

2 SAMUEL

- 1) 1:10 – Second version of Saul's death. (See 1 Samuel 31:4) This second one is the more likely since it is reinforced by 2 Samuel 4:9-10. The Amalekite probably happened on Saul's body and now tells David a false story to enhance his own position. But the important point in this episode is David's actual grief at Saul's death. Also he is cleared of complicity in his death. The Amalekite brought Saul's crown and armlet to David, not to Ishbosheth or Abner, indicating that he knew that David would be Israel's next king. David acted on the information he had, not knowing that Saul was probably dead when the Amalekite found him.
- 2) 1:17-18 – Most translations translate "elegy" as "The Song of the Bow," Jonathan's favorite weapon. The Book of Jasher is an anthology of early poems of Israel. Two other extracts: Josh 10:13, 1 Kings 8:13. Written at the time of David. Records the history of the Israelites from Adam to Joshua -- a political polemic that disagreed in so many places with the Hebrew Bible that it was kept out of the canon by the Jews themselves.
- 3) 1:19 – "Glory" can also be translated as "splendor" or "gazelle" - "The Splendor of Israel" or "The Gazelle of Israel."
- 4) 2:8-9 – Mahanaim was four miles east of Jabesh-Gilead, where Saul was revered and where they would be temporarily safe. Ishbaal is Ishbosheth in many translations. In 1 Chronicles 8:33, he is Esh-baal, meaning "God exists," emended slightly to Ishbaal, meaning "Man of Baal." Here in 2 Samuel it is Ishbosheth, meaning "Man of Shame," probably a deuteronomistic substitution, removing the offending Baal name. /// It is highly unlikely that he was 40 years old because that would make him older than Jonathan and heir to the throne ahead of Jonathan. Further evidence: he did not fight at Gilboa, probably because he was too young.
- 5) 2:12-17 – One episode in the civil war between Judah and Israel, and probably not the first battle. But why the war: Israel considers David a rebel trying to take Israel? David as a +vassal of the Philistines? No clue here.
- 6) 3:7-11 – Rizpah was probably not a slave but a wife of second rank. She bore Saul two sons, who were killed by the Gibeonites at David's request (2 Samuel 21:8-14). Here, Ishbosheth takes Abner's relations with Rizpah as a claim on the throne, a common action in that time. (See 2 Samuel 20-22, 1 Kings 2:17-25.)
- 7) 3:29-30 – "One unmanly" in many translations is literally "one who holds a spindle" – men who are not fit for battle and must do women's work. /// A redaction to excuse Joab's action.
- 8) 4:1-12 – The issue of bloodguilt has been a central concern in the history of the rise of David. Twice he avoided it by not killing Saul. Abigail saved David from killing Nabal. David ordered the death of the Amalekite who David thought had killed Saul. He cursed Joab for murdering Abner in order to dissociate himself from the killing. Now he orders the murderers of Ishbosheth to be killed in order to avoid bloodguilt. Through all this, the narrator does all possible to show that David is not responsible for the deaths, although cynics then and now claim that he probably was.
- 9) 5:5 – But Israel and Judah never truly *amalgamated*, the Israelites always feeling superior to the more rustic Judahites.
- 10) 5:7 – Zion was the fortified height (2440 feet) within Jerusalem. When Zion was taken, Jerusalem was taken. David built his palace on Zion, making Jerusalem the City of

David. Jerusalem covered only nine acres at this time. David wanted Jerusalem so that his capital was on neutral ground between Judah and Israel. It was an ancient city, mentioned in the Ebla archives c 2500 BCE, and probably the Salem where Abraham met Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17). (The 20th century movement to restore a Jewish homeland in Palestine was therefore called "Zionism.")

- 11) 5:8a – The water shaft is now called Warren's Shaft, named for Sir Charles Warren who discovered it in the 19th century. It is a natural sinkhole, enlarged and connected by a tunnel to the Gihon Springs to allow defenders to get water from the Springs which was outside the walls. Joab probably penetrated the city by climbing through the springs and up the shaft. (See 1 Chron 11:4-9 for further details of the use of the water shaft by Joab.)
- 12) 5:8b – Lev 21:18-20 lists physical defects that barred a man from the priesthood: blind, lame, disfigured, crippled foot or hand, humpbacked, weakly, walled, eczema, ringworm, hernia. Yet in Matt 21:14, Jesus heals people in the temple. /// The Millo may be a system of terraces supported by retaining walls.
- 13) 5:11 – Hiram was contemporary with Solomon, and built the Temple for him. So it was probably Hiram's father Abibaal who built David's cedar house. (Tyre, on a rocky island offshore, was perhaps the principal city of the region.)
- 14) 5:17 – Stronghold (refuge in many translations) – probably the cave of Adullam, ten miles north of Hebron, 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem, where he hid out from the Philistines in 1 Samuel 22:1.
- 15) –5:24-25 -- “Marching in the tops of the balsam trees”- a rush of wind, an image of divine power – a holy war imagery. /// This completed the conquest of Palestine. David became the undisputed ruler of all twelve tribes of Israel, and the Philistines never again controlled the interior, though they remained in their "homeland" for several more centuries.
- 16) 6:6-8 – The original text is very corrupt. The oxen probably did not stumble: they dropped (defecated) and Uzzah slipped in it, hit his head on the stone floor, and died. This was interpreted by the people as the wrath of God, an idea unacceptable to us today.
- 17) 6:20-23 – This dissociates irrevocably the house of Saul from the City of David and the claim of any of Michal's sons to the throne.
- 18) 7:1-17 – Nathan's oracle tells of God's role in taking the risk of engaging in political interests of David's kingdom. (Birch reads this as a summons to the modern church to engage in debating public policy in important issues, to get ecclesiastical hands dirty. But we as a church must be careful to separate *our* personal interests from God's.) /// The oracle introduces for the first time the language of unconditional grace into Israel's story. Not, “If you do this, I will do this...”
- 19) 7:12 – Solomon to the Jews, the Messiah to Christians, or both!
- 20) 7:18 – “Lord God” – used seven times here and nowhere else in the Samuel books. Probably a deuteronomic historian's idea. (Ezekiel in exile uses it 217 times.) The entire prayer of David the king is different from the prayers of David the shepherd/warrior/fugitive. More formal, less personal.
- 21) 7:25-29 – “And now...” The Hebrew word is *w_ 'attâ* usually used by a stronger party to demand something of a weaker party. David audaciously uses it three times, demanding fidelity from God. Bruggemann: “(David) has fixed it so that Yaweh cannot be magnified unless David is magnified as well.”

- 22) – **Chap 8** -- entire chapter a summary of material suppressed in the Deuteronomic edition for dogmatic or moral reasons.
- 23) 8:1 – “Metheg-ammah” is an ellipsis in some translations. It is a village near Gath in Philistine territory.
- 24) 8:2 – This in spite of Moab’s kindness to David’s family when he was on the run from Saul, and despite Ruth being David’s great-grandmother.
- 25) 8:8 – The bronze was used by Solomon to build ritual objects (such as the Sea) for the Temple (1 Chronicles 18:8).
- 26) 8:13-14 – These verses stand in tension with each other. Was it the Lord or David who provided the victory?
- 27) 8:16-18 – The Cherethites (from Crete?) and Pelethites (subgroup of Philistines from the Negeb, near Ziklag) were mercenaries. /// Jehoshaphat was the chief civil servant. Seraiah functioned as “secretary of state.” The sons were probably not priests in a public role but as “chaplains” to the royal household.
- 28) 9:1 – This chapter probably should be preceded by 4:3-4 and 21:1-14. In chapter 9, David should know that there were descendants of Saul who he had allowed to be murdered by the Gibeonites (chapter 21) and would not wonder if there were any left.
- 29) 9:6 – Meri-baal is the deuteronomist’s name for Mephibosheth. The frequent mention of his lameness probably means that he was not a threat to David’s throne. Although some think that David was keeping him in his household to keep an eye on him (not supported by the text).
- 30) 10:1,4 – Saul had forcibly subdued the Ammonites and David may have been sheltered by Nahash when he was running from Saul. This probably explains the rude treatment of the envoys. The country of the Ammonites is now Jordan, its capital Ammon.
- 31) 10:19 – So by 980 David ruled an empire stretching from the Red Sea to the upper Euphrates, except for the Phoenician port cities, about the size of Maine.
- 32) 11:2-5 – Did Bathsheba conspire to be seen by the king or was she simply a victim? No answer in the text.
- 33) 11:6-8 – Uriah was probably a mercenary Hittite officer but he had a Yahwistic name meaning “Yahweh is my light,” identifying him with Israel’s God. /// “Wash your feet” – “Have sex.”
- 34) 12:8 – There is no tradition that David took Saul’s wives.
- 35) 12:13a – Many ancient synagogue manuscripts leave a gap after this verse, so giving the reader the opportunity to read Psalm 51, David’s plea to God for forgiveness.
- 36) 12:15b – Bruce Birch: “If, like David, we dwell not on death but on life, then we align ourselves with the importance that the gift of life be remembered and affirmed. That life need not be eclipsed by letting death have the final word. To go on with life is not heartless or stoic and does not require us to deny the pain of loss. It is to affirm that the power of life is stronger than the power of death.”
- 37) 12:18 – Birch: “In grieving the death of a child, it is all too easy to let that child’s death become the most important thing about him. But even in a foreshortened life, the gift of that child’s life among us is more important than his death.”
- 38) 13:16 – The law required him to make a bridal payment and marry her (Exodus 22:15, Deut 22:28).
- 39) 13:34-37 – Bahurim is the more likely because Horomain was near Zoar in Moab, while Bahurim is on the Jerusalem/Jericho road. /// Talmai was Absalom’s maternal

grandfather.

- 40) 15:12 – Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather, who may have joined Absalom in retribution for David's treatment of Uriah and Bathsheba -- see David's lament in Ps 41:9, and Jesus' quote in John 13:18. Giloh is near Hebron.
- 41) 15:18b – Clearly only mercenaries are still loyal to David, the Cherethites, Pelethites, and six hundred from Gath (Philistines, surprisingly), who were with David at Ziklag when he was on the run from Saul. All the rest of the common people have been beguiled by Absalom.
- 42) 17:15, 23 – Hushai seems to have prevailed but it is Ahithophel's strategy that is carried out at first, but later it appears that the military movements that follow show little relationship to either strategy. /// Scholars often compare Ahithophel to Judas Iscariot's betrayal of God's anointed one: repentance and suicide. The 16th and 17th century writers made much attention to this, including Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden. In fact, "Ahithophel" was used as a verb denoting treachery: "to Ahithophel" was "to betray one's country."
- 43) 18:33,19:8 – It is the father who weeps over the death of Absalom, the king who reviews the returning victorious troops.
- 44) 19:10b, 11a – Apparently Absalom was anointed king and David deposed when David fled from Jerusalem. Some scholars believe that David was re-anointed at Gilgal (v 16), an ancient site connected with kingship since Saul's time (1 Samuel 11:15).
- 45) 19:13 – The concession to Amasa shows David's willingness to appease the Judeans. This move would be as if Lincoln replaced Grant with Lee after the Civil War. In Amasa's case, it worked, because the Judeans welcome David back, but caused trouble between Judah and Israel (v 42-43).
- 46) 19:43 – "Ten shares," the ten tribes of Israel, claiming to be more important to David than Judah. Foreshadows the breakup of the unified monarchy after Solomon's death.
- 47) 20:14 – Abel Beth-maacah (A bel Beth-may uh cah) near Dan, southwest of Mt. Hermon, east of the Jordan River, probably named after Abraham's brother Maachah. Means "meadow of the house of Maachah."
- 48) 21:1-14 – This episode may be what Shimel is referring to in 16:5-8, where he accuses David in bloodguilt of Saul's house. However, we have no knowledge of the offense against the Gibeonites that resulted in a charge of David's bloodguilt against the house of Saul. Only David knows (v 1). Brueggemann suggests that David fabricated the blood guilt to eliminate any future Saulide claim to the throne. The word "yaqa" translated here as "dismember" is actually uncertain, may be impaled, crucifixion, hanging, or hurling down. The Mephibosheth executed is not Jonathan's son.
- 49) **Chapter 21** – The remainder of the book is sort of an appendix, dealing with David's reign but not in chronological order. But it does follow a striking literary pattern a-b-c-c-b-a.
- 50) 21:16 – Rephaim, a prehistoric Canaanite tribe known for their size.
- 51) 21:19 – Probably a copyist's error -- should read "the brother of Goliath." Rabbinic legend says that the four giants were the sons of Orpah, a Moabite daughter-in-law of Naomi in the book of Ruth.
- 52) **Chapter 22** – (Identical to Psalm 18) Three distinct sections:
 - 1) vv 1-20 – Thanksgiving for deliverance – for David, safety from Saul, but timeless for the rest of us.
 - 2) vv 21-28 – Extols human virtue and the power of righteousness.
 - 3) vv 29-51 – In the king's voice, God's power is acknowledged as central.

- 53) 23:5 – Considered a break in the oracle. We are incredulous that David could associate his conduct with the previous verses, but we must recognize that David answers his own question by stating that God’s commitment never wavers.
- 54) 23:13-17 belong after the list ending at vs 39. These three men are not the "heroic three."
- 55) 24:1-8 – The Chronicler ascribes to Satan the temptation to do a census (1 Chron 21:1). // But why is God angry with Israel? Why is a census a threat? How does David know he has sinned? Why does God show mercy in the judgment by pestilence? The narrator answers none of these questions. But Birch thinks that the census was not a neutral act but a royal act of power that identified able-bodied men who could be conscripted for slave labor. So does Leslie Allen in the NIB, dependent of 1 Chronicles 21:5: “men who draw the sword.” Why was it a sin to take a military census? Because it indicated a lack of trust in God as the giver of victory no matter how many men David had. David trusts human resources, not God. (See Exodus 30:12-17 for Moses’ requirement for being counted – an “atonement shekel” from rich and poor.)
- 56) 24:9 – Indicating a population of 4 million, combined total of Israel and Jordan today.
- 57) 24:10 – Moses took two censuses of the Israelites, neither described as a sin.
- 58) 24:16 – This later became the site of Solomon's temple. Did the writers embroider this story with supernatural detail in order to supply additional sanctification of the ground?
- 59) 24:24 – In Chron 21:25, David paid 600 shekels (14# of gold) but that was for the site of the temple, and was a much larger area.