, David sums up the contents of his psalm of thanksgiving in a general sentence of experience, which may be called the theme of the psalm, for it embraces “the result of the long life which lay behind him, so full of dangers and deliverances.” מְהַלֵּל, “the praised one,” an epithet applied to God, which occurs several times in the Psalms (Psa. 48: 2; 96: 4; 113: 3; 145: 3). It is in apposition to Jehovah, and is placed first for the sake of emphasis: “I invoke Jehovah as the praised one.” The imperfects אֲקַרֵּא and אֲנַשֵּׂעַ are used to denote what continually happens. In v. 5 we have the commencement of the account of the deliverances out of great tribulations, which David had experienced at the hand of God.

*5 For breakers of death had compassed me,  
Streams of wickedness terrified me.*

*6 Cords of hell had girt me about,  
Snares of death overtook me.*

*7 In my distress I called Jehovah,  
And to my God I called;  
And He heard my voice out of His temple,  
And my crying came into His ears.*

*2Sa. 22: 5-7.* David had often been in danger of death, most frequently at the time when he was pursued by Saul, but also in Absalom's conspiracy, and even in several wars (cf. 2Sa. 21:16). All these dangers, out of which the Lord delivered him, and not merely those which originated with Saul, are included in vv. 5, 6. The figure "breakers or waves of death" is analogous to that of the "streams of Belial." His distress is represented in both of them under the image of violent floods of water. In the psalm we find **חֲבֵלֵי מוֹת**, "snares of death," as in Psa. 116: 3, death being regarded as a hunger with a net and snare (cf. Psa. 91: 3): this does not answer to well to the parallel **נַחֲלֵי**, and therefore is not so good, since **חֲבֵלֵי שְׂאוּל** follows immediately. **בְּלִיעַל** (*Belial*), *uselessness* in a moral sense, or *worthlessness*. The meaning "mischief," or injury in a physical sense, which many expositors give to the word in this passage on account of the parallel "death," cannot be grammatically sustained. *Belial* was afterwards adopted as a name for the devil (2Co. 6:15). Streams of wickedness are calamities that proceed from wickedness, or originate with worthless men. **קָדַם**, to come to meet with a hostile intention, i.e., to fall upon (vid., Job. 30:27). **הַיְכָל**, *the temple* out of which Jehovah heard him, was the heavenly abode of God, as in Psa. 11: 4; for, according to vv. 8ff., God came down from heaven to help him.

*8 Then the earth swayed and trembled,  
The foundations of the heavens shook  
And swayed to and fro, because He was wrath.*

*9 Smoke ascended in His nose,  
And fire out of His mouth devoured,  
Red-hot coals burned out of Him.*

*10 And He bowed the heavens and came down,  
And cloudy darkness under His feet.*

*2Sa. 22: 8-10.* Jehovah came down from heaven to save His servant, as He had formerly come down upon Sinai to conclude His covenant with Israel in the midst of terrible natural phenomena, which proclaimed the wrath of the Almighty. The theophany under which David depicts the deliverance he had experienced, had its type in the miraculous phenomenon which accompanied the descent of God upon Sinai, and which suggested, as in the song of Deborah (Jud. 5: 4, 5), the idea of a terrible storm. It is true that the deliverance of David was not actually attended by any such extraordinary natural phenomena; but the

saving hand of God from heaven was so obviously manifested, that the deliverance experienced by him could be poetically described as a miraculous interposition on the part of God. When the Lord rises up from His heavenly temple to come down upon the earth to judgment, the whole world trembles at the fierceness of His wrath. Not only does the earth tremble, but the foundations of the heavens shake: the whole universe is moved. In the psalm we have “the foundations of the hills” instead of “*the foundations of the heavens,*” — a weaker expression, signifying the earth to its deepest foundations. The *Hithpael* ‘**תָּנַעַשׂ**’, lit., *to sway itself*, expresses the idea of continuous swaying to and fro. **בִּי חָרָה לֹ**, “*for it (sc., wrath) burned to him,*” it flamed up like a fire; cf. Deu. 32:22; 29:19. “*Smoke,*” the forerunner of fire, “*ascended in His nose.*” The figurative idea is that of snorting or violent breathing, which indicates the rising of wrath. Smoke is followed by fire, which devours out of the mouth, i.e., bursts forth devouring or consuming all that opposes it. The expression is strengthened still further by the parallel: “*red-hot coals come out of Him,*” i.e., the flame of red-hot coals pours out of Him as out of a glowing furnace (cf. Gen. 15:17). This description is based entirely upon Exo. 19:18, where the Lord comes down upon Sinai in smoke and fire. We are not to picture to ourselves flashes of lightning; for all these phenomena are merely the forerunners of the appearance of God in the clouds, which is described in v. 10, “He bowed the heavens” to come down. **עָרַפַּל**, which is frequently connected with **עָנָן**, signifies cloudy darkness, or dark clouds. The substratum of this description is the fact that in a severe storm the heavens seem to sink down upon the earth with their dark clouds. The Lord draws near riding upon black thunder-clouds, “that the wicked may not behold His serene countenance, but only the terrible signs of His fierce wrath and punishment” (J. H. Michaelis).

*11 He rode upon a cherub and flew hither,  
And appeared upon the wings of the wind.*

*12 He made darkness round about Him as pavilions,  
Water-gathering, thick clouds.*

*13 Out of the splendour before Him  
Burned red-hot coals of fire.*

**2Sa. 22:11-13.** These three verses are a further expansion of v. 19, and v. 11 of v. 10a. The *cherub* is not a personified earthly creature, for *cherubim* are angels around the throne of God (see at Gen. 3:22). The poetical figure “riding upon the cherub” is borrowed from the fact that God was enthroned between the two cherubim upon the lid of the ark of the covenant, and above their outspread wings (Exo. 25:20, 21). As the idea of His “dwelling between the cherubim” (2Sa. 6: 2; 1Sa. 4: 4; Psa. 80: 2) was founded upon this typical

manifestation of the gracious presence of God in the Most Holy place, so here David depicts the descent of Jehovah from heaven as “riding upon a cherub,” picturing the cherub as a throne upon which God appears in the clouds of heaven, though without therefore imagining Him as riding upon a sphinx or driving in a chariot-throne. Such notions as these are precluded by the addition of the term וַיִּעֹף, “did fly.” The “flying” is also suggested by the wings of the cherubim. As the divine “*shechinah*” was enthroned above the ark of the covenant upon the wings of the cherubim, David in his poetical description represents the cherub and his wings as carrying the throne of God, to express the thought that Jehovah came down from heaven as the judge and saviour of His servants in the splendour of His divine glory, surrounded by cherubim who stand as His highest servants around His throne, just as Moses in his blessing (Deu. 33: 2) speaks of Jehovah as coming out of myriads of His holy angels. The elementary substratum of this was the wings of the wind, upon which He appeared. In the psalm we have וַיִּדָּא, from דָּאָה, to soar (Deu. 28:39; Jer. 48:40), which suggests the idea of flying better than וַיִּרְא (He was seen), though the latter gives the real explanation. In vv. 12 and 13, the “cloudy darkness under His feet” (v. 10*b*) is still further expanded, so as to prepare the way for the description of thunder and lightning in vv. 14ff. God in His wrath withdraws His face from man. He envelopes himself in clouds. The darkness round about him is the black thunder-cloud which forms His hut or tent. The plural *succhoth* is occasioned by the plural סְבִיבָתָיו, “His surroundings:” it is used with indefinite generality, and is more probably the original term than סִבְתּוֹ in the psalm. The “darkness” is still further explained in the second clause, חֲשֵׁרֶת מַיִם, *water-gatherings*. חֲשֵׁרָה (ἀπ. λεγ.) signifies, according to the Arabic, a gathering or collection. The expression used in the psalm is מַיִם חֲשֵׁבֶת, *water-darkness*, which, if not less appropriate, is at any rate not the original term. עֲבֵי שָׁחֲקִים, *clouds of clouds*, i.e., the thickest clouds; a kind of superlative, in which a synonym is used instead of the same noun.

**2Sa. 22:13.** The splendour of the divine nature enveloped in clouds breaks through the dark covering in burning coals of fire. The coals of fire which burst forth, i.e., which break out in flame from the dark clouds, are the lightning which shoots forth from the dark storm-clouds in streams of fire.

***14 Jehovah thundered from the heavens,  
And the Most High gave His voice.***

***15 He sent arrows, and scattered them;  
Lightning, and discomfited them.***



*16 Then the beds of the sea became visible;  
The foundations of the world were uncovered,  
Through the threatening of Jehovah,  
By the snorting of the breath of His nostrils.*

*2Sa. 22:14-16.* God sent lightning as arrows upon the enemies along with violent thunder, and threw them thereby into confusion. הִמָּזְמָם, to throw into confusion, and thereby to destroy, is the standing expression for the destruction of the foe accomplished by the miraculous interposition of God (vid., Exo. 14:24; 23:27; Jos. 10:10; Jud. 4:15; 1Sa. 7:10). To the thunder there were added stormy wind and earthquake, as an effect of the wrath of God, whereby the foundations of the sea and land were laid bare, i.e., whereby the depth of the abyss and of the hell in the interior of the earth, into which the person to be rescued had fallen, were disclosed.<sup>B2</sup>

*17 He reached out of the height, He laid hold of me;  
Drew me out of great waters:*

*18 Saved me from my enemy strong;  
From my haters, because they were too strong for me.*

*19 They fell upon me in my day of calamity:  
Then Jehovah became my stay,*

*20 And led me out into a broad place;  
Delivered me, because He had pleasure in me.*

*2Sa. 22:17-20.* The Lord stretched His hand from the height into the deep abysses, which had been uncovered through the threatening of the wrath of God, and drew out the sinking man. יִשְׁלַח without יָד is used to denote the stretching out of the hand, and in the sense of reaching out to a thing (as in 2Sa. 6: 6). מַיִם רַבִּים (great waters) does not refer to the enemy, but to the calamities and dangers (waves of death and streams of Belial, v. 5) into which the enemies of the Psalmist had plunged him. יַמְשִׁנִּי, from מִשְׁחָה (Exo. 2:10), from which the name of *Moses* was derived, to whom there is probably an allusion made. As Moses was taken out of the waters of the Nile, so David was taken out of great (many) waters. This deliverance is still further depicted in a more literal terms in vv. 18ff. אֹיְבֵי עָו, my enemy strong, poetical for my strong enemy, does not refer to one single enemy, namely Saul; but, as the parallel “my haters” shows, is a poetical personification of all his enemies. They were stronger than David, therefore the Lord had to deliver him with an almighty hand. The “*day of calamity*” in which the enemy fell upon him (קָדַם: see at v. 6) was the time when David wandered about in the desert helpless and homeless, fleeing from the pursuit of Saul. The Lord was then his support, or a

staff on which he could support himself (vid., Psa. 23: 4), and led him out of the strait into the broad, i.e., into a broad space where he could move freely, because God had pleasure in him, and had chosen him in His grace to be His servant. This reason for his deliverance is carried out still further in what follows.

*21 Jehovah rendered to me according to my righteousness,  
According to the cleanness of my hands He recompensed me.*

*22 For I have observed the ways of Jehovah,  
And have not wickedly departed from my God.*

*23 For all His rights are before my eyes;  
And His statutes, — I do not depart from them.*

*24 And I was innocent towards Him,  
And kept myself from mine iniquity.*

2Sa. 22:21-24. נָמַל signifies to do to a person good or evil, like the Greek εἶ and κακῶς πράττειν τινά. The *righteousness* and *cleanness of hands*, i.e., the innocence, which David attributed to himself, were not perfect righteousness or holiness before God, but the righteousness of his endeavours and deeds as contrasted with the unrighteousness and wickedness of his adversaries and pursuers, and consisted in the fact that he endeavoured earnestly and sincerely to walk in the ways of God and to keep the divine commandments. רָשַׁע מִן, *to be wicked from*, is a pregnant expression, signifying to depart wickedly from God. לְנִגְדִי, i.e., as a standard before my eye. In the psalm we find תָּמִים עִמּוֹ, *innocent in intercourse with the Lord*, instead of תָּמִים לֵרֵךְ (see Deu. 18:13); and for the fact itself, David's own testimony in 1Sa. 26:23, 24, the testimony of God concerning him in 1Ki. 14: 8, and the testimony of history in 1Ki. 15: 5. מֵעוֹנִי, *from mine iniquity*, i.e., from the iniquity which I might have committed.

*25 Thus Jehovah repaid me according to my righteousness,  
According to my cleanness before His eyes.*

*26 Towards the pious Thou showest thyself pious,  
Towards the perfectly innocent Thou showest thyself innocent.*

*27 Towards the genuine Thou showest thyself genuine,  
And towards the perverse Thou showest thyself crooked.*

*28 And afflicted people Thou helpst,  
And Thine eyes are against the haughty; them Thou humblest.*

2Sa. 22:25-28. The motive for deliverance, which was expounded in vv. 21-24, is summed up briefly in v. 25; and then in vv. 26 and 27 it is carried back to

the general truth, that the conduct of God towards men is regulated according to the conduct of men towards God. The *vav cons.* in וַיֵּשֶׁב expresses the logical consequence. כְּבָרִי is used instead of כְּבָר יְדִי in v. 21, which is repeated in the psalm simply for the sake of variation. The truth that God treats every man in accordance with his conduct towards Him, is expounded in four parallel clauses, in which the conduct of God is expressed in verbs in the *Hithpael*, formed from the adjectives used to describe the conduct of men towards God. To the חָסִיד, the pious or devoted to God, He also shows himself pious; and innocent, blameless, to the נָבוֹר הַמַּיִם, the man strong in innocence, who walks in perfect innocence. נָבַר, a *Niphal* participle, from בָּרַר, he who keeps himself pure, strives after purity of walk. תִּתְקַבֵּר, an anomalous contraction of תִּתְקַבְּרָר (Ps.), analogous to the formation of נָבַר for נִבְרָר. The form תִּתְפַּל for תִּתְפַּלֵּל, to show one's self perverse or crooked, is still more anomalous. God shows himself so towards the perverse, by giving him up to his perverseness (Rom. 1:28). This general truth is applied in v. 28 to the congregation of God, in the contrast which it presents of humble and haughty, and is expounded from the conduct of God, as displayed in the history of Israel, towards these two classes of men, into which the nation was divided. In the psalm, therefore, we find בְּנִי אֲתָהּ, for which the simple בֶּן is substituted here, because the verse does not contain any actual reason for what goes before. עַם עָנִי, afflicted people, is used to denote the pious and depressed in the nation; רְמַיִם, *the high*, i.e., the haughty, or godless rich and mighty in the nation. תִּשְׁפִּיל is to be taken as a relative: whom Thou humblest (see Ewald, § 332, *b.*; and for the thought, Isa. 2:11). In the psalm the unusual mode of expression in the second clause is changed into the more common phrase, "Thou bringest down high, i.e., proud looks" (cf. Pro. 6:17; 21: 4; 30:13; Psa. 131: 1, etc.).

*2Sa. 22:29.* V. 29 commences the description of the help which David had already received from God in his conflict with the enemies of Israel, and which he would still receive.

*29 For Thou art my lamp, O Jehovah!  
And Jehovah maketh my darkness bright.*

*30 For through Thee I run troops,  
And through my God I leap walls.*

*31 God — innocent is His way.  
The word of Jehovah is refined,  
A shield is He to all who trust in Him.*

The explanatory **כִּי**, with which the new description of the divine mercy commences, refers to the thought implied in v. 28, that David belonged to the “afflicted people,” whom the Lord always helps. As the Lord delivered him out of the danger of death, because He took pleasure in him, so He also gave him power over all his enemies. For He was his lamp, i.e., He had lifted him out of a condition of depression and contempt into one of glory and honour (see at 2Sa. 21:17), and would still further enlighten his darkness, i.e., “would cause the light of His salvation to shine upon him and his tribe in all the darkness of their distress” (Hengstenberg). In the psalm the verse reads thus: “For Thou lightest (makest bright) my lamp (or candle), Jehovah my God enlighteneth my darkness;” the bold figure “Jehovah the lamp of David” being more literally explained. The figure is analogous to the one in Psa. 27: 1, “The Lord is my light;” whilst the form **נֵר** is a later mode of writing **נִר**.

**2Sa. 22:30.** In the strength of his God he could run hostile troops and leap walls, i.e., overcome every hostile power. **אָרָוּץ**, not from **רָצַץ**, to smash in pieces, but from **רָוַץ**, to run; construed with the accusative according to the analogy of verbs of motion.

**2Sa. 22:31.** He derives this confidence from the acts of God, and also from His word. **הָאֵל** (God) is written absolutely, like **הַצֹּרֵר** in Deu. 32: 4. The article points back to **בְּאֵלֵהוּי**. Jehovah is *the* God (**הָאֵל**), whose way is perfect, without blemish; and His word is refined brass, pure silver (cf. Psa. 12: 7). He who trusts in Him is safe from all foes. The last two clauses occur again in Agur’s proverbs (Pro. 30: 5). The thought of the last clause is still further explained in vv. 32ff.

**32 For who is God save Jehovah,  
And who a rock save our God?**

**33 This God is my strong fortress,  
And leads the innocent his way.**

**34 He makes my feet like the hinds,  
And setteth me upon my high places;**

**35 He teacheth my hands to fight,  
And my arms span brazen bows.**

**2Sa. 22:32-35.** There is no true God who can help, except or by the side of Jehovah (cf. Deu. 32:31; 1Sa. 2: 2). **צֹרֵר**, as in v. 2. This God is “my strong fortress:” for this figure, comp. Psa. 31: 5 and 27: 1. **חַיִל**, strength, might, is construed with **מְעוֹזִי**, by free subordination: “my fortress, a strong one,” like

מַחֲסֵי עוֹ (Psa. 71: 7; cf. Ewald, § 291, *b.*). יָתַר for יָתַר, from יָתַר (vid., Ges. § 72; Olshausen, *Gram.* p. 579), in the sense of leading or taking round, as in Pro. 12:26. God leads the innocent his way, i.e., He is his leader and guide therein. The *Keri* דִּרְבִּי rests upon a misunderstanding. There is an important difference in the reading of this verse in Psa. 18, viz., “The God who girdeth me with strength, and makes my way innocent.” The last clause is certainly an alteration which simplifies the meaning, and so is also the first clause, the thought of which occurs again, word for word, in v. 40a, with the addition of לַמְלַחְמָה. אֵילָה or אֵילָה, the hind, or female stag, is a figure of speech denoting swiftness in running. “*Like the hinds:*” a condensed simile for “like the hinds’ feet,” such as we frequently meet with in Hebrew (vid., Ges. § 144, Anm.). The reference is to swiftness in pursuit of the foe (vid., 2Sa. 2:18; 1Ch. 12: 8). רַגְלָיו, *his* feet, for רַגְלִי (*my* feet) in the psalm, may be accounted for from the fact, that David had spoken of himself in the third person as the innocent one. “*My high places*” were not the high places of the enemy, that became his by virtue of conquest, but the high places of his own land, which he maintained triumphantly, so that he ruled the land for them. The expression is formed after Deu. 32:13, and is imitated in Hab. 3:19. לַמֶּד is generally construed with a double accusative: here it is written with an accusative and לְ, and signifies to instruct for the war. נָחַת, in the psalm נִחַתָּה, on account of the feminine זָרוּעָתִי, is not the *Niphal* of חָתַת, to be broken in pieces, but the *Piel* of נָחַת, to cause to go down, to press down the bow, i.e., to set it. The bow of brass is mentioned as being the strongest: setting such a bow would be a sign of great heroic strength. The two verses (34 and 35) are simply a particularizing description of the power and might with which the Lord had endowed David to enable him to conquer all his foes.

*36 And Thou reachest me the shield of my salvation,  
And Thy hearing makes me great.*

*37 Thou makest my steps broad under me,  
And my ankles have not trembled.*

2Sa. 22:36, 37. The Lord bestows the true strength for victory in His salvation. The shield of salvation is the shield which consists of salvation, of the helping grace of the Lord. עֲנֹתֶךָ, for which we find in the psalm עֲנֹתֶךָ, thy humility, i.e., God’s condescending grace, does not mean “thy humiliation,” but “*thy hearkening,*” i.e., that practical hearkening on the part of God, when called upon for help, which was manifested in the fact that God made his steps broad, i.e., provided the walker with a broad space for free motion, removing obstructions and stumbling-blocks out of the way. God had done this for David, so that his ankles had not trembled, i.e., he had not been wanting in the power

to take firm and safe steps. In this strength of his God he could destroy all his foes.

*38 I will pursue my enemies and destroy them,  
I will not turn till they are consumed.*

*39 I will consume them and dash them in pieces,  
that they may not arise,  
And may fall under my feet.*

*40 And Thou girdest me with strength for war,  
Thou bowest mine adversaries under me.*

*41 And Thou makest mine enemies turn the back to me;  
My haters, I root them out.*

2Sa. 22:38-41. The optative form **אֶרְדֹּבָה** serves to make the future signification of **אֶרְדֹּבֵם** (in the psalm) the more apparent. Consequently it is quite out of the question to take the other verbs as preterites. We are not compelled to do this by the interchange of imperfects *c. vav consec.* with simple imperfects, as the *vav consec.* is not used exclusively as expressive of the past. On the contrary, the substance of the whole of the following description shows very clearly that David refers not only to the victories he has already won, but in general to the defeat of all his foes in the past, the present, and the future; for he speaks as distinctly as possible not only of their entire destruction (vv. 38, 39, 43), but also of the fact that God makes him the head of the nations, and distant and foreign nations to him homage. Consequently he refers not only to his own personal dominion, but also, on the strength of the promise which he had received from God, to the increase of the dominion of the throne of his house, whilst he proclaims in the Spirit the ultimate defeat of all the enemies of the kingdom of God. This Messianic element in the following description comes out in a way that cannot be mistaken, in the praise of the Lord with which he concludes in vv. 47-51. **וְאַשְׁמִידֵם**, “I destroy them,” is stronger than **וְאַשְׁגִּים**, “I reach them” (in the psalm). In v. 39 the words are crowded together, to express the utter destruction of all foes. In the psalm **וְאַכְלֵם** is omitted. **וְתִזְרֵנִי** for **וְתִזְרֵנִי** in the psalm is not a poetical Syriasm, and still less a “careless solecism” (Hupfeld), but a simple contraction, such as we meet with in many forms: e.g., **מִלְפָּנֵינוּ** for **מִמְּאֻלְפָּנֵינוּ** (Job. 35:11; cf. Ewald, § 232, *b.*). The form **תִּתֶּה** for **נִתְּתֶה** (in the psalm) is unusual, and the aphaeresis of the **נ** can only be accounted for from the fact that this much-used word constantly drops its **נ** as a radical sound in the imperfect (see Ewald, § 195, *c.*). The phrase **תִּתֶּה לִּי עֲרֵף** is formed after Exo. 23:27. “Giving the enemy to a person’s back” means causing them to turn the back, i.e., putting them to flight.

*42 They look out, but there is no deliverer;  
For Jehovah, but He answereth them not.*

*43 And I rub in pieces as the dust of the earth,  
Like the mire of the streets I crush them and stamp upon them.*

2Sa. 22:42, 43. The cry of the foe for help is not attended to; they are annihilated without quarter. **יִשְׁעוּ**, to look out to God for help (with **אֵל** and **עַל**; vid., Isa. 17: 7, 8), is more poetical than **יִשְׁעוּ**, “they cry” (in the psalm); and **בְּעַפְר־אֲרָץ** is more simple than **בְּעַפְר־עַל־פְּנֵי־רוּחַ** (in the psalm), “I crush them as dust before the wind,” for the wind does not crush the dust, but carries it away. In the second clause of v. 43, **אֲדַקֵּם** is used instead of **אֲרִיקֵם** in the psalm, and strengthened by **אֲדַקֵּם. אֲדַקֵּם**, from **דָּקַק**, to make thin, to crush; so that instead of “I pour them out like mire of the streets which is trodden to pieces,” the Psalmist simply says, “I crush and stamp upon them like mire of the streets.” Through the utter destruction of the foe, God establishes the universal dominion to which the throne of David is to attain.

*44 And Thou rescuest me out of the strivings of my people,  
Preservest me to be the head of the heathen.  
People that I knew not serve me.*

*45 The sons of the stranger dissemble to me,  
Upon hearsay they obey me.*

*46 The sons of the stranger despair,  
And tremble out of their castles.*

2Sa. 22:44-46. By “the strivings of my people” the more indefinite expression in the psalm, “strivings of the people,” is explained. The words refer to the domestic conflicts of David, out of which the Lord delivered him, such as the opposition of Ishbosheth and the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba. These deliverances formed the prelude and basis of his dominion over the heathen. Consequently **תִּשְׁמְרֵנִי** (Thou preservest me to be the head of the nations) occurs quite appropriately in the second clause; and **תִּשְׂמֵנִי**, “Thou settest me,” which occurs in the psalm, is a far less pregnant expression. **עַם** before **לֹא יִדְעוּהוּ** is used indefinitely to signify foreign nations. *Toi* king of Hamath (2Sa. 8:10) was an example, and his subjugation was a prelude of the future subjection of all the heathen to the sceptre of the Son of David, as predicted in Psa. 72. In v. 45 the two clauses of the psalm are very appropriately transposed. The *Hithpael* **יִתְכַחְשׁוּ**, as compared with **יִכְחָשׁוּ**, is the later form. In the primary passage (Deu. 33:29) the *Niphal* is used to signify the dissembling of friendship, or of involuntary homage on the part of the vanquished towards the

victor. לְשִׁמּוֹעַ אָזְנוֹ, “by the hearing of the ear,” i.e., by hearsay, is a simple explanation of לְשִׁמְעַת אָזְנוֹ, at the rumour of the ears (vid., Job. 42: 5), i.e., at the mere rumour of David’s victories. The foreign nations pine away, i.e., despair of ever being able to resist the victorious power of David. יִחְגְּרוּ, “they gird themselves,” does not yield any appropriate meaning, even if we should take it in the sense of equipping themselves to go out to battle. The word is probably a misspelling of יִחְרְגוּ, which occurs in the psalm, חָרַג being a ὄπ. λεγ. in the sense of being terrified, or trembling: they tremble out of their castles, i.e., they come trembling out of their castles (for the thought itself, see Micah 7:17). It is by no means probable that the word חָגַר, which is so frequently met with in Hebrew, is used in this one passage in the sense of “to limp,” according to Syriac usage.

In conclusion, the Psalmist returns to the praise of the Lord, who had so highly favoured him.

*47 Jehovah liveth, and blessed is my rock,  
And the God of my refuge of salvation is exalted.*

*48 The God who giveth me vengeance,  
And bringeth nations under me;*

*49 Who leadeth me out from mine enemies,  
And exalteth me above mine adversaries,  
Delivereth me from the man of violence.*

2Sa. 22:47-49. The formula חַי־יְהוָה does not mean “let Jehovah live,” for the word חַי would be used for that (vid., 2Sa. 16:16, 1Sa. 10:24), but is a declaration: “the Lord is living.” The declaration itself is to be taken as praise of God, for “praising God is simply ascribing to Him the glorious perfections which belong to him; we have only to give Him what is His own” (Hengstenberg). The following clauses also contain simply declarations; this is evident from the word יָרוּם, since the optative יָרֹם would be used to denote a wish. The Lord is living or alive when He manifests His life in acts of omnipotence. In the last clause, the expression צוּר (rock) is intensified into אֱלֹהֵי צוּר יְשָׁעִי (the God of my refuge, or rock, of salvation), i.e., the God who is my saving rock (cf. v. 3). In the predicates of God in vv. 48, 49, the saving acts depicted by David in vv. 5-20 and 29-46 are summed up briefly. Instead of מוֹרִיד, “He causes to go down under me,” i.e., He subjects to me, we find in the psalm וְיַדְבֵּר, “He drives nations under me,” and מִפְּלִטִי instead of מוֹצִיאִי; and lastly, instead of אִישׁ חָמָס in the psalm, we have here חֲמָסִים



שִׁיר, as in Psa. 140: 2. Therefore the praise of the Lord shall be sounded among all nations.

*50 Therefore will I praise Thee,  
O Jehovah, among the nations,  
And sing praise to Thy name.*

*51 As He who magnifies the salvation of His king,  
And showeth grace to His anointed,  
To David, and his seed for ever.*

*2Sa. 22:50, 51.* The grace which the Lord had shown to David was so great, that the praise thereof could not be restricted to the narrow limits of Israel. With the dominion of David over the nations, there spread also the knowledge, and with this the praise, of the Lord who had given him the victory. Paul was therefore perfectly justified in quoting the verse before us (v. 50) in Rom. 16: 9, along with Deu. 32:43 and Psa. 117: 1, as a proof that the salvation of God was intended for the Gentiles also. The king whose salvation the Lord had magnified, was not David as an individual, but David and his seed for ever, — that is to say, the royal family of David which culminated in Christ. David could thus sing praises upon the ground of the promise which he had received (2Sa. 7:12-16), and which is repeated almost verbatim in the last clause of v. 51. The *Chethib* מַגְדִּיל is the *Hiphil* participle מְגַדֵּיל, according to Psa. 18:51; and the *Keri* מְגִדֹּל, “tower of the fulness of salvation,” is a singular conjecture.

### **David’s Last Words. — Ch. 23: 1-7.**

*2Sa. 23: 1-7.* The psalm of thanksgiving, in which David praised the Lord for all the deliverances and benefits that he had experienced throughout the whole of his life, is followed by the prophetic will and testament of the great king, unfolding the importance of his rule in relation to the sacred history of the future. And whilst the psalm may be regarded (2Sa. 22) as a great hallelujah, with which David passed away from the stage of life, these “last words” contain the divine seal of all that he has sung and prophesied in several psalms concerning the eternal dominion of his seed, on the strength of the divine promise which he received through the prophet Nathan, that his throne should be established for ever (2Sa. 7). These words are not merely a lyrical expansion of that promise, but a prophetic declaration uttered by David at the close of his life and by divine inspiration, concerning the true King of the kingdom of God. “The aged monarch, who was not generally endowed with the gift of prophecy, was moved by the Spirit of God at the close of his life, and beheld a *just Ruler in the fear of God*, under whose reign blessing and salvation sprang up for the

righteous, and all the wicked were overcome. The pledge of this was the eternal covenant which God had concluded with him” (Tholuck: *die Propheten and ihre Weissagungen*, p. 166). The heading “*these are the last words of David*” serves to attach it to the preceding psalm of thanksgiving.

*1 Divine saying of David the son of Jesse,  
Divine saying of the man, the highly exalted,  
Of the anointed of the God of Jacob,  
And of the lovely one in the songs of praise of Israel.*

*2 The Spirit of Jehovah speaks through me,  
And His word is upon my tongue.*

**2Sa. 23: 1, 2.** This introduction to the prophetic announcement rests, both as to form and substance, upon the last sayings of Balaam concerning the future history of Israel (Num. 24: 3, 15). This not only shows to what extent David had occupied himself with the utterances of the earlier men of God concerning Israel’s future; but indicates, at the same time, that his own prophetic utterance was intended to be a further expansion of Balaam’s prophecy concerning the Star out of Jacob and the Sceptre out of Israel. Like Balaam, he calls his prophecy a **נְאֻם**, i.e., a *divine saying* or oracle, as a revelation which he had received directly from God (see at Num. 24: 3). But the recipient of this revelation was not, like Balaam the son of Beor, a man with closed eye, whose eyes had been opened by a vision of the Almighty, but “*the man who was raised up on high*” (**עָלָה**), adverbially “*above,*” is, strictly speaking, a substantive, “*height,*” used in an adverbial sense, as in Hos. 11: 7, and probably also 2Sa. 7:16), i.e., whom God had lifted up out of humiliation to be the ruler of His people, yea, even to be the head of the nations (2Sa. 22:44). Luther’s rendering, “*who is assured of the Messiah of the God of Jacob,*” is based upon the Vulgate, “*cui constitutum est de Christo Dei Jacob,*” and cannot be grammatically sustained. David was exalted on the one hand as “*the anointed of the God of Jacob,*” i.e., as the one whom the God of Israel had anointed king over His people, and on the other hand as “*the lovely one in Israel’s songs of praise,*” i.e., the man whom God had enabled to sing lovely songs of praise in celebration of His grace and glory. **זְמִירָה = זְמִירָה** does not mean a song generally, but a song of praise in honour of God (see at Exo. 15: 2), like **מְזִמֹּר** in the headings to the psalms. As David on the one hand had firmly established the kingdom of God in an earthly and political respect as the anointed of Jehovah, i.e., as king, so had he on the other, as the composer of Israel’s songs of praise, promoted the spiritual edification of that kingdom. The idea of **נְאֻם** is explained in v. 2. The Spirit of Jehovah speaks through him; his words are the inspiration of God. The preterite **דִּבֶּר** relates to the divine inspiration which

preceded the utterance of the divine saying. **דַּבֵּר בְּ**, literally to speak into a person, as in Hos. 1: 2. The saying itself commences with v. 3.

*3 The God of Israel saith,  
The Rock of Israel speaketh to me:  
A Ruler over men, just,  
A Ruler in the fear of God.*

*4 And as light of the morning, when the sun rises,  
As morning without clouds:  
From shining out of rain (springeth) green out of the earth.*

*5 For is not my house thus with God?  
For He hath made me an everlasting covenant,  
Provided with all, and attested;  
For all my salvation and all good pleasure,  
Should He then not cause it to grow?*

**2Sa. 23: 3.** As the prophets generally preface their saying with “thus saith the Lord,” so David commences his prophetic saying with “*the God of Israel saith,*” for the purpose of describing it most emphatically as the word of God. He designates God “*the God*” and “*The Rock*” (as in 2Sa. 22: 3) of Israel, to indicate that the contents of his prophecy relate to the salvation of the people of Israel, and are guaranteed by the unchangeableness of God. The saying which follows bears the impress of a divine oracle even in its enigmatical brevity. The verbs are wanting in the different sentences of vv. 3b and 4. “*A ruler over men,*” sc., “will arise,” or there will be. **בְּאֲדָם** does not mean “among men,” but “*over men;*” for **בְּ** is to be taken as with the verb **מָשַׁל**, as denoting the object ruled over (cf. Gen. 3:16; 4: 7, etc.). **הָאָדָם** does not mean certain men, but the human race, humanity. This ruler is “*just*” in the fullest sense of the word, as in the passages founded upon this, viz., Jer. 23: 5, Zec. 9: 9, and Psa. 72: 2. The justice of the ruler is founded in his “*fear of God.*” **אֱלֹהִים יְרֵאתָ** is governed freely by **מוֹשֵׁל**. (On the fact itself, see Isa. 11: 2, 3.) The meaning is, “A ruler over the human race will arise, a just ruler, and will exercise his dominion in the spirit of the fear of God.”

**2Sa. 23: 4.** V. 4 describes the blessing that will proceed from this ruler. The idea that v. 4 should be connected with v. 3b so as to form one period, in the sense of “when one rules justly over men (as I do), it is as when a morning becomes clear,” must be rejected, for the simple reason that it overlooks Nathan’s promise (2Sa. 7) altogether, and weakens the force of the saying so solemnly introduced as the word of God. The ruler over men whom David sees in spirit, is not any one who rules righteously over men; nor is the seed of David to be regarded as a collective expression indicating a merely ideal personality,

but, according to the Chaldee rendering, the Messiah himself, the righteous Shoot whom the Lord would raise up to David (Jer. 23: 5), and who would execute righteousness and judgment upon earth (Jer. 33:15). V. 4 is to be taken by itself as containing an independent thought, and the connection between it and v. 3 must be gathered from the words themselves: the appearance (the rise) of this Ruler will be *“as light of the morning, when the sun rises.”* At the same time, the Messiah is not to be regarded as the subject to אור בִּקְרָא (the light of the morning), as though the ruler over men were compared with the morning light; but the subject compared to the morning light is intentionally left indefinite, according to the view adopted by Luther in his exposition, *“In the time of the Messiah it will be like the light of the morning.”* We are precluded from regarding the Messiah as the subject, by the fact that the comparison is instituted not with the sun, but with the morning dawn at the rising of the sun, whose vivifying effects upon nature are described in the second clause of the verse. The words זֶרַח שָׁמֶשׁ are to be taken relatively, as a more distinct definition of the morning light. The clause which follows, *“morning without clouds,”* is parallel to the foregoing, and describes more fully the nature of the morning. The light of the rising sun on a cloudless morning is an image of the coming salvation. The rising sun awakens the germs of life in the bosom of nature, which had been slumbering through the darkness of the night. *“The state of things before the coming of the ruler resembles the darkness of the night”* (Hengstenberg). The verb is also wanting in the second hemistich. *“From the shining from rain (is, comes) fresh green out of the earth.”* נִגַּה signifies the brightness of the rising sun; but, so far as the actual meaning is concerned, it relates to the salvation which attends the coming of the righteous ruler. מִמָּטָר is either subordinate to מִנִּגְהָ, or co-ordinate with it. In the former case, we should have to render the passage, *“from the shining of the sun which proceeds out of rain,”* or *“from the shining after rain;”* and the allusion would be to a cloudless morning, when the shining of the sun after a night’s rain stimulates the growth of the plants. In the latter case, we should have to render it *“from the shining (and) from the rain;”* and the reference would be to a cloudless morning, on which the vegetation springs up from the ground through sunshine followed by rain. Grammatically considered, the first view (? the second) is the easier of the two; nevertheless we regard the other (? the first) as the only admissible one, inasmuch as rain is not to be expected when the sun has risen with a cloudless sky. The rays of the sun, as it rises after a night of rain, strengthen the fresh green of the plants. The rain is therefore a figurative representation of blessing generally (cf. Isa. 44: 3), and the green grass which springs up from the earth after the rain is an image of the blessings of the Messianic salvation (Isa. 44: 4; 45: 8).

In Psa. 72: 6, Solomon takes these words of David as the basis of his comparison of the effects resulting from the government of the true Prince of peace to the coming down of the rain upon the mown grass.

**2Sa. 23: 5.** In v. 5, the prophecy concerning the coming of the just ruler is sustained by being raced back to the original promise in 2Sa. 7, in which David had received a pledge of this. The first and last clauses of this verse can only be made to yield a meaning in harmony with the context, by being taken interrogatively: “*for is not my house so with God?*” The question is only indicated by the tone (כִּי לֹא = כִּי הֲלֹא: 2Sa. 19:23), as is frequently the case, even before clauses commencing with לֹא (e.g., Hos. 11: 5, Mal. 2:15: cf. Ewald, § 324, a.). לֹא-כֵן (not so) is explained by the following clause, though the כִּי which follows is not to be taken in the sense of “*that.*” Each of the two clauses contains a distinct thought. That of the first is, “Does not my house stand in such a relation to God, that the righteous ruler will spring from it?” This is then explained in the second: “for He hath made an everlasting covenant with me.” David calls the promise in 2Sa. 7:12ff., that God would establish his kingdom to his seed for ever, a covenant, because it involved a reciprocal relation, — namely, that Jehovah would first of all found for David a permanent house, and then that the seed of David was to build the house of the Lord. This covenant is עָרוּכָה בְּכֹל, “*equipped (or provided) with all*” that could help to establish it. This relates more especially to the fact that all eventualities were foreseen, even the falling away of the bearers of the covenant of God, so that such an event as this would not annul the covenant (2Sa. 7:14, 15). וְשֹׁמְרָה, “*and preserved,*” i.e., established by the assurance that even in that case the Lord would not withdraw His grace. David could found upon this the certainty, that God would cause all the salvation to spring forth which had been pledged to his house in the promise referred to. כָּל יְשׁוּעִי, “*all my salvation,*” i.e., all the salvation promised to me and to my house. כָּל חֲפֵצִי, not “*all my desire,*” but “*all the good pleasure*” of God, i.e., all the saving counsel of God expressed in that covenant. The כִּי before לֹא is an energetic repetition of the כִּי which introduces the explanatory thought, in the sense of a firm assurance: “*for all my salvation and all good pleasure, yea, should He not cause it to spring forth?*”

**6** *But the worthless, as rejected thorns are they all;  
For men do not take them in the hand.*

**7** *And the man who touches them  
Provides himself with iron and spear-shaft,  
And they are utterly burned with fire where they dwell.*

**2Sa. 23: 6, 7.** The development of salvation under the ruler in righteousness and the fear of God is accompanied by judgment upon the ungodly. The abstract בְּלִיעֵל, *worthlessness*, is stronger than אִישׁ בְּלִיעֵל, the worthless man, and depicts the godless as personified worthlessness. מִנְדָּ, in the *Keri* מִנְדָּ, the *Hophal* of נִוֵד or נִדָּ, literally “scared” or hunted away. This epithet does not apply to the thorns, so well as to the ungodly who are compared to thorns. The reference is to thorns that men root out, not to those which they avoid on account of their prickles. בְּלָהֶם, an antiquated form for בָּלָם (see Ewald, § 247, *d.*). To root them out, or clean the ground of them, men do not lay hold of them with the bare hand; but “*whoever would touch them equips himself* (מָלֵא), sc., יָדוּ, to ‘fill the hand’ with anything: 2Ki. 9:24) *with iron*, i.e., with iron weapons, *and spear-shaft*” (vid., 1Sa. 17: 7). This expression also relates to the godless rather than to the thorns. They are consumed בַּשָּׂבֶת, “*at the dwelling*,” i.e., as Kimchi explains, at the place of their dwelling, the place where they grow. For בַּשָּׂבֶת cannot mean “on the spot” in the sense of without delay. The burning of the thorns takes place at the final judgment upon the ungodly (Mat. 13:30).

### **David’s Heroes. — Ch. 23: 8-39.**

**2Sa. 23: 8-39.** The following list of David’s heroes we also find in 1Ch. 11:10-47, and expanded at the end by sixteen names (vv. 41-47), and attached in v. 10 to the account of the conquest of the fortress of Zion by the introduction of a special heading. According to this heading, the heroes named assisted David greatly in his kingdom, along with all Israel, to make him king, from which it is evident that the chronicler intended by this heading to justify his appending the list to the account of the election of David as king over all the tribes of Israel (1Ch. 11: 1), and of the conquest of Zion, which followed immediately afterwards. In every other respect the two lists agree with one another, except that there are a considerable number of errors of the text, more especially in the names, which are frequently corrupt in both texts, so that the true reading cannot be determined with certainty. The heroes enumerated are divided into three classes. The *first* class consists of three, viz., *Jashobeam*, *Eleazar*, and *Shammah*, of whom certain brave deeds are related, by which they reached the first rank among David’s heroes (vv. 8-12). They were followed by *Abishai* and *Benaiah*, who were in the *second* class, and who had also distinguished themselves above the rest by their brave deeds, though they did not come up to the first three (vv. 18-23). The others all belonged to the *third* class, which consisted of thirty-two men, of whom no particular heroic deeds are mentioned (vv. 24-39). Twelve of these, viz., the five belonging to the first two classes and seven of the third, were appointed by David commanders of the

twelve detachments into which he divided the army, each detachment to serve for one month in the year (1Ch. 27). These heroes, among whom we do not find Joab the commander-in-chief of the whole of the forces, were the king's aides-de-camp, and are called in this respect **הַשְּׁלִשִׁי** (v. 8), though the term **הַשְּׁלִשִׁים** (the *thirty*, vv. 13, 23, 24) was also a very customary one, as their number amounted to thirty in a round sum. It is possible that at first they may have numbered exactly thirty; for, from the very nature of the case, we may be sure than in the many wars in which David was engaged, other heroes must have arisen at different times, who would be received into the corps already formed. This will explain the addition of sixteen names in the Chronicles, whether the chronicler made use of a different list from that employed by the author of the books before us, and one belonging to a later age, or whether the author of our books merely restricted himself to a description of the corps in its earlier condition.

**2Sa. 23: 8-12.** HEROES OF THE FIRST CLASS. — The short heading to our text, with which the list in the Chronicles also begins (1Ch. 11:11), simply gives the name of these heroes. But instead of “the *names* of the mighty men,” we have in the Chronicles “the *number* of the mighty men.” This variation is all the more striking, from the fact that in the Chronicles the total number is not given at the close of the list as it is in our text. At the same time, it can hardly be a copyist's error for **מִבְּחָר** (*selection*), as Bertheau supposes, but must be attributable to the fact that, according to vv. 13, 23, and 24, these heroes constituted a corps which was named from the number of which it originally consisted. The first, *Jashobeam*, is called “the chief of the thirty” in the Chronicles. Instead of **יָשָׁבֵעַם** (*Jashobeam*), the reading in the Chronicles, we have here **יֹשֵׁב בַּשֶּׁבֶת** (*Josheb-basshebeth*), unquestionably a spurious reading, which probably arose, according to Kennicott's conjecture, from the circumstance that the last two letters of **יָשָׁבֵעַם** were written in one MS under **בַּשֶּׁבֶת** in the line above (v. 7), and a copyist took **בַּשֶּׁבֶת** from that line by mistake for **עַם**. The correctness of the reading *Jashobeam* is established by 1Ch. 27: 2. The word **בְּחַכְמוֹנִי** is also faulty, and should be corrected, according to the Chronicles, into **בֶּן־חַכְמוֹנִי** (*Ben-hachmoni*); for the statement that *Jashobeam* was a son (or descendant) of the family of *Hachmon* (1Ch. 27:32) can easily be reconciled with that in 1Ch. 27: 2, to the effect that he was a son of Zabdiel. Instead of **רֹאשׁ הַשְּׁלִשִׁים** (*head of the thirty*), the reading in the Chronicles, we have here **רֹאשׁ הַשְּׁלִשִׁי** (*head of the three*). Bertheau would alter our text in accordance with the Chronicles, whilst Thenius proposes to bring the text of the Chronicles into accordance with ours. But although the many unquestionable corruptions in the verse before us may

appear to favour Bertheau's assumption, we cannot regard either of the emendations as necessary, or even warrantable. The proposed alteration of **הַשְּׁלֵשִׁי** is decidedly precluded by the recurrence of **רֹאשׁ הַשְּׁלֵשִׁי** in v. 18, and the alteration of **הַשְּׁלֵשִׁים** in the Chronicles by the repeated allusion to the **שְׁלֵשִׁים**, not only in vv. 15, 42, ch. 12: 4, and ch. 27: 6 of the Chronicles, but also in vv. 13, 23, and 24 of the chapter before us. The explanation given of **שְׁלֵשִׁי** and **שְׁלֵשִׁים**, as signifying chariot-warriors, is decidedly erroneous,<sup>33</sup> for the singular **הַשְּׁלִישׁ** is used in all the passages in which the word occurs to signify the royal aide-de-camp (2Ki. 7: 2, 17, 19; 9:25; 15:25), and the plural **שְׁלִישִׁים** the royal body-guard, not only in 2Ki. 1:25, but even in 1Ki. 9:22, and Exo. 14: 7; 15: 4, from which the meaning chariot-warriors has been derived. Consequently **רֹאשׁ הַשְּׁלֵשִׁי** is the head of the king's aides-de-camp, and the interchange of **הַשְּׁלֵשִׁי** with the **הַשְּׁלֵשִׁים** of the Chronicles may be explained on the simple ground that David's thirty heroes formed his whole body of adjutants. The singular **שְׁלֵשִׁי** is to be explained in the same manner as **הַכְּרֵתִי** (see at 2Sa. 8:18). Luther expresses the following opinion in his marginal gloss with regard to the words which follow (**הוּא עֲדִינוּ הָעֶצֶן**): "We believe the text to have been corrupted by a writer, probably from some book in an unknown character and bad writing, so that *orer* should be substituted for *adino*, and *ha-eznib* for *eth hanitho*:" that is to say, the reading in the Chronicles, "he swung his spear," should be adopted (cf. v. 18). This supposition is certainly to be preferred to the attempt made by Gesenius (*Lex.*) and v. Dietrich (*s. v.* **עֲדִין**) to find some sense in the words by assuming the existence of a verb **עֲדַן** and a noun **עֶצֶן**, a spear, since these words do not occur anywhere else in Hebrew; and in order to obtain any appropriate sense, it is still necessary to resort to alterations of the text. "*He swung his spear over eight hundred slain at once.*" This is not to be understood as signifying that he killed eight hundred men at one blow, but that in a battle he threw his spear again and again at the foe, until eight hundred men had been slain. The Chronicles give three hundred instead of eight hundred; and as that number occurs again in v. 18, in the case of Abishai, it probably found its way from that verse into this in the book of Chronicles.

### 2Sa. 23: 9, 10.

"After him (i.e., next to him in rank) was *Eleazar* the son of *Dodai* the Ahohite, among the three heroes with David when they defied the Philistines, who had assembled there, and the Israelites drew near."

The *Chethib* **דְּדִי** is to be read **דְּדוּדִי**, *Dodai*, according to 1Ch. 27: 4, and the form **דוּדוּ** (*Dodo*) in the parallel text (1Ch. 11:12) is only a variation in the



form of the name. Instead of **בֶּן־אֲחֹהִי** (*the son of Ahohi*) we find **הָאֲחֹהִי** (*the Ahohite*) in the Chronicles; but the **בֶּן** must not be struck out on that account as spurious, for “the son of an Ahohite” is the same as “the Ahohite.” For **גִּבְרִים** **בְּשִׁלְשָׁה** we must read **בְּשִׁלְשָׁה הַגִּבְרִים**, according to the *Keri* and the Chronicles. **שִׁלְשָׁה** is not to be altered, since the numerals are sometimes attached to substantives in the absolute state (see *Ges.* § 120, 1). “The three heroes” are Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah (v. 11), who reached the first rank, according to v. 19, among the heroes of David. Instead of **בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים** **בְּחָרְפָם** (*when they defied the Philistines*), we find in the Chronicles **בְּפִס דַּמִּים** **וְהַפְלִשְׁתִּים**, “at Pas-dammim,” i.e., most probably *Ephes-dammim* (1Sa. 17: 1), where the Philistines were encamped when Goliath defied the Israelites. Thenius, Bertheau, and Böttcher therefore propose to alter our text so as to make it correspond to that of the Chronicles, and adduce as the reason the fact that in other passages **חָרַף** is construed with the accusative, and that **שָׁם**, which follows, presupposes the previous mention of the place referred to. But the reasons are neither of them decisive. **חָרַף** is not construed with the accusative alone, but also with **לְ** (2Ch. 32:17), so that the construction with **בְּ** is quite a possible one, and is not at variance with the idea of the word. **שָׁם** again may also be understood as referring to the place, not named, where the Philistines fought with the Israelites. The omission of **אֲשֶׁר** before **נֶאֱסָפוּ** is more difficult to explain; and **וְהַפְלִשְׁתִּים**, which we find in the Chronicles, has probably dropped out after **בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים**. The reading in the Chronicles (**בְּאָפֶס**) **בְּפִס דַּמִּים** is probably only a more exact description of the locality, which is but obscurely indicated in our text by **בְּחָרְפָם** **בְּפִלְשְׁתִּים**; for these words affirm that the battle took place where the Israelites had once been defied by the Philistines (1Sa. 17:10), and where they repaid them for this defiance in a subsequent conflict. The Philistines are at any rate to be regarded as the subject to **נֶאֱסָפוּ**, and these words are a circumstantial clause: the Philistines had assembled together there to battle, and the Israelites had advanced to the attack. The heroic act of Eleazar is introduced with “he arose.” He arose and smote the Philistines till his hand was weary and clave to his sword, i.e., was so cramped as to be stiffened to the sword. Through this Jehovah wrought a great salvation for Israel on that day, “and the people (the soldiers) turned after him only to plunder,” sc., because he had put the enemy to flight by himself. **שׁוּב אַחֲרָיו** does not mean to turn back from flight after him, but is the opposite of **מֵאַחֲרָיו** **שׁוּב**, to turn away from a person (1Sa. 15:11, etc.), so that it signifies “to turn to a person and follow behind him.” Three lines have dropped out from the

parallel text of the Chronicles, in consequence of the eye of a copyist having wandered from **פִּלְשְׁתִּים נֶאֱסָפוּ** in v. 9 to **וַיֵּאָסְפוּ פִּלְשְׁתִּים** in v. 11.

**2Sa. 23:11, 12.** The third leading hero was *Shammah*, the son of *Age* the Hararite (**הַרְרִי** is probably contracted from **הַהַרְרִי**, v. 33). He also made himself renowned by a great victory over the Philistines. The enemy had gathered together **לְחֵיָהּ**, “*as a troop*,” or in a crowd. This meaning of **חֵיָהּ** (here and v. 13, and possibly also in Psa. 68:11) is thoroughly established by the Arabic (see Ges. *Thes.* p. 470). But it seems to have fallen into disuse afterwards, and in the Chronicles it is explained in v. 13 by **מִלְחָמָהּ**, and in v. 15 by **מִחֲנֵהָ**. “On a portion of a field of lentils there,” sc., where the Philistines had gathered together, the people (of Israel) were smitten. Then Shammah stationed himself in the midst of the field, and **וַיִּצְיֵלָהּ**, “*wrested it*,” from the foe, and smote the Philistines. Instead of **עֲדָשִׁים**, *lentils*, we find in the Chronicles **שְׁעוּרִים**, *barley*, a very inconsiderable difference.

**2Sa. 23:13-17.** To this deed there is appended a similar heroic feat performed by three of the thirty heroes whose names are not given. The *Chethib* **לְשִׁים** is evidently a slip of the pen for **שְׁלֶשָׁה** (*Keri* and Chronicles). The thirty chiefs are the heroes named afterwards (see above at p. 698). As **שְׁלֶשָׁה** has no article either in our text or the Chronicles, the three intended are not the three already mentioned (Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah), but three others out of the number mentioned in vv. 24ff. These three came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam (see at 1Sa. 22: 1), when a troop of the Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim, and David was on the mountain fortress, and a Philistian post was then in Bethlehem. And David longed for water, and said, “Oh that one would bring me water to drink out of the well of Bethlehem at the gate!” The encampment of the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim, and the position of David on the mountain fortress (**בְּמִצְוֹדָהּ**), render it probable that the feat mentioned here took place in the war with the Philistines described in 2Sa. 5:17ff. Robinson could not discover any well in Bethlehem, “especially none ‘by the gate,’ except one connected with the aqueduct on the south” (*Palestine*, vol. ii. p. 158). **בְּשַׁעַר** need not be understood, however, as signifying that the well was *in* or *under* the gate; but the well referred to may have been at the gate outside the city. The well to which tradition has given the name of “David’s well” (*cisterna David*), is about a quarter of an hour’s walk to the north-east of Bethlehem, and, according to Robinson’s description, is “merely a deep and wide cistern or cavern now dry, with three or four narrow openings cut in the rock.” But Ritter (*Erdk.* xvi. p. 286) describes it as “deep with clear cool water, into which there are three

openings from above, which Tobler speaks of as bored;” and again as a cistern “built with peculiar beauty, from seventeen to twenty-one feet deep, whilst a house close by is pointed out to pilgrims as Jesse’s house.”

**2Sa. 23:16.** The three heroes then broke through the camp of the Philistines at Bethlehem, i.e., the outpost that occupied the space before the gate, fetched water out of the well, and brought it to David. He would not drink it, however, but poured it out upon the ground to the Lord, as a drink-offering for Jehovah. “He poured it out upon the earth, rendering Him thanks for the return of the three brave men” (Clericus). And he said, “Far be it from me, O Jehovah, to do this! The blood of the men who went with their lives (i.e., at the risk of their lives),” sc., should I drink it? The verb **אָשָׁתָה** is wanting in our text, but is not to be inserted according to the Chronicles as though it had fallen out; the sentence is rather to be regarded as an *aposiopesis*. **יְהוָה** after **לִי** is a vocative, and is not to be altered into **מִיְהוָה**, according to the **מֵאלֹהֵי** of the Chronicles. The fact that the vocative does not occur in other passages after **לִי** **לְהַלְלָהּ** proves nothing. It is equivalent to the oath **חַי יְהוָה** (1Sa. 14:45). The chronicler has endeavoured to simplify David’s exclamation by completing the sentence. **בְּנַפְשׁוֹתָם**, “for the price of their souls,” i.e., at the risk of their lives. The water drawn and fetched at the risk of their lives is compared to the soul itself, and the soul is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Drinking this water, therefore, would be nothing else than drinking their blood.

**2Sa. 23:18-23.** HEROES OF THE SECOND CLASS. — Vv. 18, 19. *Abishai*, Joab’s brother (see 1Sa. 26: 6), was also chief of the body-guard, like Jashobeam (v. 8: the *Chethib* **הַשְּׁלִשִׁי** is correct; see at v. 8). He swung his spear over three hundred slain. “He had a name among the three,” i.e., the three principal heroes, Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah. The following words, **מִן־הַשְּׁלִשָּׁה**, make no sense. **הַשְּׁלִשָּׁה** is an error in writing for **הַשְּׁלִישִׁים**, as v. 23 shows in both the texts (v. 25 of the Chronicles): an error the origin of which may easily be explained from the word **שְׁלִשָּׁה**, which stands immediately before. “He was certainly honoured before the thirty (heroes of David), and became their chief, but he did not come to the three,” i.e., he was not equal to Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah. **הִכִּי** has the force of an energetic assurance: “Is it so that,” i.e., it is certainly so (as in 2Sa. 9: 1; Gen. 27:36; 29:15).

**2Sa. 23:20-23.** *Benaiah*, the son of Jehoiada, “Jehoiada the priest” according to 1Ch. 27: 5, possibly the one who was “prince for Aaron,” i.e., of the family of Aaron, according to 1Ch. 12:27, was captain of the Crethi and Plethi according to 2Sa. 8:18 and 20:23. He was the son of a brave man, rich in deeds

(חַי is evidently an error for חַיִל in the Chronicles), of Kabzeel in the south of Judah (Jos. 15:21). “*He smote the two Ariels of Moab.*” The Arabs and Persians call every remarkably brave man *Ariel*, or lion of God (vid., Bochart, *Hieroz.* ii. pp. 7, 63). They were therefore two celebrated Moabitish heroes. The supposition that they were sons of the king of the Moabites is merely founded upon the conjecture of Thenius and Bertheau, that the word בְּנֵי (sons of) has dropped out before Ariel. “He also slew the lion in the well on the day of the snow,” i.e., a lion which had been driven into the neighbourhood of human habitations by a heavy fall of snow, and had taken refuge in a cistern. The *Chethib* חַאֲרִיָּה and פֶּאֶר are the earlier forms for the *Keris* substituted by the Masorettes חֲאָרִי and הַפּוֹר, and consequently are not to be altered. He also slew an Egyptian of distinguished size. According to the *Keri* we should read אִישׁ מְרָאָה (instead of מְרָאָה, “*a man of appearance,*” i.e., a distinguished man, or a man of great size, ἄνδρα ὄρατόν (LXX); in the Chronicles it is simplified as אִישׁ מְדָה, a man of measure, i.e., of great height. This man was armed with a spear or javelin, whereas Benaiah was only armed with a stick; nevertheless the latter smote him, took away his spear, and slew him with his own weapon. According to the Chronicles the Egyptian was five cubits high, and his spear like a weaver’s beam. Through these feats Benaiah acquired a name among the three, though he did not equal them (vv. 22, 23, as in vv. 18, 19); and David made him a member of his privy council (see at 1Sa. 22:14).

**2Sa. 23:24-39. HEROES OF THE THIRD CLASS.** — V. 24. “*Asahel*, the brother of Joab, among the thirty,” i.e., belonging to them. This definition also applies to the following names; we therefore find at the head of the list in the Chronicles, וַגְּבוּרֵי הַחַיִלִּים, “and brave heroes (were).” The names which follow are for the most part not further known. *Elhanan*, the son of *Dodo* of Bethlehem, is a different man from the Bethlehemite of that name mentioned in 2Sa. 21:19. *Shammah* the Harodite also must not be confounded with the Shammahs mentioned in vv. 11 and 33. In the Chronicles we find *Shammoth*, a different form of the name; whilst הַחַרְדִּי is an error in writing for הַחֲרָדִי, i.e., sprung from *Harod* (Jud. 7: 1). This man is called *Shamhut* in 1Ch. 27: 8; he was the leader of the fifth division of David’s army. *Elika* or *Harod* is omitted in the Chronicles; it was probably dropped out in consequence of the *homoioteleuton* חַחְרָדִי.

**2Sa. 23:26.** *Helez* the Paltite; i.e., sprung from *Beth-Pelet* in the south of Judah (Jud. 15:27). He was chief of the seventh division of the army (compare 1Ch. 27:10 with 1Ch. 11:27, though in both passages הַפְּלֵטִי is misspelt

הַפְּלִנִי). *Ira* the son of *Ikkesh* of Tekoah in the desert of Judah (2Sa. 14: 2), chief of the sixth division of the army (1Ch. 27: 9).

2Sa. 23:27. *Abiezer* of Anathoth (Anata) in Benjamin (see at Jos. 18:24), chief of the ninth division of the army (1Ch. 27:12). *Mebunnai* is a mistake in spelling for *Sibbechai* the Hushathite (compare 2Sa. 21:18 and 1Ch. 11:29). According to 1Ch. 27:11, he was chief of the eighth division of the army.

2Sa. 23:28. *Zalmon* the Ahohite, i.e., sprung from the Benjaminite family of Ahoah, is not further known. Instead of *Zalmon* we find *Ilai* in the Chronicles (v. 29); but which of the two names is the correct one it is impossible to decide. *Maharai* of *Netophah*: according to Ezr. 2:22 and Neh. 7:26, *Netophah* was a place in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, but it has not yet been discovered, as *Beit Nattif*, which might be thought of, is too far from Bethlehem (vid., Rob. Pal. ii. p. 344, and Tobler, *Dritte Wanderung*, pp. 117-8). According to 1Ch. 27:13, *Maharai* belonged to the Judahite family of Serah, and was chief of the tenth division of the army.

2Sa. 23:29. *Cheleb*, more correctly *Cheled* (1Ch. 11:30; or *Cheldai*, 1Ch. 27:15), also of *Netophah*, was chief of the twelfth division of the army. *Ittai* (*Ithai* in the Chronicles), the son of Ribai of Gibeah of Benjamin, must be distinguished from *Ittai* the Gathite (2Sa. 15:19). Like all that follow, with the exception of *Uriah*, he is not further known.

2Sa. 23:30. *Benaiah* of *Phir'aton* in the tribe of Ephraim, a place which has been preserved in the village of *Fer'ata*, to the south-west of Nablus (see at Jud. 12:13). *Hiddai* (wrongly spelt *Hudai* in the Chronicles), out of the valleys of *Gaash*, in the tribe of Ephraim by the mountain of *Gaash*, the situation of which has not yet been discovered (see at Jos. 24:30).

2Sa. 23:31. *Abi-Albon* (written incorrectly *Abiel* in the Chronicles) the Arbathite, i.e., from the place called *Beth-haarabah* or *Arabah* (Jos. 15:61 and 18:18, 22) in the desert of Judah, on the site of the present *Kasr Hajla* (see at Jos. 15: 6). *Azmaveth* of *Bahurim*: see at 2Sa. 16: 5.

2Sa. 23:32, 33. *Eliahba* of *Shaalbon* or *Shaalbin*, which may possibly have been preserved in the present *Selbit* (see at Jos. 19:42). The next two names, יִזְנָתָן בֶּן שִׁשַׁי הַהַרְרִי and בְּנֵי יִשָּׁשׁוּן יְהוֹנָתָן (*Bneyashen Jehonathan* and *Shammah the Hararite*), are written thus in the Chronicles (v. 34), יִזְנָתָן בֶּן שִׁשַׁי הַהַרְרִי: “*Bnehashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Sage the Hararite*,” The text of the Chronicles is evidently the more correct of the two, as *Bne Jashen Jehonathan* does not make any sense. The only question is whether the form בְּנֵי יִשָּׁשׁוּן is correct, or whether בְּנֵי יִשָּׁשׁוּן has not arisen merely

through a misspelling. As the name does not occur again, all that can be said is that *Bne hashem* must at any rate be written as one word, and therefore should be pointed differently. The place mentioned, *Gizon*, is unknown. שָׁמָהּ for אֲנִי־בְנֵי־אֲרָאִים probably arose from v. 11. *Ahiam* the son of *Sharar* or *Sacar* (Chron.) the Ararite (in the Chronicles the Hararite).

**2Sa. 23:34.** The names in 34a, *Eliphelet ben-Ahasbai ben-Hammaacathi*, read thus in the Chronicles (vv. 35, 36): *Eliphal ben-Ur; Hephher hammecerathi*. We see from this that in *ben-Ahasbai ben* two names have been fused together; for the text as it lies before us is rendered suspicious partly by the fact that the names of both father and grandfather are given, which does not occur in connection with any other name in the whole list, and partly by the circumstance that בֵּן cannot properly be written with הַמְעַכְתִּי, which is a *Gentile noun*. Consequently the following is probably the correct way of restoring the text, אֵלִיפְלֵט בֶּן־אֲוִיר חֶפְר הַמְעַכְתִּי, *Eliphelet* (a name which frequently occurs) *the son of Ur; Hephher the Maacathite*, i.e., of Maacah in the north-east of Gilead (see at 2Sa. 10: 6 and Deu. 3:14). *Eliam* the son of *Ahithophel* the Gilonite, the clever but treacherous counsellor of David (see at 2Sa. 15:12). This name is quite corrupt in the Chronicles.

**2Sa. 23:35.** *Hezro* the Carmelite, i.e., of Carmel in the mountains of Judah (1Sa. 25: 2). *Paarai* the Arbite, i.e., of Arab, also in the mountains of Judah (Jos. 15:52). In the Chronicles we find *Naarai ben-Ezbi*: the latter is evidently an error in writing for *ha-Arbi*; but it is impossible to decide which of the two forms, *Paarai* and *Naarai*, is the correct one.

**2Sa. 23:36.** *Jigal* the son of *Nathan* of *Zoba* (see at 2Sa. 8: 3): in the Chronicles, *Joel* the brother of *Nathan*. *Bani* the *Gadite*: in the Chronicles we have *Mibhar* the son of *Hagri*. In all probability the names in the Chronicles are corrupt in this instance also.

**2Sa. 23:37.** *Zelek* the *Ammonite*, *Nacharai* the *Beerothite* (of *Beeroth*: see at 2Sa. 4: 2), the *armour-bearer* of *Joab*. Instead of נְשִׂאֵי, the *Keri* and the Chronicles have נְשִׂאֵי: the latter reading is favoured by the circumstance, that if more than one of the persons named had been *Joab's armour-bearers*, their names would most probably have been linked together by a copulative *vav*.

**2Sa. 23:38.** *Ira* and *Gareb*, both of them *Jithrites*, i.e., sprung from a family in *Kirjath-jearim* (1Ch. 2:53). *Ira* is of course a different man from the *cohen* of that name (2Sa. 20:26).

*2Sa. 23:39.* *Uriah* the Hittite is well known from *2Sa. 11: 3*. “*Thirty and seven in all.*” This number is correct, as there were *three* in the first class (vv. 8-12), *two* in the second (vv. 18-23), and *thirty-two* in the third (vv. 24-39), since v. 34 contains three names according to the amended text.

### **Numbering of the People, and Pestilence. — Ch. 24.**

*2Sa. 24.* For the purpose of ascertaining the number of the people, and their fitness for war, David ordered Joab, his commander-in-chief, to take a census of Israel and Judah. Joab dissuaded him from such a step; but inasmuch as the king paid no attention to his dissuasion, he carried out the command with the help of the military captains (vv. 1-9). David very speedily saw, however, that he had sinned; whereupon the prophet Gad went to him by the command of Jehovah to announce the coming punishment, and give him the choice of three different judgments which he placed before him (vv. 10-13). As David chose rather to fall into the hand of the Lord than into the hand of men, God sent a pestilence, which carried off seventy thousand men in one day throughout the whole land, and had reached Jerusalem, when the Lord stopped the destroying angel in consequence of the penitential prayer of David (vv. 14-17), and sent Gad to the king to direct him to build an altar to the Lord on the spot where the destroying angel had appeared to him (v. 18). Accordingly David bought the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, built an altar upon it, and sacrificed burnt-offerings and thank-offerings, after which the plague was stayed (vv. 19-25).

This occurrence, which is introduced in the parallel history in *1Ch. 21* between David's wars and his arrangements for a more complete organization of the affairs of the nation, belongs undoubtedly to the closing years of David's reign. The mere taking of a census, as a measure that would facilitate the general organization of the kingdom, could not in itself be a sinful act, by which David brought guilt upon himself, or upon the nation, before God. Nevertheless it is not only represented in v. 1 as a manifestation of the wrath of God against Israel, but in v. 3 Joab seeks to dissuade the king from it as being a wrong thing; and in v. 10 David himself admits that it was a grievous sin against God, and as a sin it is punished by the Lord (vv. 12ff.). In what, then, did David's sin consist? Certainly not in the fact that, when taking the census, “he neglected to demand the atonement money, which was to be raised, according to *Exo. 30:12ff.*, from all who were numbered, because the numbering of the people was regarded in itself as an undertaking by which the anger of God might easily be excited,” as Josephus and Bertheau maintain; for the Mosaic instructions concerning the atonement money had reference to the incorporation of the people into the army of Jehovah (see at *Exo. 30:13, 14*), and therefore did not come into consideration at all in connection with the census appointed by David as a purely political measure. Nor can we imagine that David's sin

consisted merely in the fact that he “entered upon the whole affair from pride and vain boasting,” or that “he commanded the census from vanity, inasmuch as he wanted to have it distinctly set before his own eyes how strong and mighty he was” (Buddeus, Hengstenberg, and others); for although pride and vanity had something to do with it, as the words of Joab especially seem to indicate, David was far too great a man to allow us to attribute to him a childish delight in the mere number of souls in his kingdom. The census had certainly a higher purpose than this. It is very evident from 1Ch. 27:23, 24, where it is mentioned again that it was connected with the military organization of the people, and probably was to be the completion of it. David wanted to know the number of his subjects, not that he might be able to boast of their multitude, nor that he might be able to impose all kinds of taxes upon every town and village according to their houses and inhabitants, as Ewald maintains; but that he might be fully acquainted with its defensive power, though we can neither attribute to him the definite purpose “of transforming the theocratic sacred state into a conquering world-state” (Kurtz), nor assume that through this numbering the whole nation was to be enrolled for military service, and that thirst for conquest was the motive for the undertaking. The true kernel of David’s sin was to be found, no doubt, in self-exaltation, inasmuch as he sought for the strength and glory of his kingdom in the number of the people and their readiness for war. This sin was punished. “Because David was about to boast proudly and to glory in the number of his people, God determined to punish him by reducing their number either by famine, war, or pestilence” (Seb. Schmidt). At the same time, the people themselves had sinned grievously against God and their king, through the two rebellions headed by Absalom and Sheba.

**2Sa. 24: 1-9.** “Again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel; and He moved David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah.” לַחֲרוֹת ... וַיִּסַּף points back to the manifestation of the wrath of God, which Israel had experienced in the three years’ famine (2Sa. 21). Just as that plague had burst upon the land on account of the guilt which rested upon the people, so the kindling of the wrath of God against Israel a second time also presupposes guilt on the part of the nation; and as this is not expressly pointed out, we may seek for it generally in the rebellions of Absalom and Sheba against the divinely established government of David. The subject to “moved” is *Jehovah*, and the words “against them” point back to *Israel*. Jehovah instigated David against Israel to the performance of an act which brought down a severe judgment upon the nation. With regard to the idea that God instigates to sin, see the remarks on 1Sa. 26:19. In the parallel text of the Chronicles, Satan is mentioned as the tempter to evil, through whom Jehovah had David to number the people.



2Sa. 24: 2. David entrusted the task to his commander-in-chief Joab. אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר, “*who was with him:*” the meaning is, “when he was with him” (David). We are not warranted in attempting any emendations of the text, either by the expression אֲשֶׁר אֲתוֹ, or by the reading in the Chronicles, וְאֶל-שָׂרֵי הָעָם (“and to the rulers of the people”); for whilst the latter reading may easily be seen to be a simplification founded upon v. 4, it is impossible to show how אֲשֶׁר אֲתוֹ שָׂרֵי-הַחַיִּל, which is supported by all the ancient versions (with the sole exception of the Arabic), could have originated in וְאֶל-שָׂרֵי הָעָם. “*Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba* (see at Jud. 20: 1), *and muster the people.*” פָּקַד, to muster or number, as in Num. 1:44ff. The change from the singular שׂוֹמֵט to the plural פָּקְדוּ may be explained very simply, from the fact that, as a matter of course, Joab was not expected to take the census by himself, but with the help of several assistants.

2Sa. 24: 3. Joab discountenanced the thing: “Jehovah thy God add to the nation, as it is, a hundredfold as many, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?” The ו before יוֹסֵף stands at the commencement, when what is said contains a sequel to something that has gone before (vid., Ges. § 255, 1, *a.*). The thought to which Joab’s words are appended as a sequel, is implied in what David said, “that I may know the number of the people;” and if expressed fully, his words would read somewhat as follows: “If thou hast delight in the greatness of the number of the people, may Jehovah,” etc. Joab evidently saw through the king’s intention, and perceived that the numbering of the people could not be of any essential advantage to David’s government, and might produce dissatisfaction among the people, and therefore endeavoured to dissuade the king from his purpose. כִּי־הֵם וְכִי־הֵם, “*as they* (the Israelites) *just are,*” i.e., in this connection, “just as many as there are of them.” From a grammatical point of view, כִּי־הֵם is to be taken as the object to יוֹסֵף, as in the parallel passages, Deu. 1:11, 2Sa. 12: 8. Not only did he desire that God would multiply the nation a hundredfold, but that He would do it during the lifetime of David, so that his eyes might be delighted with the immense numbers.

2Sa. 24: 4, 5. But as the king’s word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army, they (Joab and the other captains) went out to number Israel. וַיִּחַנוּ, they encamped, i.e., they fixed their headquarters in the open field, because great crowds assembled together. This is only mentioned here in connection with the place where the numbering commenced; but it is to be understood as applying to the other places as well (Thenius). In order to distinguish *Aroer* from the place of the same name in the Arnon, in the tribe of

Reuben (Jos. 12: 2; Num. 32:34, etc.), it is defined more precisely as “the town in the brook-valley of Gad,” i.e., Aroer of Gad before Rabbah (Jos. 13:25; Jud. 11:33), in the Wady *Nahr Ammân*, to the north-east of *Ammân* (see at Jos. 13:25). **וְאֶל-יַעֲזֵר** (and to *Jazer*): this is a second place of encampment, and the preposition **אֶל** is to be explained on the supposition that **וַיָּבֹאוּ** (they came), which follows, was already in the writer’s thoughts. *Jazer* is probably to be found in the ruins of *es Szir*, at the source of the *Nahr Szir* (see at Num. 21:32).

**2Sa. 24: 6.** “And they came to *Gilead*,” i.e., the mountainous district on the two sides of the Jabbok (see at Deu. 3:10). The words which follow, viz., “into the land **תְּחָתַיִם חֲדָשִׁי**” are quite obscure, and were unintelligible even to the earlier translators. The Septuagint has **γῆν Ἐθαὼν Ἀδασαί**, or **γῆν Θαβασῶν** (also **γῆν χειτεῖμ**) ἢ ἐστὶν Ἀδασαί. Symmachus has **τὴν κατωτέραν ὁδόν**; Jonathan **לְאַרְעֵא דְרוּמָא לְחֲדָשִׁי** (“into the southland *Chodshi*”); and the Vulgate in *terram inferiorem*. The singular form **תְּחָתַיִם**, and the fact that we never read of a land called *Chodshi*, render the conjecture a very probable one that the text is corrupt. But it is no longer possible to discover the correct reading. Ewald imagines that we should read *Hermon* instead of the unintelligible *Chodshi*; but this is not very probable. Böttcher supposes **תְּחָתַיִם** to be a mistake in writing for **תְּחָתַיִם**, “below the lake,” namely the lake of Gennesareth, which might have been called *Chodshi* (the new-moon-like), since it had very much the appearance of a crescent when seen from the northern heights. This is ingenious, but incredible. The order of the places named points to the eastern side of the sea of Galilee; for they went thence to *Dan-Jaan*, i.e., the Dan in northern Peraea, mentioned in Gen. 14:14, to the south-west of Damascus, at that time probably the extreme north-eastern boundary of the kingdom of David, in the direction towards Syria (see at Gen. 14:14): “and round to *Sidon*,” the extreme north-western boundary of the kingdom.

**2Sa. 24: 7.** Thence southwards to the fortress of *Zor*, i.e., Tyre (see at Jos. 19:29), and “into all the towns of the Hivites and Canaanites,” i.e., the towns in the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar, or the (subsequent) province of Galilee, in which the Canaanites had not been exterminated by the Israelites, but had only been made tributary.

**2Sa. 24: 8, 9.** When they had traversed the whole land, they came back to Jerusalem, at the end of nine months and twenty days, and handed over to the king the number of the people mustered: viz., 800,000 men of Israel fit for military service, drawing the sword, and 500,000 men of Judah. According to the Chronicles (v. 5), there were 1,100,000 Israelites and 470,000 Judaeans.

The numbers are not given by thousands, and therefore are only approximative statements in round numbers; and the difference in the two texts arose chiefly from the fact, that the statements were merely founded upon oral tradition, since, according to 1Ch. 27: 4, the result of the census was not inserted in the annals of the kingdom. There is no ground, however, for regarding the numbers as exaggerated, if we only bear in mind that the entire population of a land amounts to about four times the number of those who are fit for military service, and therefore 1,300,000, or even a million and a half, would only represent a total population of five or six millions, — a number which could undoubtedly have been sustained in Palestine, according to thoroughly reliable testimony as to its unusual fertility (see the discussion of this subject at Num. 1-4, *Pentateuch*, pp. 651-57). Still less can we adduce as a proof of exaggeration the fact, that according to 1Ch. 27: 1-15, David had only an army of 288,000; for it is a well-known fact, that in all lands the army, or number of men in actual service, is, as a rule, much smaller than the total number of those who are capable of bearing arms. According to 1Ch. 21: 6, the tribes of Levi and Benjamin were not numbered, because, as the chronicler adds, giving his own subjective view, “the word of the king was an abomination to Joab,” or, as it is affirmed in 1Ch. 27: 4, according to the objective facts, “because the numbering was not completed.” It is evident from this, that in consequence of Joab’s repugnance to the numbering of the people, he had not hurried with the fulfilment of the king’s command; so that when David saw his own error, he revoked the command before the census was complete, and so the tribe of Benjamin was not numbered at all, the tribe of Levi being of course *eo ipso* exempt from a census that was taken for the sake of ascertaining the number of men who were capable of bearing arms.

**2Sa. 24:10-18.** David’s heart, i.e., his conscience, smote him, after he had numbered the people, or had given orders for the census to be taken. Having now come to a knowledge of his sin, he prayed to the Lord for forgiveness, because he had acted foolishly. The sin consisted chiefly in the self-exaltation which had led to this step (see the introductory remarks).

**2Sa. 24:11-13.** When he rose up in the morning, after he had calmly reflected upon the matter during the night upon his bed, and had been brought to see the folly of his determination, the prophet Gad came to him by the command of God, pointed out to him his fault, and foretold the punishment that would come from God. “Shall seven years of famine come upon thy land, or three months of flight before thine oppressors that they may pursue thee, or shall there be three days of pestilence in thy land? Now mark and see what answer I shall bring to Him that sendeth me.” These three verses form *one* period, in which **יִבְא גָד** (v. 134) answers as the consequent to **וַיִּקָּם דָּוִד וַיִּגַּד** in v. 11, and the words

from **וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה** (v. 11b) to **וַאֲעִשֶׂה לָּךְ** (v. 12) form a circumstantial clause inserted between. **וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה וְגו'**: “and the word of the Lord had taken place (gone forth) to Gad, David’s seer, saying, Go...thus saith Jehovah, I lay upon thee three (things or evils); choose thee one of them that I may do it to thee.” Instead of **נָטַל עָלַי**, to lay upon, we find **נָטָה** in the Chronicles, “to turn upon thee.” The three things are mentioned first of all in connection with the execution of Gad’s commission to the king. Instead of *seven* years of famine, we find *three* years in the Chronicles; the Septuagint has also the number three in the passage before us, and apparently it is more in harmony with the connection, viz., *three* evils to choose from, and each lasting through *three* divisions of time. But this agreement favours the *seven* rather than the *three*, which is open to the suspicion of being intentionally made to conform to the rest. **נָסַךְ** is an infinitive: “thy fleeing,” for that thou fliest before thine enemies. In the Chronicles the last two evils are described more fully, but the thought is not altered in consequence.

**2Sa. 24:14.** David replied, “I am in great trouble. Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercy is great; but let me not fall into the hand of men.” Thus David chose the third judgment, since pestilence comes directly from God. On the other hand, in flight from the enemy, he would have fallen into the hands of men. It is not easy to see, however, how far this could apply to famine; probably inasmuch as it tends more or less to create dependence upon those who are still in possession of the means of life.

**2Sa. 24:15.** God then gave (sent) a pestilence into (upon) Israel, “from the morning till the time of the assembly;” and there died of the people in the whole land (from Dan to Beersheba) seventy thousand men. “*From the morning:*” on which Gad had foretold the punishment. The meaning of **וְעַד-עֵת מוֹעֵד** is doubtful. The rendering “*to the time appointed,*” i.e., “till the expiration of the three days,” in support of which the Vulgate (*ad tempus constitutum*) is wrongly appealed to, is precluded not only by the circumstance that, according to v. 16, the plague was stayed earlier because God repented Him of the evil, so that it did not last so long as was at first appointed, but also by the grammatical difficulty that **עֵת מוֹעֵד** has no article, and can only be rendered “for *an* (not for *the*) appointed time.” We meet with two different explanations in the ancient versions: one in the Septuagint, **ἕως ὥρας ἀπίστου**, “till the hour of breakfast,” i.e., till the sixth hour of the day, which is the rendering also adopted by the Syriac and Arabic as well as by Kimchi and several of the Rabbins; the other in the Chaldee (Jonathan), “from the time at which the sacrifice is commonly slain until it is consumed.” Accordingly Bochart explains **אֵת מוֹעֵד** as signifying “the time at which the people came together for evening prayers, about the ninth

hour of the day, i.e., the third hour in the afternoon” (vid., Acts 3: 1). The same view also lies at the foundation of the Vulgate rendering, according to the express statement of Jerome (*traditt. Hebr. in 2 libr. Regum*): “He calls that the *time appointed*, in which the evening sacrifice was offered.” It is true that this meaning of מוֹעֵד cannot be established by precisely analogous passages, but it may be very easily deduced from the frequent employment of the word to denote the meetings and festivals connected with the worship of God, when it generally stands without an article, as for example in the perfectly analogous יוֹם מוֹעֵד (Hos. 9: 5; Lam. 2: 7, 22); whereas it is always written with the article when it is used in the general sense of a fixed time, and some definite period is referred to. <sup>B4</sup>

We must therefore decide in favour of the latter. But if the pestilence did not last a whole day, the number of persons carried off by it (70,000 men) exceeded very considerably the number destroyed by the most violent pestilential epidemics on record, although they have not unfrequently swept off hundreds of thousands in a very brief space of time. But the pestilence burst upon the people in this instance with supernatural strength and violence, that it might be seen at once to be a direct judgment from God.

**2Sa. 24:16.** The general statement as to the divine judgment and its terrible effects is followed by a more minute description of the judgment itself, and the arrest of the plague. “When the destroying angel (*‘the angel’* is defined immediately afterwards as *‘the angel that destroyed the people’*) stretched out his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it, Jehovah repented of the evil (for this expression, see Exo. 32:14, Jer. 26:13, 19, etc.; and for the repentance of God, the remarks on Gen. 6: 6), and He commanded the angel, Enough! stay now thine hand.” This implies that the progress of the pestilence was stayed before Jerusalem, and therefore that Jerusalem itself was spared. “*And the angel of Jehovah was at the threshing-floor of Aravnah the Jebusite.*” These words affirm most distinctly that the destroying angel was visible. According to v. 17, David saw him there. The visible appearance of the angel was to exclude every thought of a natural land plague. The appearance of the angel is described more minutely in the Chronicles: David saw him standing by the threshing-floor of Aravnah between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. The drawn sword was a symbolical representation of the purpose of his coming (see at Num. 22:23 and Jos. 5:13). The threshing-floor of Aravnah was situated, like all other threshing-floors, outside the city, and upon an eminence, or, according to the more precise statement which follows, to the north-east of Zion, upon Mount Moriah (see at v. 25). According to the *Chethib* of v. 16, the name of the owner of the floor was אֲרַנְיָהּ, of v. 18 אֲרַנְיָהּ, and of v. 20 (twice) אֲרַנְיָהּ. This last form also occurs in vv. 22, 23,

and 24, and has been substituted by the Masoretes as the *Keri* in vv. 16 and 18. In the Chronicles, on the other hand, the name is always written אֲרַנָּן (*Ornan*), and hence in the Septuagint we find Ὀρνα in both texts. “The form אֲרַנָּה (*Aravnah*) has not a Hebrew stamp, whereas *Orna* and *Ornan* are true Hebrew formations. But for this very reason *Aravnah* appears to be derived from an ancient tradition” (Bertheau).

**2Sa. 24:17.** When David saw the angel, he prayed to the Lord (he and the elders being clothed in mourning costume: Chron.): “Behold, *I* have sinned, and *I* have acted perversely; but these, the flock, what have they done? Let Thy hand come upon me and my house.” The meaning is: I the shepherd of Thy people have sinned and transgressed, but the nation is innocent; i.e., not indeed free from every kind of blame, but only from the sin which God was punishing by the pestilence. It belongs to the very nature of truly penitential prayer, that the person praying takes all the blame upon himself, acknowledges before God that he alone is deserving of punishment, and does not dwell upon the complicity of others for the sake of palliating his own sin in the sight of God. We must not infer, therefore, from this confession on the part of David, that the people, whilst innocent themselves, had had to atone only for an act of transgression on the part of their king.

**2Sa. 24:18.** David’s prayer was heard. The prophet Gad came and said to him by command of Jehovah, “Go up, and erect an altar to the Lord upon the floor of Aravnah the Jebusite.” This is all that is communicated here of the word of Jehovah which Gad was to convey to the king; the rest is given afterwards, as is frequently the case, in the course of the subsequent account of the fulfilment of the divine command (v. 21). David was to build the altar and offer burnt-offerings and supplicatory-offerings upon it, to appease the wrath of Jehovah. The plague would then be averted from Israel.

**2Sa. 24:19-25.** David went up to Aravnah according to the command of God.

**2Sa. 24:20, 21.** When Aravnah saw the king coming up to him with his servants (וַיִּשְׁקֹף, “*he looked out,*” viz., from the enclosure of the threshing-floor), he came out, bowed low even to the earth, and asked the king what was the occasion of his coming; whereupon David replied, “To buy the floor from thee, to build an altar to the Lord, that the plague may be turned away from the people.”

**2Sa. 24:22.** Aravnah replied, “Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold (i.e., there thou hast) the ox for the burnt-offering, and the threshing-machine, and the harness of the ox for wood” (i.e.,

for fuel). הַבָּקָר, the pair of oxen yoked together in front of the threshing-machine. בְּלֵי הַבָּקָר, the wooden yokes. “All this giveth Aravnah, O king, to the king.” הַמֶּלֶךְ is a vocative, and is simply omitted by the LXX, Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, because the translators regarded it as a nominative, which is quite unsuitable, as Aravnah was not a king. When Thenius, on the other hand, objects to this, for the purpose of throwing suspicion upon the passage, that the sentence is thus stamped as part of Aravnah’s address to the king, and that in that case the words that follow, “and Aravnah said,” would be altogether superfluous; the former remark is correct enough, for the words “all this giveth Aravnah...to the king” must form part of what Aravnah said, inasmuch as the remark, “all this gave Aravnah to the king,” if taken as the historian’s own words, would be in most glaring contradiction to what follows, where the king is said to have bought the floor and the oxen from Aravnah. And the words that follow (“and Aravnah said”) are not superfluous on that account, but simply indicate that Aravnah did not proceed to say the rest in the same breath, but added it after a short pause, as a word which did not directly bear upon the question put by the king. וַיֹּאמֶר (and he said) is often repeated, where the same person continues speaking (see for example 2Sa. 15: 4, 25, 27). “Jehovah thy God accept thee graciously,” i.e., fulfil the request thou presentest to Him with sacrifice and prayer.

**2Sa. 24:24.** The king did not accept the offer, however, but said, “No; but I will buy it of thee at a price, and will not offer burnt-offerings to the Lord my God without paying for them.” Thus David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. Instead of this, the Chronicles give “shekels of gold, in weight six hundred.” This difference cannot be reconciled by assuming that David paid his fifty shekels in gold coin, which would have been worth as much as six hundred shekels of silver, since gold was worth twelve times as much as silver. For there is nothing about gold shekels in our text; and the words of the Chronicles cannot be interpreted as meaning that the shekels of gold were worth six hundred shekels of silver. No other course is left, therefore, than to assume that the number must be corrupt in one of the texts. Apparently the statement in the Chronicles is the more correct of the two: for if we consider that Abraham paid four hundred shekels of silver for the site of a family burial-place, at a time when the land was very thinly populated, and therefore land must certainly have been much cheaper than it was in David’s time, the small sum of fifty shekels of silver (about £6) appears much too low a price; and David would certainly pay at least fifty shekels of gold. But we are not warranted in any case in speaking of the statement in the Chronicles, as Thenius does, as “intentionally exaggerated.” This style of criticism, which carries two kinds of weights and measure in its bag, explaining the high

numbers in the books of Samuel and Kings as corruptions of the text, and those in the Chronicles as intentional exaggerations on the part of the chronicler, is sufficiently dealt with by the remark of Bertheau, that “this (i.e., the charge of exaggeration) could only be sustained if it were perfectly certain that the chronicler had our present text of the books of Samuel before him at the time.”

*2Sa. 24:25.* After acquiring the threshing-floor by purchase, David built an altar to the Lord there, and offered burnt-offerings and supplicatory-offerings (*shelamim*: as in Jud. 20:26; 21: 4; 1Sa. 13: 9) upon it to the Lord. “So Jehovah was entreated, and the plague was turned away from Israel.”

This remark brings to a close not only the account of this particular occurrence, but also the book itself; whereas in the Chronicles it is still further stated that Jehovah answered David with fire from heaven, which fell upon the burnt-offering; and that after his prayer had been answered thus, David not only continued to offer sacrifice upon the floor of Aravnah, but also fixed upon it as the site for the temple which was afterwards to be built (1Ch. 21:27; 22: 1); and to this there is appended, in 2Sa. 22: 2ff., an account of the preparations which David made for the building of the temple. It is not affirmed in the Chronicles, however, that David fixed upon this place as the site for the future temple in consequence of a revelation from God, but simply that he did this, because he saw that the Lord had answered him there, and because he could not go to Gibeon, where the tabernacle was standing, to seek the Lord there, on account of the sword of the angel, i.e., on account of the pestilence. The command of God build an altar upon the threshing-floor of Aravnah, and offer expiatory sacrifices upon it, when connected with His answering his prayer by turning away the plague, could not fail to be taken as a distinct intimation to David, that the site of this altar was the place where the Lord would henceforth make known His gracious presence to His people; and this hint was quite sufficient to determine the site for the temple which his son Solomon was to build.



## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>ft1</sup> “*Thy mouth hath testified against thee, and out of it thou art judged* (Luke 19:22), whether thou hast done it or not. If thou hast done it, thou receivest the just reward of thy deeds. If thou hast not done it, then throw the blame upon thine own lying testimony, and be content with the wages of a wicked flatterer; for, according to thine own confession, thou art the murderer of a king, and that is quite enough to betray thine evil heart. David could see plainly enough that the man was no murderer: he would show by his example that flatterers who boast of such sins as these should get no hearing from their superiors.” — *Berleb. Bible.*
- <sup>ft2</sup> In the Septuagint we find *Θασιρι* or *Θασούρ*, an equally mistaken form. The Chaldee has “over the tribe of Asher,” which is also unsuitable, unless we include the whole of the northern portion of Canaan, including the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. But there is no proof that the name *Asher* was ever extended to the territory of the three northern tribes. We should be rather disposed to agree with Bachienne, who supposes it to refer to the city of Asher (Jos. 17: 7) and its territory, as this city was in the south-east of Jezreel, and Abner may possibly have conquered this district for Ishbosheth with Gilead as a base, before he ventured to dispute the government of Israel with the Philistines, if only we could discover any reason why the inhabitants (“*the Ashurites*”) should be mentioned instead of the city *Asher*, or if it were at all likely that one city should be introduced in the midst of a number of large districts. The Syriac and Vulgate have *Geshuri*, and therefore seem to have read or conjectured *הַגְּשׁוּרִי*; and Thenius decides in favour of this, understanding the name *Geshur* to refer to the most northerly portion of the land on both sides of the Jordan, from Mount Hermon to the Lake of Gennesareth (as in Deu. 3:14, Jos. 12: 5; 13:13, 1Ch. 2:23). But no such usage of speech can be deduced from any of these passages, as *Geshuri* is used there to denote the land of the Geshurites, on the north-east of Bashan, which had a king of its own in the time of David (see at 2Sa. 3: 3), and which Abner would certainly never have thought of conquering.
- <sup>ft3</sup> From the fact that in vv. 10, 11, Ishbosheth’s ascending the throne is mentioned before that of David, and is also accompanied with a statement of his age, whereas the age of David is not given till 2Sa. 5: 4, 5, when he became king over all Israel, Ewald draws the erroneous conclusion that the earlier (?) historian regarded Ishbosheth as the true king, and David as a

pretender. But the very opposite of this is stated as distinctly as possible in vv. 4ff.) compared with v. 8). The fact that Ishbosheth is mentioned before David in v. 10 may be explained simply enough from the custom so constantly observed in the book of Genesis, of mentioning subordinate lines or subordinate persons first, and stating whatever seemed worth recording with regard to them, in order that the ground might be perfectly clear for relating the history of the principal characters without any interruption.

<sup>ft4</sup> The LXX thought it desirable to explain the possibility of Rechab and Baanah getting into the king's house, and therefore paraphrased the sixth verse as follows: *καὶ ἰδοὺ ἡ θυρωρὸς τοῦ οἴκου ἐκάθαιρε πυροὺς καὶ ἐνύσταξε καὶ ἐκάθευδε κατ' ἡγάβ καὶ Βαανὰ οἱ ἄδελφοὶ διέλαθον* ("and behold the doorkeeper of the house was cleaning wheat, and nodded and slept. And Rahab and Baana the brothers escaped, or went in secretly"). The first part of this paraphrase has been retained in the Vulgate, in the interpolation between vv. 5 and 6: *et ostiaria domus purgans triticum obdormivit*; whether it was copied by Jerome from the Itala, or was afterwards introduced as a gloss into his translation. It is very evident that this clause in the Vulgate is only a gloss, from the fact that, in all the rest of v. 6, Jerome has closely followed the Masoretic text, and that none of the other ancient translators found anything about a doorkeeper in his text. When Thenius, therefore, attempts to prove the "evident corruption of the Masoretic text," by appealing to the "nonsense (*Unsinn*) of relating the murder of Ishbosheth and the flight of the murderers twice over, and in two successive verses (see v. 7)," he is altogether wrong in speaking of the repetition as "nonsense" whereas it is simply tautology, and has measured the peculiarities of Hebrew historians by the standard adopted by our own. J. P. F. Königsfeldt has given the true explanation when he says: "The Hebrews often repeat in this way, for the purpose of adding something fresh, as for example, in this instance, their carrying off the head." Comp. with this 2Sa. 3:22, 23, where the arrival of Joab is mentioned twice, viz., in two successive verses; or 2Sa. 5: 1-3, where the assembling of the tribes of Israel at Hebron is also referred to a second time, — a repetition at which Thenius himself has taken no offence, — and many other passages of the same kind.

<sup>ft5</sup> The earliest translators have only resorted to guesses. The Seventy, with their *ἀπτέσθω ἐν παραξίφιδι*, have combined *רַנְרַ* with *רַנְרַ*, which they render now and then *μάχαιρα* or *ρομφαία*. This is also done by the Syriac and Arabic. The Chaldee paraphrases in this manner: "who begins to subjugate the citadel." Jerome, who probably followed the Rabbins, has *et tetigisset domatum fistulas* (and touched the *water-pipes*); and Luther, "*und erlanget die Dachrinnen*" (like the English version, "whosoever getteth up to the gutter:" Tr.). Hitzig's notion, that *zinnor* signifies ear ("whosoever boxes

the ears of the blind and lame”) needs no refutation; nor does that of Fr. Böttcher, who proposes to follow the Alexandrian rendering, and refer *zinnor* to a “sword of honour or marshal’s staff,” which David promised to the victor.

<sup>ft6</sup> This is also inserted in the passage before us by the translators of the English version: “he shall be chief and captain.” — Tr.

<sup>ft7</sup> The statements of Menander of Ephesus in Josephus (*c. Ap.* i. 18), that after the death of *Abibal* his son *Hirom* (Ἡρώμος) succeeded him in the government, and reigned thirty-four years, and died at the age of fifty-three, are at variance with the biblical history. For, according to these statements, as Hiram was still reigning “at the end of twenty years” (according to 1Ki. 9:10, 11), when Solomon had built his palaces and the house of the Lord, i.e., twenty-four years after Solomon began to reign, he cannot have ascended the throne before the sixty-first year of David’s life, and the thirty-first of his reign. But in that case the erection of David’s palace would fall somewhere within the last eight years of his life. And to this we have to add the repeated statements made by Josephus (*l.c.* and *Ant.* viii. 3, 1), to the effect that Solomon commenced the building of the temple in Hiram’s twelfth year, or after he had reigned eleven years; so that Hiram could only have begun to reign seven years before the death of David (in the sixty-third year of his life), and the erection of the palace by David must have fallen later still, and his determination to build the temple, which he did not form till he had taken possession of his house of cedar, i.e., the newly erected palace (2Sa. 7: 2), would fall in the very last years of his life, but a very short time before his death. As this seems hardly credible, it has been assumed by some that Hiram’s father, Abibal, also bore the name of Hiram, or that Hiram is confounded with Abibal in the account before us (Thenius), or that Abibal’s father was named Hiram, and it was he who formed the alliance with David (Ewald, *Gesch.* iv. 287). But all these assumptions are overthrown by the fact that the identity of the Hiram who was Solomon’s friend with the contemporary and friend of David is expressly affirmed not only in 2Ch. 2: 2 (as Ewald supposes), but also in 1Ki. 5:15. For whilst Solomon writes to Hiram in 2Ch. 2: 3, “as thou didst deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein,” it is also stated 1Ki. 5: 1 that “Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for *Hiram was a lover of David all days* (all his life).” Movers (*Phönizier* ii. 1, p. 147ff.) has therefore attempted to remove the discrepancy between the statements made in Josephus and the biblical account of Hiram’s friendship with David and Solomon, by assuming that in the narrative contained in the books of Samuel we have a topical and not a

chronological arrangement, and that according to this arrangement the conquest of Jerusalem by David is followed immediately by the building of the city and palace, and this again by the removal of the holy ark to Jerusalem, and lastly by David's resolution to build a temple, which really belonged to the close of his reign, and indeed, according to 2Sa. 7: 2, to the period directly following the completion of the cedar palace. There is a certain amount of truth at the foundation of this, but it does not remove the discrepancy; for even if David's resolution to build a temple did not fall within the earlier years of his reign at Jerusalem, as some have inferred from the position in which it stands in the account given in this book, it cannot be pushed forward to the very last years of his life and reign. This is decidedly precluded by the fact, that in the promise given to David by God, his son and successor upon the throne is spoken of in such terms as to necessitate the conclusion that he was not yet born. This difficulty cannot be removed by the solution suggested by Movers (p. 149), "that the historian necessarily adhered to the topical arrangement which he had adopted for this section, because he had not said anything yet about Solomon and his mother Bathsheba:" for the expression "which shall proceed out of thy bowels" (2Sa. 7:12) is not the only one of the kind; but in 1Ch. 22: 9, David says to his son Solomon, "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, A son *shall be* born to thee — Solomon — he shall build an house for my name;" from which it is very obvious, that Solomon was not born at the time when David determined to build the temple and received this promise from God in consequence of his intention.

To this we have also to add 2Sa. 11: 2, where David sees Bathsheba, who gave birth to Solomon a few years later, from the roof of his palace. Now, even though the palace is simply called "the king's house" in this passage, and not the "house of cedar," as in 2Sa. 7: 2, and therefore the house intended might possibly be the house in which David lived before the house of cedar was built, this is a very improbable supposition, and there cannot be much doubt that the "king's house" is the palace (2Sa. 5:11; 7: 1) which he had erected for himself. Lastly, not only is there not the slightest intimation in the whole of the account given in 2Sa. 7 that David was an old man when he resolved to build the temple, but, on the contrary, the impression which it makes throughout is, that it was the culminating point of his reign, and that he was at an age when he might hope not only to commence this magnificent building, but in all human probability to live to complete it. The only other solution left, is the assumption that there are errors in the chronological date of Josephus, and that Hiram lived longer than Menander affirms. The assertion that Solomon commenced the erection of the temple in the eleventh or twelfth year of Hiram's reign was

not derived by Josephus from Phoenician sources; for the fragments which he gives from the works of Menander and Dios in the *Antiquities* (viii. 5, 3) and *c. Apion* (i. 17, 18), contain nothing at all about the building of the temple (vid., Movers, p. 141), but he has made it as the result of certain chronological combinations of his own, just as in *Ant.* viii. 3, 1, he calculates the year of the building of the temple in relation both to the exodus and also to the departure of Abraham out of Haran, but miscalculates, inasmuch as he places it in the 592nd year after the exodus instead of the 480th, and the 1020th year from Abraham's emigration to Canaan instead of the 1125th. And in the present instance his calculation of the exact position of the same event in relation to Hiram's reign was no doubt taken from Menander; but even in this the numbers may be faulty, since the statements respecting *Balezorus* and *Myttonus* in the very same extract from Menander, as to the length of the reigns of the succeeding kings of Tyre, can be proved to be erroneous, and have been corrected by Movers from Eusebius and Syncellus; and, moreover, the seven years of Hiram's successor, *Baleazar*, do not tally with Eusebius and Syncellus, who both give seventeen years. Thus the proof which Movers adduces from the synchronism of the Tyrian chronology with the biblical, the Egyptian, and the Assyrian, to establish the correctness of Menander's statements concerning Hiram's reign, is rendered very uncertain, to say nothing of the fact that Movers has only succeeded in bringing out the synchronism with the biblical chronology by a very arbitrary and demonstrably false calculation of the years that the kings of Judah and Israel reigned.

<sup>ft8</sup> Through the express statement that David inquired of Jehovah (viz., by the Urim) in both these conflicts with the Philistines (vv. 19 and 23), Diestel's assertion, that after the death of Saul we do not read any more about the use of the holy lot, is completely overthrown, as well as the conclusion which he draws from it, namely, that "David probably employed it for the purpose of giving a certain definiteness to his command over his followers, over whom he had naturally but little authority (1Sa. 22: 2?), rather than because he looked upon it himself with any peculiar reverence."

<sup>ft9</sup> This is the marginal reading in the English version, though the text has "he burned them." — Tr.

<sup>ft10</sup> There is no force in the objection brought by Bertheau against this view, viz., that "it is *a priori* improbable that the Philistines who were fighting against David and his forces, whose base of operations was Jerusalem, should have taken possession of the whole line from Gibeon to Gezer," as the improbability is by no means apparent, and has not been pointed out by Bertheau, whilst the assumption that Jerusalem was David's base of operations has no foundation whatever. Moreover, Bertheau's opinion, that

*Geba* was the same as *Gibeah* in the tribe of Judah (Jos. 15:57), is decidedly erroneous: for this *Gibeah* is not to be identified with the present village of *Jeba* on the south side of the Wady *Musurr*, half-way between Shocoh and Jerusalem, but was situated towards the desert of Judah (see at Jos. 15:57); and besides, it is impossible to see how the Philistines, who had invaded the plain of Rephaim, could have been beaten from this Gibeah as far as to Gezer.

<sup>ft11</sup> If it were possible to discover the situation of Gath-rimmon, the home of Obed-edom (see at v. 10), we might probably decide the question whether Obed-edom was still living in the town where he was born or not. But according to the *Onom.*, Kirjath-jearim was ten miles from Jerusalem, and Gath-rimmon twelve, that is to say, farther off. Now, if these statements are correct, Obed-edom's house cannot have been in Gath-rimmon.

<sup>ft12</sup> There is no discrepancy, therefore, between the two different accounts; but the one supplements the other in a manner perfectly in harmony with the whole affair, — at the outset, a sacrifice consisting of one ox and one fatted calf; and at the close, one of seven oxen and seven rams. Consequently there is no reason for altering the text of the verse before us, as Thenius proposes, according to the senseless rendering of the LXX, *καὶ ἦσαν μετ' αὐτοῦ αἴροντες τὴν κιβωτὸν ἑπτὰ χοροὶ καὶ θῦμα μόσχος καὶ ἄρνες* (“with David there were bearers of the ark, seven choirs, and sacrifices of a calf and lambs”), which has also found its way into the Vulgate, though Jerome has rendered our Hebrew text faithfully afterwards (i.e., after the gloss, which was probably taken from the Itala, and inserted in his translation).

<sup>ft13</sup> With regard to the historical authenticity of this promise, Tholuck observes, in his *Prophets and their Prophecies* (pp. 165-6), that “it can be proved, with all the evidence which is ever to be obtained in support of historical testimony, that David actually received a prophetic promise that his family should sit upon the throne for ever, and consequently an intimation of a royal descendant whose government should be eternal. Anything like a merely subjective promise arising from human combinations is precluded here by the fact that Nathan, acting according to the best of his knowledge, gave his consent to David's plan of building a temple; and that it was not till afterwards, when he had been instructed by a divine vision, that he did the very opposite, and assured him on the contrary that God would build *him* a house.” Thenius also affirms that “there is no reason for assuming, as De Wette has done, that Nathan's prophecies were not composed till after the time of Solomon;” that “their historical credibility is attested by Psa. 89 (vv. 4, 5, 20-38, and especially v. 20), Psa. 132:11, 12, and Isa. 55: 3; and that, properly interpreted, they are also Messianic.” The principal evidence of this is to be found in the prophetic utterance of David in 2Sa. 23, where, as is

generally admitted, he takes a retrospective glance at the promise, and thereby attests the historical credibility of Nathan's prophecy (Thenius, p. 245). Nevertheless, Gust. Baur maintains that "a closer comparison of this more elaborate and simple description (2Sa. 7) with the brief and altogether unexampled *last words of David*, more especially with 2Sa. 23: 5, can hardly leave the slightest doubt, that the relation in which the chapter before us stands to these words, is that of a later expansion to an authentic prophetic utterance of the king himself." For example, the distinct allusion to the birth of Solomon, and the building of the temple, which was to be completed by him, is said to have evidently sprung from a later development of the original promise after the time of Solomon, on account of the incongruity apparent in Nathan's prediction between the ideal picture of the Israelitish monarchy and the definite allusion to Solomon's building of the temple. But there is no such "incongruity" in Nathan's prediction; it is only to be found in the naturalistic assumptions of Baur himself, that the utterances of the prophets contained nothing more than subjective and *ideal* hopes of the future, and not supernatural predictions. This also applies to Diestel's opinion, that the section vv. 4-16 does not harmonize with the substance of David's glorious prayer in vv. 18-29, nor the latter again with itself, because the advice given him to relinquish the idea of building the temple is not supported by any reasons that answer either to the character of David or to his peculiar circumstances, with which the allusion to his son would have been in perfect keeping; but the prophet's dissuasion merely alludes to the fact that Jehovah did not stand in need of a stately house at all, and had never given utterance to any such desire. On account of this "obvious" fact, Diestel regards it as credible that the original dissuasion came from God, because it was founded upon an earlier view, but that the promise of the son of David which followed proceeded from Nathan, who no doubt looked with more favourable eyes upon the building of the temple. This discrepancy is also arbitrarily foisted upon the text. There is not a syllable about any "original dissuasion" in all that Nathan says; for he simply tells the king that Jehovah had hitherto dwelt in a tent, and had not asked any of the tribes of Israel to build a stately temple, but not that Jehovah did not need a stately house at all.

<sup>ft14</sup> The LXX has this additional clause: "And Shishak the king of Egypt took them away, when he went up against Jerusalem in the days of Rehoboam the son of Solomon," which is neither to be found in the Chronicles nor in any other ancient version, and is merely an inference drawn by the Greek translator, or by some copyists of the LXX, from 1Ki. 14:25-28, taken in connection with the fact that the application of the brass is given in 1Ch. 18: 8. But, in the first place, the author of this gloss has overlooked

the fact that the golden shields of Rehoboam which Shishak carried away, were not those captured by David, but those which Solomon had had made, according to 1Ki. 10:16, for the retainers of his palace; and in the second place, he has not observed that, according to v. 11 of this chapter, and also of the Chronicles, David dedicated to the Lord all the gold and silver that he had taken, i.e., put it in the treasury of the sanctuary to be reserved for the future temple, and that at the end of his reign he handed over to his son and successor Solomon all the gold, silver, iron, and brass that he had collected for the purpose, to be applied to the building of the temple (1Ch. 22:14ff., 29: 2ff.). Consequently the clause in question, which Thenius would adopt from the LXX into our own text, is nothing more than the production of a presumptuous Alexandrian, whose error lies upon the very surface, so that the question of its genuineness cannot for a moment be entertained.

<sup>ft15</sup> Bertheau erroneously maintains that אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא, which he took, is at variance with 2Sa. 8: 7, as, according to this passage, the golden shields of Hadadezer did not become the property of the Lord. But there is not a word to that effect in 2Sa. 8: 7. On the contrary, his taking the shields to Jerusalem implies, rather than precludes, the intention to devote them to the purposes of the sanctuary.

<sup>ft16</sup> Michaelis adduces a case in point from the Seven Years' War. After the battle of *Lissa*, eight or twelve thousand men were reported to have been taken prisoners; but when they were all counted, including those who fell into the hands of the conquerors on the second, third, and fourth days of the flight, the number amounted to 22,000.

<sup>ft17</sup> Gesenius (*Thes. s. vv.*) and Thenius (on 1Ki. 1:38) both adopt this explanation; but the majority of the modern theologians decide in favour of Lakemacher's opinion, to which Ewald has given currency, viz., that the *Crethi* or *Cari* are Cretes or Carians, and the *Pelethi* Philistines (vid., Ewald, *Krit. Gramm.* p. 297, and *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, pp. 330ff.; Bertheau, *zur Geschichte Israel*, p. 197; Movers, *Phönizier* i. p. 19). This view is chiefly founded upon the fact that the Philistines are called *C'rethi* in 1Sa. 30:14, and *C'rethim* in Zep. 2: 5 and Eze. 25:16. But in both the passages from the prophets the name is used with special reference to the meaning of the word הַכְרִית, viz., to exterminate, cut off, as Jerome has shown in the case of Ezekiel by adopting the rendering *interficiam interfectores* (I will slay the slayers) for הַכְרִיתִי אֶת־הַכְרִיתִים. The same play upon the words takes place in Zephaniah, upon which Strauss has correctly observed: "Zephaniah shows that this violence of theirs had not been forgotten, calling the Philistines *Crethim* for that very reason, *ut sit nomen et omen.*" Besides, in both these passages the true name *Philistines* stands



by the side as well, so that the prophets might have used the name *Crethim* (slayers, exterminators) without thinking at all of 1Sa. 30:14. In this passage it is true the name *Crethi* is applied to a branch of the Philistine people that had settled on the south-west of Philistia, and not to the Philistines generally. The idea that the name of a portion of the royal body-guard was derived from the Cretans is precluded, *first* of all, by the fact of its combination with **הַפְּלִתִי** (the Pelethites); for it is a totally groundless assumption that this name signifies the *Philistines*, and is a corruption of **פְּלִשְׁתִּים**. There are no such contractions as these to be found in the Semitic languages, as Gesenius observes in his *Thesaurus* (*l.c.*), “quis hujusmodi contractionem in linguis Semiticis ferat?” *Secondly*, it is also precluded by the strangeness of such a combination of two synonymous names to denote the royal body-guard. “Who could believe it possible that two synonymous epithets should be joined together in this manner, which would be equivalent to saying Englishmen and Britons?” (Ges. *Thes.* p. 1107). *Thirdly*, it is opposed to the title afterwards given to the body-guard, **הַכָּרִי וְהַרְצִים** (2Ki. 11: 4, 19), in which the *Cari* correspond to the *Crethi*, as in 2Sa. 20:23, and *ha-razim* to the *Pelethi*; so that the term *pelethi* can no more signify a particular tribe than the term *razim* can. Moreover, there are other objections to this interpretation. In the first place, the hypothesis that the Philistines were emigrants from Crete is merely founded upon the very indefinite statements of Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 3, 2), “*Judaeos Creta insula profugos novissima Libyae insedissememorant,*” and that of Steph. Byz. (*s. v.* Γαζά), to the effect that the city of Gaza was once called *Minoa*, from *Minos* a king of Crete, — statements which, according to the correct estimate of Strauss (*l.c.*), “have all so evidently the marks of fables that they hardly merit discussion,” at all events when opposed to the historical testimony of the Old Testament (Deu. 2:23; Amo. 9: 7), to the effect that the Philistines sprang from *Caphtor*. And secondly, “it is *a priori* altogether improbable, that a man with so patriotic a heart, and so devoted to the worship of the one God, should have surrounded himself with a *foreign* and *heathen* body-guard” (Thenius). This argument cannot be invalidated by the remark “that it is well known that at all times kings and princes have preferred to commit the protection of their persons to foreign mercenaries, having, as they thought, all the surer pledge of their devotedness in the fact that they did not spring from the nation, and were dependent upon the ruler alone” (Hitzig). For, in the first place, the expression “at all times” is one that must be very greatly modified; and secondly, this was only done by kings who did not feel safe in the presence of their own people, which was not the case with David. And the Philistines, those arch-foes of Israel, would have been the last nation that David would

have gone to for the purpose of selecting his own body-guard. It is true that he himself had met with a hospitable reception in the land of the Philistines; but it must be borne in mind that it was not as king of Israel that he found refuge there, but as an outlaw flying from Saul the king of Israel, and even then the chiefs of the Philistines would not trust him (1Sa. 29: 3ff.). And when Hitzig appeals still further to the fact, that according to 2Sa. 18: 2, David handed over the command of a third of his army to a foreigner who had recently entered his service, having emigrated from Gath with a company of his fellow-countrymen (2Sa. 15:19, 20, 22), and who had displayed the greatest attachment to the person of David (v. 21), it is hardly necessary to observe that the fact of David's welcoming a brave soldier into his army, when he had come over to Israel, and placing him over a division of the army, after he had proved his fidelity so decidedly as Ittai had at the time of Absalom's rebellion, is no proof that he chose his body-guard from the Philistines. Nor can 2Sa. 15:18 be adduced in support of this, as the notion that, according to that passage, David had 600 Gathites in his service as body-guard, is simply founded upon a misinterpretation of the passage mentioned.

<sup>ft18</sup> "Cutting off a persons' beard is regarded by the Arabs as an indignity quite equal to flogging and branding among ourselves. Many would rather die than have their beard shaved off" (Arvieux, *Sitten der Beduinen-araber*). Niebuhr relates a similar occurrence as having taken place in modern times. In the years 1764, a pretender to the Persian throne, named *Kerim Khan*, sent ambassadors to *Mir Mahenna*, the prince of Bendervigk, on the Persian Gulf, to demand tribute from him; but he in return cut off the ambassadors' beards. *Kerim Khan* was so enraged at this, that he went the next year with a large army to make war upon this prince, and took the city, and almost the whole of his territory, to avenge the insult.

<sup>ft19</sup> "We may see from this how deep a soul may fall when it turns away from God, and from the guidance of His grace. This David, who in the days of his persecution would not even resort to means that were really plausible in order to defend himself, was now not ashamed to resort to the greatest crimes in order to cover his sin. O God! how great is our strength when we lay firm hold of Thee! And how weak we become as soon as we turn away from Thee! The greatest saints would be ready for the worst of deeds, if Thou shouldst but leave them for a single moment without Thy protection. Whoever reflects upon this, will give up all thought of self-security and spiritual pride." — *Berleburg Bible*.

<sup>ft20</sup> Josephus adopts this explanation: "This she said, as desirous to avoid her brother's violent passion at present" (*Ant.* viii. 8, 1).

<sup>ft21</sup> The LXX have very comprehensive additions here: first of all, after ἐκ πλευρᾶς τοῦ ὄρους, they have the more precise definition ἐν τῇ καταβάσει, and then the further clause, “and the spy came and announced to the king,” Ἄνδρας ἑώρακα ἐκ τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς ὠρωνῆν (?) ἐκ μέρους τοῦ ὄρους, partly to indicate more particularly the way by which the king’s sons came, and partly to fill up a supposed gap in the account. But they did not consider that the statement in v. 35, “and Jonadab said to the king, Behold, the king’s sons are coming,” does not square with these additions; for if the spy had already informed the king that his sons were coming, there was no necessity for Jonadab to do it again. This alone is sufficient to show that the additions made by the LXX are nothing but worthless glosses, introduced according to subjective conjectures and giving no foundation for alterations of the text.

<sup>ft22</sup> The LXX have this additional clause, καὶ γίνεται γυνῆ ὀβαὰμ υἱῷ Σαλωμών καὶ τίκει αὐτῷ τὸν Ἀβιά (and she became the wife of Rehoboam the son of Solomon, and bore him a son named Abia). Although this is quite at variance with 1Ki. 15: 2, where it is stated that the wife of Rehoboam and mother of Abia (Abijam) was named *Maacah*, the clause had been adopted by Thenius, who regards it as original, though for reasons which Böttcher has shown to be worthless.

<sup>ft23</sup> The Septuagint also has πάντες οἱ Γεθᾶλοι, and has generally rendered the Masoretic text correctly. But בְּלִעְבְּדֵי has been translated incorrectly, or at all events in a manner likely to mislead, viz., πάντες οἱ παῖδες αὐτοῦ. But in the Septuagint text, as it has come down to us, another paraphrase has been interpolated into the literal translation, which Thenius would adopt as an emendation of the Hebrew text, notwithstanding the fact that the critical corruptness of the Alexandrian text must be obvious to every one.

<sup>ft24</sup> The meaning of the word, wearied or weariness, does not warrant any conjectures, even though they should be more felicitous than that of Böttcher, who proposes to alter *Ayephim* into *Ephraim*, and assumes that there was a place of this name near Mahanaim, though without reflecting that the place where David rested was on this side of the Jordan, and somewhere near to Gilgal or Jericho (2Sa. 17:16ff. and 22).

<sup>ft25</sup> Consequently no conjectures are needed as to the rendering of the words in the LXX, viz., καθὼς (al. ὄν τρόπον) ἐπιστρέφει ἡ νύμφη πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς πλὴν ψυχὴν ἄνδρὸς ἑνὸς σὺ ζητεῖς, such as Ewald, Thenius, and Böttcher have attempted. For it is very obvious that ἡ νύμφη πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς owes its origin simply to a false reading of וְשֵׁן הַכֶּהָל אִשׁ הַלְבָּהּ, and that πλὴν ψυχὴν ἄνδρὸς ἑνὸς has been interpolated by way of

explanation from nothing but conjecture. No other of the ancient versions contains the slightest trace of a different reading from that given in the text.

<sup>f126</sup> According to Burckhardt's account (*Die Beduinen*, p. 48), "after they have taken the butter from the butter-milk, they beat the latter again till it coagulates, and then dry it till it is quite hard. It is then rubbed to pieces, and in the spring every family stores up two or three lasts of it, which they eat mixed with butter."

<sup>f127</sup> Dathe and Thenius propose to alter **ירושלים** into **מירושלים** (*from Jerusalem*), from a simple misunderstanding of the true meaning of the words; for, as Böttcher has observed, the latter (*from Jerusalem*) would be quite superfluous, as it is already contained in the previous **ירד**. But Böttcher's emendation of **בא** into **באה**, because Jerusalem or the population of Jerusalem is a feminine notion, is equally unnecessary, since towns and lands are frequently construed as masculines when the inhabitants are intended (*vid.*, Ewald, § 318, *a.*). On the other hand, the rendering adopted by the LXX, and by Luther, Michaelis, and Maurer, in which **ירושלים** is taken as an accusative in the sense of "when Mephibosheth came to Jerusalem to meet the king," is altogether wrong, and has been very properly given up by modern expositors, inasmuch as it is at variance not only with the word **ירד**, but also with 2Sa. 16: 3 and 9:13, where Mephibosheth is said to have lived in Jerusalem.

<sup>f128</sup> This difficulty cannot be removed by emendations of the text, inasmuch as all the early translators, with the exception of the Syriac, had our Hebrew text before them. Thenius does indeed propose to alter *Abishai* into *Joab* in v. 6, after the example of Josephus and the Syriac; but, as Böttcher observes, if *Joab* had originally formed part of the text, it could not have been altered into *Abishai* either accidentally or intentionally, and the Syriac translators and Josephus have inserted *Joab* merely from conjecture, because they inferred from what follows that Joab's name ought to be found here. But whilst this is perfectly true, there is no ground for Böttcher's own conjecture, that in the original text v. 6 read as follows: "Then David said to Joab, Behold, the three days are gone: shall we wait for Amasa?" and through the copyist's carelessness a whole line was left out. For this conjecture has no tenable support in the senseless reading of the *Cod. Vat.*, **πρὸς Αμεσσαί** for **Αβισαί**.

<sup>f129</sup> The correctness of the text is not to be called in question, as Thenius and Böttcher suppose, for the simple reason that all the older translators have followed the Hebrew text, including even the LXX with their **ἐγὼ εἶμι εἰρηνικά τῶν στηριγμάτων ἐν Ἰσραήλ**; whereas the words **ἄθεντο οἱ πιστοὶ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ**, which some of the MSS contain at the close of v. 18

after *εἰ ἐξέλιπον*, and upon which Thenius and Böttcher have founded their conjectures, are evidently a gloss or paraphrase of *וְכֵן הִתְמוּ*, and of so little value on critical grounds, that Tischendorf did not even think the reading worth mentioning in his edition of the Septuagint.

<sup>f30</sup> Men with six fingers and six toes have been met with elsewhere. Pliny (*h. nat.* xi. 43) speaks of certain *sedigiti* (six-fingered) Romans. This peculiarity is even hereditary in some families. Other examples are collected by Trusen (*Sitten, Gebräuche, und Krankheiten der alten Hebräer*, pp. 198-9, ed. 2) and Friedreich (*zur Bible*, i. 298-9).

<sup>f31</sup> Even Hitzig observes (*die Psalmen*, i. p. 95): “There is no ground whatever for calling in question the Davidic authorship of the psalm, and therefore the statement made in the heading; and, in fact, there is all the more reason for adhering to it, because it is attested twice. The recurrence of the psalm as one of Davidic origin in 2Sa. 22 is of some weight, since not the slightest suspicion attaches to any of the other songs of sayings attributed to David in the second book of Samuel (e.g., 2Sa. 3:33, 34; 5: 8; 7:18-29; 23: 1-7). Moreover, the psalm is evidently ancient, and suited to the classical period of the language and its poetry. V. 31 is quoted as early as Pro. 30: 5, and v. 34 in Hab. 3:19. The psalm was also regarded as Davidic at a very early period, as the ‘*diaskeuast*’ of the second book of Samuel met with the heading, which attributes the psalm to David. No doubt this opinion might be founded upon v. 51; and with perfect justice if it were: for if the psalm was not composed by David, it must have been composed in his name and spirit; and who could have been this contemporaneous and equal poet?” Again, after quoting several thoroughly Davidic signs, he says at p. 96: “It is very obvious with how little justice the words of v. 51, relating to 2Sa. 7:12-16, 26, 29, have been pronounced spurious. Besides, the psalm can no more have concluded with *לְמִשִּׁיחוֹ* (v. 51) than with v. 50; and if David refers to himself by name at the commencement in 2Sa. 23: 1, and in the middle in 2Sa. 7:20, why should he not do the same at the close?”

<sup>f32</sup> In vv. 13-16 the text of the Psalms deviates greatly and in many instances from that before us. In v. 13 we find *עָבְיוּ עֲבָרוּ בְּרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ* instead of *בְּעָרוּ גַחְלֵי אֵשׁ*; and after v. 14 *בְּרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ* is repeated in the psalm. In v. 15 we have *וּבְרָקִים רַב* for *בְּרָק*, and in v. 16 *אֲפִיקֵי מַיִם* for *אֲפִיקֵי אֵשׁ*. The other deviations are inconsiderable. So far as the repetition of *בְּרָד וְגַחְלֵי אֵשׁ* at the end of v. 14 is concerned, it is not only superfluous, but unsuitable, because the lightning following the thunder is described in v. 15, and the words repeated are probably nothing more than a gloss that has crept by an oversight into the text. The *אֲפִיקֵי מַיִם* in v. 16 is an obvious

softening down of the אֲפִיקֵי יָם of the text before us. In the other deviations, however, the text of the Psalms is evidently the more original of the two; the abridgment of the second clause of v. 13 is evidently a simplification of the figurative description in the psalm, and בְּרָקִים רַב in the 15th verse of the psalm is more poetical and a stronger expression than the mere בְּרָק of our text.

<sup>ft33</sup> This explanation, which we find in Gesenius (*Thes.* and *Lex.*) and Bertheau, rests upon no other authority than the testimony of Origen, to the effect that an obscure writer gives this interpretation of τριστάτης, the rendering of שְׁלִישׁ, an authority which is completely overthrown by the writer of the gloss in *Octateuch.* (Schleussner, *Lex. in LXX t. v. p. 338*), who gives this explanation of τριστάτας: τὸς παρὰ χεῖρα τοῦ βασιλέως ἀριστερὰν τρίτης μοίρας ἄρχοντας. Suidas and Hesychius give the same explanation (*s. v. τριστάται*). Jerome also observes (ad Eze. 23): “It is the name of the second rank next to the king.”

<sup>ft34</sup> The objections brought against this have no force in them, viz., that, according to this view, the section must have been written a long time after the captivity (Clericus and Thenius), and that “the perfectly general expression ‘*the time of meeting*’ could not stand for the time of the afternoon or evening meeting” (Thenius): for the former rests upon the assumption that the daily sacrifice was introduced after the captivity, — an assumption quite at variance with the historical facts; and the latter is overthrown by the simple remark, that the indefinite expression derived its more precise meaning from the legal appointment of the morning and evening sacrifice as times of meeting for the worship of God, inasmuch as the evening meeting was the only one that could be placed in contrast with the morning.]