

GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE RULERS BUT ONE SOVEREIGN Yahweh, Kings, and a United Kingdom

April 28, 2021

David Rises to Power

Death of Samuel and Saul marked the passing of an era.

David represented a new way of life that seemed revolutionary compared to Tribal Confederacy.

To give Saul some credit he was able to preserve the unity of Israel.

With David there is a shift from charismatic leadership to a centralized power in the crown.

From a tribal league Israel was transformed into a miniature empire.

Empire was modeled after those found in the surrounding nations.

At the time of Saul's death David was an exile in Philistia.

His first task was to put himself in a strategic position to set himself up as ruler over Israel.

He had already prepared the way for readmission to his native tribe of Judah.

He had endeared himself with the Judeans by protecting landholders from robbers.

With the elders of Judah he divided the spoil taken from raids (1 Samuel 23:1-5, 27:8-12).

Soon after the death of Saul he was anointed king at Hebron where he reigned for seven years.



During this time David had his eye on the whole territory of Israel. Northern tribes still owed allegiance to one of Saul's son, Ishbaal. Ishbaal was not an effective leader and allowed his army general, Abner, to rule.

The army general for David, Joab, was very competent. Conflict between the house of David and the house of Saul occurred by the pool of Gibeon. Two army commanders agreed to a test of strength (2 Samuel 2:12-17). Nothing was settled and from then on there was always fighting between them. David grew stronger and stronger.

Political struggle ended when Abner offered to deliver the remnant of Saul's kingdom to David. Part of the deal meant David was to take Michal, the daughter of Saul, as his first wife (2 Samuel 3:12-16).

At the age of thirty-seven, David became the unchallenged ruler of all Israel.

During his reign at Hebron the Philistines did not interfere with him.
Philistines were content for Israel to be divided by their internal civil wars.
But when the power of David increased the Philistines felt it was time to act (2 Samuel 5:17-25).
One of the greatest accomplishments by David was to break their control over Canaan.
In 2 Samuel 5:17-25, 21:15-22 we see how they made it to the coastal plain.
David also waged successful wars against Moab, Ammon, Edom, Amalek, and Aram.
He entered into a treaty with the Phoenician king.
He became recognized as the ruler of the empire.
Never before or after the time of David did Israel have such political power.

Jerusalem

David also captured the old fortress of Jerusalem despite the presence of the Jebusites.
Jebusites boasted that it was an impregnable fortress (2 Samuel 5:6-16).
Interesting that Jerusalem had never before been incorporated into the tribal territory of Israel.
David had already capitalized on the southern tribes.
His political ambitions included the northern tribes.
He sought a place for his capital that was neither northern nor southern.
Jerusalem would have been a neutral site right on the boundary of the two sections.
Jerusalem came to be known as the *City of David*.

Slight detour –

Name of the city of Jerusalem was originally *Yerushalem*.
Shalem comes from the name of the God worshiped in the city of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18).
Word *yeru* means *foundation stone* or *cornerstone*.
Name *Jerusalem* then means *the foundation stone of Shalem*.
Old tradition believes it refers to the original cornerstone laid by God when he created the earth.
Abraham was in Jerusalem once more when he offered Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22).

Further discussion on Jerusalem –

In the Tribal Confederacy leadership was based on status in a tribe or by divine charisma.
Instead David gathered a group of courtiers who got their position from him, the crown.
Also the administration of the law was no longer with the tribal elders but with the king.
David would often delegate much of the responsibilities to judges.

David wanted to establish the total allegiance of all Israel.
But he needed to be faithful to the religious sanctions and Mosaic traditions of the Confederacy.
His political innovations had to bring to fulfillment their sacred heritage.
So he rescued the Ark of the Covenant from where it rested since the fall of Shiloh.
He brought it to Jerusalem where he performed a religious dance (2 Samuel 6).
Once more the presence of Yahweh was in the midst of Israel.
Priests of the house of Eli were brought to Jerusalem and made part of the royal court.

All of these events marked the beginning of a *royal theology*.
According to the royal view Yahweh made a special covenant with David.
It was Yahweh who promised to establish the throne of David throughout all generations.
It came to be believed that Yahweh would favor any king who was a descendant of David.

As we know David wanted to replace the *Tent of Meeting* with a splendid royal temple. It was to be patterned after the temples of other nations. Conservative religious redactors of the Confederacy added the story of the prophet Nathan. Nathan argued that Yahweh did not have a *house* since the Exodus. Yahweh did not need a permanent house and David conceded his plans for now. Instead he built a tent shrine (mishkan). David organized the musicians into guilds.

One motivation for all this activity was to control the independence of the Tribal Confederacy. Against the advice of his counselors David insisted on taking a census of all Israel. Findings were to be the basis to enlist men for military service, taxation, and/or forced labor. In 2 Samuel 20 he forced some of the citizens into work camps. David served notice to all Israel that they owed their primary allegiance to the king. His plan backfired.

In 2 Samuel 24 there is a story of a plague that came about because of the sins of David. It was interpreted as a sign of the wrath of Yahweh against David but he repented in the end. Initial popularity of David began to wane. Israelites grew more restless under the burden of this centralized power. They longed for the independence they had enjoyed before Israel became a state. Echoes the complaints of the Israelites when they left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness.

In one sense the nation of Israel was the envy of the surrounding nations. David was renowned and the city of Jerusalem was beautiful. Commercial wealth came to the kingdom from all over the Near East. But that also meant that the faith of Israel was exposed to outside influences. So once more all was not well. Absalom, the son of David, instigated a revolt in Judah that almost cost David his crown. Among the northern tribes Sheba sounded a call for a revolution. David proved equal to these crises but they foreshadowed future troubles.

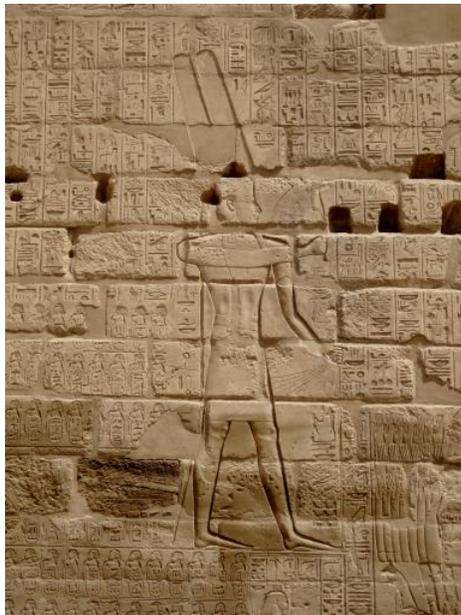
Over time the weaknesses of David were forgotten and his greatness was eulogized. It is not unlike what we have done with some of our stories in American history. Historians believed that David (more than any other king) was the ideal. He was remembered as a God-fearing king and a servant of Yahweh. He was the one who ultimately executed justice and righteousness for all of his people.

Evidence for the House of David

Tel Dan Stele was discovered in 1993 at the site of the ancient city of Dan in northern Israel. Aramaic inscription used the words *House of David*. It also records the victory of the King of Aram over the king of Israel. It dates about 200 years after the reign of David.

In 1994 it was discovered that the Moabite Stone also contained the phrase *House of David*. It contains an inscription by the King of Moab and his success over the King of Israel.

Work of archaeologists to get to these details –
 Years are spent using high resolution images and computer algorithms to perform PTM.
 PTM is Polynomial Texture Mapping that creates a 3-D image of the writings.
 RTI (Reluctance Transformation Imaging) creates photos of the stele.
 It is reviewed from various angles and in different lighting.
 Purpose is to create a high-resolution backlit image of the inscription.
 New technology showed a previously overlooked dot.
 Dot was the customary way scribes at that time indicated a break between words.
 In this case it confirmed that the word *House of David* was an authentic reading of the stele.



A third possible reference to David is found in this relief on the wall of the Great Temple at Karnak. The Pharaoh Shishak invaded Palestine in 926 BC.

Until the 10th century BC the term *Pharaoh* stood alone. Many Pharaohs in the book of Genesis were not named (following the convention of Moses' day). In subsequent periods the personal name of the monarch was generally added on, following the convention of later authors. Shishak was one of the more prominent Egyptian rulers identified in Scripture.

Shishak is mentioned six times in the Bible –
 1 Kings 11:40 2 Chronicles 12:7-8
 1 Kings 14:25 2 Chronicles 12:9
 2 Chronicles 12:2

Shortly after King Solomon died, Shishak invaded the lands of Judah and Israel. When he returned to Egypt he commissioned a record of his success to be inscribed on this wall. Portal where it is located lists over 150 places he claimed to have conquered land. Each *name ring* portrayed a bound prisoner with a symbol beneath it. Biblical places that he claimed to have conquered include Gibeon and the field of Abraham.

Jerusalem (mentioned in 1 Kings 14:25) is not mentioned on the Portal. Reason could be that it was lost to erosion as the row recording places in Judah was damaged. Another theory is that Rehoboam gave Shishak the treasures of the temple and royal palace. City did not need to be destroyed (2 Chronicles 12:7-9). Rehoboam saved Jerusalem from destruction by paying tribute to the Egyptian king.

Government of David – Judahite Cities

Archaeological evidence exists of a common political administration throughout the kingdom. A fortress dating to the time of King David has been unearthed southwest of Jerusalem. It was located on the summit of a hill that was strategically located within kingdom of Judah. Clear evidence of urban planning such as the casemate city wall with houses built into them. Lack of pig bones and absence of cultic shrines identify it as an Israelite fortress.

Two large structures were identified as royal public buildings. One was a lavish residence and the other was a storehouse. It is estimated that 100,000 tons of stone were used to build the city. It would have required a significant central government to oversee such a construction project. It is far beyond what a tribal chieftain could have constructed.

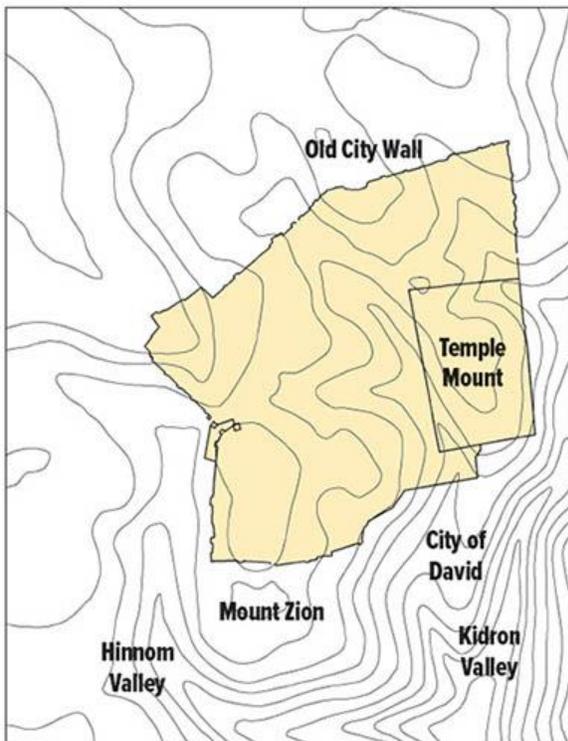
Another ancient city was unearthed that also dates to the time of King David. Researchers discovered a monumental structure which they called the governor's residency. It was built using ashlar stones and deep foundations with quality building materials. Ashlar is finely cut stone that is worked until squared and is the finest stone masonry unit. Once more it suggests a complex society with a strong political administration.

After the reign of King David, 20 monarchs from his family line reigned in succession after him. It began with Solomon who reigned over the United Monarchy and then of the southern Judah. David did indeed rule over a significant kingdom.

Ancient Jerusalem

Before the arrival of the Israelites the city was confined to a small area south of Temple Mount. Even then the city was an important territorial entity. Area included a massive fortification system of about 11-12 acres. Population estimates were between 500-700 people at most.

Jerusalem Landmarks



At the time of David the borders of the city did not change. Later King Solomon would expand the confines of the city northward to include the Temple Mount. This increased the size of the city to about 40 acres. An increase in the population was not proportionate since much of this expansion was taken up with the Temple and royal buildings.

Jerusalem would have attracted new inhabitants of different social classes. Some of these people came to reside in the city as a consequence of their official and religious capacities while others came to seek a livelihood in its developing economy. It is estimated the population of the city at this time was about 2,000.

In the mid-eighth century BC the Western Hill was added to the city.
It included more than a hundred acres.
This time the population of the city grew proportionately.
Increase may have been at least in part due to the influx of refugees from the north.
Time would have been after the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 BC.

First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.
By the end of this period the walled city of Jerusalem covered 160 acres.
Settlement also extended northward outside the city walls which expanded the city further.
At its height, the population of Jerusalem at the end of the 8th century BC was about 8,000.
Population of Jerusalem declined to about 6,000 as a result of the siege by Assyrians in 701 BC.
It remained at that level until the Babylonians destroyed the city in 586 BC.
It forced much of its population into exile in Babylon.

After the Babylonian destruction the few inhabitants who remained lived in the City of David.
After the Persians gained control of Jerusalem from the Babylonians it continued to be small.
Confined to the City of David, Jerusalem was 40 acres with a population of about 1,000.
It was not until the late Hellenistic period that Jerusalem flourished again.
The Early Roman period to the Roman destruction of the city in 70 included the time of Jesus.

Final Words about the House of David

Stories in 2 Samuel teach us that it is ultimately God who redeemed the kingdom.
As David moved toward his own power he recognized that the ultimate power rested in Yahweh.
God made faithful leadership possible in the midst of (and in spite of) so much violence.
It is the Kingdom of God that stands as an alternative to human kingdoms.
To give faithful leadership to the Kingdom of God does not require perfection.
It implies though an integrity rooted in an alternate vision of the source of true power.
What set David apart in those stories was his constant possession of a vision.
Vision was rooted in the power of God as the hope for newness in Israel.

Shape of human governance maintained the ideal of shepherding and covenant making.
Both remain significant images in the vision of the church.
In reading the story of David we do not just read about kings and kingdoms.
We read about the dwelling of God in their midst.
Like Jerusalem our places of worship can be transformed by the vision of the presence of God.

Next Session – May 5

A Divided Kingdom