

In the previous chapter, we learned about how David was spared from the battle against Saul and returned to Ziklag, only to encounter disaster. As we enter into the narrative of 2 Samuel 1, we find David learning about the tragic outcome of the battle between Saul and the Philistines.

DAVID LEARNS OF SAUL'S DEATH (2 SAMUEL 1:1-16)

Upon returning to Ziklag after a victorious battle, David was visited by a man from Saul's camp. With signs of mourning, he paid obeisance to David, indicating a significant event had taken place. David, concerned about the battle against the Philistines, was eager to hear his news.

The man revealed the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, marking the end of Saul's reign and ushering in David's leadership. This man, identifying as an Amalekite from Israel's camp, is unreliable, possibly misrepresenting his actions and motives to align with the future king. Yet, he misjudged David's respect for Saul as God's anointed king.

His fabricated story included presenting Saul's crown and bracelet, potentially symbolizing power transfer. However, their authenticity remained unclear, as did the depth of David's mourning for Saul, given their strained past.

David's execution of the Amalekite man, seemingly brutal, was likely guided by his commitment to justice and his responsibility as Israel's future king. If the man truly killed Saul, he was a threat to David and Israel, hence, his execution was a protective measure for the monarchy.

DAVID'S LAMENT (2 SAMUEL 1:17-27)

THE LAMENTATION OF THE BOW (VV. 17-18)

Verse 18 introduces the term "The Bow", which has been subject to various interpretations. While some suggest that this could point to David instructing his people in the art of warfare (the use of the bow) following the death of Saul, it seems more likely, given the context, that "The Bow" refers to the lamentation David composed. Thus, a more fitting interpretation would be that David taught [the lamentation of] "The Bow". This aligns better with the narrative flow, connecting verse 18 with the surrounding verses more effectively. Notably, the term "bow" is mentioned again in verse 22, further supporting this interpretation. Compare also 1 Chronicles 8:40, where the children of Benjamin (from whom Saul and Jonathan come) are noted archers.

It is noted that this is written in the Book of Jasher. If translated, this means "the book of the upright." Most likely, this is a book of records no longer available to us.

THE LAMENT (VV. 19-27)

David begins his lamentation by mourning the loss of "the beauty of Israel," (v. 19), referring to Saul and Jonathan who were slain on the battlefield. He begs

that the news of their deaths not be proclaimed in Ashkelon or Gath, Philistine cities, for fear that the enemies of Israel might rejoice in their downfall (v. 20).

In his deep sorrow, David proclaims a curse upon Mount Gilboa, the very place where Saul and Jonathan met their tragic ends, wishing that no dew or rain would fall upon it (v. 21).

In verses 22-23, David remembers Saul and Jonathan, celebrating their prowess in battle and their inseparable bond in life, which continued even into their death. They are metaphorically described as being "swifter than eagles" and "stronger than lions," highlighting their heroic qualities.

David then calls upon the women of Israel to weep over Saul, who had enriched them with spoils taken in battle (v. 24).

Finally, David laments the loss of his dear friend Jonathan (v. 25-27). Their friendship, which began the moment they met, was a special bond. David states, "your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women" (v. 26). This is not to be interpreted in a modern homosexual context, but rather as a deep, platonic love between two friends. It speaks to the unique and treasured bonds that can form between men who have bonded into brotherhood, transcending all other forms of love.

The refrain of the lament, "How are the mighty fallen" (vv. 19, 25, 27), has transcended its biblical origins and become a culturally iconic phrase. Often used in literature, speeches, and popular media, it has come to symbolize the tragic downfall of great individuals or entities. Its applicability to many situations and its poignant commentary on the nature of power and fallibility has ensured its lasting resonance through the centuries.

FROM FUGITIVE TO KING

2 Samuel 1 marks the transition from Saul's reign to David's rise. It begins with David mourning Saul and Jonathan's deaths, showing his respect for Saul as God's anointed king and his loss at Israel's defeat. The Amalekite messenger, expecting a reward, is instead executed, demonstrating David's commitment to justice and respect for God's anointed.

David's lament for his friend Jonathan reveals his deep love and emotional expression, qualities that would endear him to his people as a king. Despite being God's anointed king, David is still transitioning from fugitive to ruler. Saul's death ends his fugitive status, but he must carefully navigate his path to kingship, showing respect for God's timing and authority.

In the upcoming chapter, 2 Samuel 2, the narrative continues to unfold as David steps into his kingly calling. After mourning Saul and Jonathan's deaths, David seeks God's guidance on his next steps. He moves to Hebron, where he is anointed king over the house of Judah, marking the beginning of his reign. However, strife is on the horizon as Abner, Saul's former army commander, instigates conflict by making Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, king over the rest of Israel. This sets the stage for a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. Stay tuned for a dive into this era-defining conflict.