
a *Grace Notes* course

Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

History 512

Grace Notes

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E-mail: wdoud@gracenotes.info

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IV_18 Wars of David Great Ammonite and Syrian Campaign against Israel - Auxiliaries in turn Defeated - The Capital of Moab is taken - Edom subdued - Record of David's officers - His Kindness to Mephibosheth

2 Samuel 8 and 9; 1 Chronicles 18 to 20

BY a fitting arrangement, the record of God's promise to establish the kingdom of David is followed by an account of all his wars, though here also the order is not strictly chronological. In fact, we have merely a summary of results, which is all that was necessary in a history of the kingdom of God - the only exception being in the case of the war with Ammon and their allies the Syrians, which is described in detail in 2 Samuel 10 and 11 because it is connected with David's great sin. As might be expected, the first war was with the Philistines, whom David subdued, taking "out of the hand of the Philistines the bridle of the mother"¹ - that is, as we learn from 1 Chronicles 18:1, the command of Gath, "the mother," or principal city of the Philistine confederacy - which henceforth became tributary to Israel.

The next victory was over the Moabites, who must have, in some way, severely offended against Israel, since the old friendship between them was not only broken (1 Samuel 22:3, 4), but terrible punishment meted out to them - the whole army being made to lie down, when two-thirds, measured by line, were cut down, and only one third left alive. It was, no doubt, in this war that Benaiah, one of David's heroes, "slew two lion-like men of Moab" (1 Chronicles 11:22).

The next contest, mentioned in 2 Samuel 8:3-6, evidently formed only an incident in the course of the great war against Ammon and its confederates, which is detailed at length in the tenth and eleventh chapters of 2 Samuel. From the number of auxiliaries whom the Ammonites engaged against Israel, this was by far the greatest danger which threatened the kingdom of David. As such it is brought before the Lord in Psalm 44 and 60, while the deliverance Divinely granted, with all

that it typically implied concerning the future victory of God's kingdom, is gratefully celebrated in Psalm 68. In fact, Ammon had succeeded in girdling the whole Eastern frontier of the land with steel. Up in the far north-east rose Hadad-Ezer (Hadad, the sun-god, is help), and arrayed against Israel his kingdom of Zobah, which probably lay to the north-east of Damascus. Nor was he alone. With him were the forces of the Syrian (probably) vassal-territory, south of Hamath, between the Orontes and the Euphrates, of which Rehob (Numbers 13:21; Judges 18:28), or Beth-Rehob, was the capital. Descending still further south, along the northeastern frontier of Palestine, was the kingdom of Maacah (Deuteronomy 3:14), which joined in the war against Israel, as well as the men of Tob, who inhabited the territory between Syria and Ammon, where Jephthah had erewhile found refuge (Judges 11:5). Next we reach the territory of Ammon, from which the war originally proceeded. In the far south Moab had been only just subdued, while the Edomites made a diversion by overrunning the valley south of the Dead Sea - and a stubborn enemy they proved. Thus, as already stated, the whole eastern, northeastern, and south-eastern frontier was threatened by the enemy.

The occasion of this war was truly Oriental. Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, seems on some occasion, not otherwise known, to have shown kindness to David (2 Samuel 10:2). On his death, David, who never lost grateful remembrance, sent an embassy of sympathy to Hanun, the son and successor of Nahash. This the Ammonite princes chose to represent as only a device, preparatory to an attack on their capital, similar in character to that which so lately had laid Moab waste (8:2). There was something cowardly and deliberately provocative in the insult which Hanun put upon David's ambassadors, such as Orientals would specially feel, by shaving off the beard on one side of their face, and cutting off their long flowing dress from below up to the middle. It was an insult which, as they well knew, David could not brook; and Ammon accordingly prepared for war by raising, as we have described, all the border tribes as auxiliaries against Israel. A sum of not less than a thousand talents, or about 375,000 pounds, was spent on these auxiliaries (1

¹ The expression "taking the bridle," means taking the command or supremacy (comp. Job 30:11). The term "mother" is applied to the principal city in a district, the other towns being designated "daughters."

Chronicles 19:6), who amounted altogether to thirty-two thousand men - consisting of chariots, horsemen, and footmen ² - besides the one thousand men whom the king of Maacah furnished (2 Samuel 10:6; 1 Chronicles 19:6, 7).

Against this formidable confederacy David sent Joab, at the head of "all the host - the mighty men," that is, the choicest of his troops (2 Samuel 10:7). Joab found the enemy in double battle-array. The Ammonite army stood a short distance outside their capital, Rabbah, while the Syrian auxiliaries were posted on the wide unwooded plateau of Medeba (1 Chronicles 19:7), about fifteen miles south-west of Rabbah. Thus Joab found himself shut in between two armies. But his was not the heart to sink in face of such danger. Dividing his men into two corps, he placed the best soldiers under his brother Abishai, to meet a possible attack of the Ammonites, encouraging him with brave and pious words, while he himself, with the rest of the army, fell upon the Syrians. From the first the victory was his. When the Ammonites saw the flight of their auxiliaries, they retired within the walls of Rabbah without striking a blow. But the war did not close with this almost bloodless victory, although Joab returned to Jerusalem. It rather commenced with it. Possibly this may explain why only the second act in this bloody drama is recorded in the summary account given in 2 Samuel 8:3, etc., and in 1 Chronicles 18:4, etc. Combining these narratives with the fuller details in 2 Samuel 10 and 1 Chronicles 19, we gather that, on his defeat, or rather after his precipitate flight, Hadad-Ezer "went to turn again his hand at the river [Euphrates]," that is, to recruit his forces there (2 Samuel 8:3, in 1 Chronicles 18:3: "to establish his hand" ³) - a statement which is further explained in 2 Samuel 10:16 and 1 Chronicles 19:16 by the notice, that the Syrian

auxiliaries thence derived were placed under the command of Shobach, the captain of the host of Hadad-Ezer.

The decisive battle was fought at Helam (2 Samuel 10:17), near Hamath (1 Chronicles 18:3), and resulted in the total destruction of the Syrian host. No less than 1000 chariots, 7000 ⁴ horsemen, and 20,000 footmen, were taken; while those who fell in the battle amounted to 700, or rather (according to 1 Chronicles 19:18) 7000 charioteers and horsemen, and 40,000 footmen (in 2 Samuel, "horsemen"). Shobach himself was wounded, and died on the field of battle. ⁵

David next turned against the Syrians of Damascus, who had come to the succor of Hadad-Ezer, slew 22,000 of them, put garrisons throughout the country, and made it tributary. But all the spoil taken in that war - notably the "golden shields," and the brass from which afterwards "the brazen sea, and the pillars and the vessels of brass," were made for the Temple (1 Chronicles 18:8) - was carried to Jerusalem. The immediate results of these victories was not only peace along the borders of Palestine, but that all those turbulent tribes became tributary to David. One of the kings or chieftains, Toi, the king of Hamath, had always been at war with Hadad-Ezer. On his complete defeat, Toi sent his son Hadoram ⁶ to David to seek his alliance. The gifts which he brought, as indeed all the spoil of the war, were dedicated to the Lord, and deposited in the treasury of the sanctuary for future use.

⁴ In 2 Samuel 8:4 by a clerical error the number is given as 700. In general, as already stated, the details of the two accounts must be compared, so as to correct copyists' omissions and mistakes in either of them. It need scarcely be pointed out how readily such might occur in numerals, and where the details were so numerous and intricate.

⁵ If the reader will attentively compare the brief notices in 2 Samuel 8:3, 4 and 1 Chronicles 18:3, 4 with those in 2 Samuel 10:15-18 and 1 Chronicles 19:16-18, no doubt will be left on his mind that they refer to one and the same event, viz., not to the beginning of the war with Hadad-Ezer, but to its second stage after his precipitate flight from the battle of Medeba. For detailed proof we must refer to the Commentaries.

⁶ So in 1 Chronicles 18:10. The writing Joram, in 2 Samuel 8:10, is either a clerical error or the translation of the heathen into the Jewish form of the name - by changing "Hadad," or sun-god, into "Jehovah."

² By combining the accounts in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, it will be seen that the army consisted, as might be expected, of these three kinds of forces, although only chariots and horsemen are mentioned in Chronicles, and foot-men in Samuel. In general these two narratives supplement each other, and also not infrequently enable us to detect and correct from the one text clerical errors that have crept into the other.

³ This is the correct rendering, and not as in our Authorised Version.

But still the formidable combination against Israel was not wholly broken up. On the return of David's army from their victory over the Syrians, they had to encounter the Edomites ⁷ (2 Samuel 8:13, 14), who had advanced as far as the "valley of salt," south of the Dead Sea.

The expedition was entrusted to Abishai, Joab's brother (1 Chronicles 18:12, 13), and resulted in the total rout of the enemy, and the garrisoning of the principal places in Edom by David's men; though, to judge by 1 Kings 11:5, 16, the operations took some time, and were attended with much bloodshed. The account just given of the wars of David appropriately closes with a notice of his principal officers of state, among whom we mark Joab as general-in-chief, Jehoshaphat as chancellor (magister memorioe), or recorder and adviser, Zadok as high-priest at Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39), and Jonathan as assistant of his father Abiathar (1 Kings 1:7, 42; 2:22-27) at Jerusalem, Seraiah as secretary of state, and Benaiah as captain of the body-guard - the Cherethi and Pelethi, or "executioners and runners" ⁸ - while the king's sons acted as intimate advisers. ⁹

The record of this period of David's reign - indeed, of his life - would have been incomplete if the memory of his friendship with Jonathan had passed without leaving a trace behind. But it was not so. When he had reached the climax of his power, ¹⁰ he made inquiry for any descendant of Saul to whom he might show "the kindness of God" for Jonathan's sake.

⁷ In 2 Samuel 8:13 the words "he smote Edom," have evidently fallen out after "when he returned from smiting of the Syrians."

⁸ This seems to us the most rational interpretation of the terms, though not a few have regarded them as names of nationalities, in which case they would represent a guard of foreign mercenaries.

⁹ The term here used in the Hebrew is cohen, which is always translated "priest," but is here employed in its root-meaning: one who represents and pleads the case of a person.

¹⁰ This is evident from the circumstance that, on the death of Saul, Mephibosheth was only five years old (2 Samuel 4:4), while in the account before us he is represented as having a young son (2 Samuel 9:12), so that a considerable period must have intervened.

There is something deeply touching alike in this loving remembrance of the past, and in the manner of it, while David was at the zenith of his power, which shows his true character, and proves that success had not yet injured his better nature. There was but one legitimate scion of the royal house left - Mephibosheth, who bore in his lamed body the memorial of that sad day on Mount Gilboa. It is another bright glimpse into the moral state of the people that all this time the poor neglected descendant of fallen royalty should have found a home and support in the house of the wealthy chieftain Machir, the son of Ammiel, at Lodebar, ¹¹ near Mahanaim, the scene of Ishbosheth's murder (2 Samuel 4).

Yet another evidence was afterwards given of the worth and character of Machir. He had evidently known to appreciate David's conduct toward Mephibosheth, and in consequence become one of his warmest adherents, not only in the time of prosperity, but in that of direst adversity, when he dared openly to espouse David's cause, and to supply him in his flight with much needed help (2 Samuel 17:27-29).

But to return. The first care of the king was to send for Ziba, well known as a servant of Saul's - perhaps formerly the steward of his household. It is curious to note how, even after David assured him of his friendly intentions, Ziba on mentioning Mephibosheth, immediately told that he was "lame on his feet," as if to avert possible evil consequences. So strongly did the Oriental idea seem rooted in his mind, that a new king would certainly compass the death of all the descendants of his predecessor. Something of the same feeling appeared also in the bearing of Mephibosheth when introduced to David. But far other thoughts

¹¹ Much ingenious use has been made of the name "Lo Debar," as meaning "no pasture." It may help to control such fancies if we point out that the Masoretic writing "Lo-debar" in two words is manifestly incorrect, the place being probably the Lidbir of Joshua 13:26 (in our Authorised Version Debir). But even were it otherwise, Lo-Debar could only mean "no pasture," if the "Lo" were spelt with an aleph, which it is in 2 Samuel 17:27, but not in 9:4, 5, where it is spelt with a vav, and hence would mean the opposite of "no pasture." We have called attention to this as one of many instances of certain interpretations of Holy Scripture, wholly unwarranted by a proper study of the text, from which, however, too often, dogmatic inferences are drawn.

were in the king's heart. Mephibosheth was henceforth to be treated as one of the royal princes. His residence was to be at Jerusalem, and his place at the king's table while, at the same time, all the land formerly belonging to Saul was restored to him for his support. Ziba, whom David regarded as a faithful adherent of his old master's family, was directed, with his sons and servants, to attend to the ancestral property of Mephibosheth.

We love to dwell upon this incident in the history of David, which forms, so to speak, an appendix to the narrative of the first period of his reign, not merely for what it tells us of the king, but as the last bright spot on which the eye rests. Other thoughts, also, seem to crowd around us, as we repeat to ourselves such words as "the kindness of God" and "for Jonathan's sake." Thus much would a man do, and so earnestly would he inquire for the sake of an earthly friend whom he had loved. Is there not a higher sense in which the "for Jonathan's sake" can bring us comfort and give us direction in the service of love?

IV_19 Siege of Rabbah - David's great Sin - Death of Uriah - Taking of Rabbah - David's seeming Prosperity - God's Message through Nathan - David's Repentance - The Child of Bathsheba dies - Birth of Solomon

2 Samuel 11 and 12

THERE is one marked peculiarity about the history of the most prominent Biblical personages, of which the humbling lesson should sink deep into our hearts. As we follow their onward and upward progress, they seem at times almost to pass beyond our reach, as if they had not been compassed with the same infirmities as we, and their life of faith were so far removed as scarcely to serve as an example to us. Such thoughts are terribly rebuked by the history of their sudden falls, which shed a lurid light on the night side of their character - showing us also, on the one hand, through what inward struggles they must have passed, and, on the other, how Divine grace alone had supported and given them the victory in their many untold contests. But more than that, we find this specially exhibited just as these heroes of faith attain, so to speak, the spiritual climax of their life, as if the more clearly to set it forth from the eminence which they had reached. Accordingly,

the climax of their history often also marks the commencement of their decline. It was so in the case of Moses and of Aaron, in that of David,¹² and of Elijah. But there is one exception to this - or rather we should say, one history to which the opposite of this remark applies: that of our Blessed Lord and Savior. The climax in the history of His life among men was on the Mount of Transfiguration; and though what followed marks His descent into the valley of humiliation, even to the bitter end, yet the glory around Him only grew brighter and brighter to the Resurrection morning.

Once more spring-time had come, when the war against the Ammonites could be resumed. For hitherto only their auxiliaries had been crushed. The importance attached to the expedition may be judged from the circumstance that the ark of God now accompanied the army of Israel (2 Samuel 11:11). Again success attended David. His army, having in its advance laid waste every town, appeared before Rabbah, the strong capital of Ammon. Here was the last stand which the enemy could make - or, indeed, so far as man could judge, it was the last stand of David's last enemy. Henceforth all would be prosperity and triumph! It was in the intoxication of hitherto unbroken success, on the dangerous height of absolute and unquestioned power, that the giddiness seized David which brought him to his fall. It is needless to go over the sad, sickening details of his sin - how he was literally "drawn away of his lust, and enticed;" and how when lust had conceived it brought forth sin - and then sin, when it was finished, brought forth death (James 1:14, 15). The heart sinks as we watch his rapid downward course - the sin, the attempt to conceal it by enticing Uriah, whose suspicions appear to have been aroused, and then, when all else had failed,

¹² It need scarcely be pointed out, how this truthful account of the sins of Biblical heroes evinces the authenticity and credibility of the Scriptural narratives. Far different are the legendary accounts which seek to palliate the sins of Biblical personages, or even to deny their guilt. Thus the Talmud (Shab., 55. 6) denies the adultery of David on the ground that every warrior had, before going to the field, to give his wife a divorce, so that Bathsheba was free. We should, however, add, that this view was controverted. In the Talmudic tractate Avodah Sarah (4. b, & 5. a) a very proper application is made of the sin of David, while that of Israel in making the golden calf is not only excused but actually given thanks for!

the dispatch of the murderous missive by Uriah's own hands, followed by the contest, with its foreseen if not intended consequences, in which Uriah, one of David's heroes and captains, who never turned his back to the foe (2 Samuel 23:39), fell a victim to treachery and lust.

It was all past. "The wife of Uriah" - as the text significantly calls Bathsheba, as if the murdered man were still alive, since his blood cried for vengeance to the Lord - had completed her seven days' hypocritical "mourning," and David had taken her to his house. And no worse had come of it. Her husband had simply fallen in battle; while the wife's shame and the king's sin were concealed in the harem. Everything else was prosperous. As the siege of Rabbah can scarcely have lasted a whole year, we assume that also to have been past. The undertaking had not been without serious difficulty. It had been comparatively easy to penetrate through the narrow gorge, and, following the "fish-stocked stream, with shells studding every stone and pebble," which made "Rabbah most truly 'a city of waters,'" to reach "the turfed plain," "completely shut in by low hills on every side," in which "the royal city" stood. This Joab took. But there still remained "the city itself," or rather the citadel, perched in front of Rabbah on "a round, steep, flat-topped mamelon," past which the stream flowed rapidly "through a valley contracted at once to a width of five hundred paces." As if to complete its natural defenses, on its other side were valleys, gullies, and ravines, which almost isolated the citadel.

But these forts could not hold out after the lower city was taken. Only it was a feat of arms in those days - and Joab, unwilling to take from the king the credit of its capture, sent for David, who in due time reduced it. The spoil was immense - among it the royal crown of Ammon, weighing no less than a talent of gold,¹³ and encrusted with precious stones, which David took to himself.

¹³

Keil and other commentators are disposed to regard this weight as approximative, as the crown would, in their opinion, have been too heavy to wear. But the text does not imply that it was habitually worn, nor was its weight really so excessive. Comp. Erdmann, *die Bucher Samuelis*, p. 442, col. b. The question is very fully discussed in the Talmud (Av. S. 44. a). Among the strange explanations offered - such as that there

The punishment meted out to those who had resisted was of the most cruel, we had almost said, un-Israelitish character, not justified even by the terrible war which the Ammonites had raised, nor by the cruelties which they seem to have practiced against helpless Israelitish mothers (Amos 1:13), and savoring more of the ferocity of Joab than of the bearing of David - at least before his conscience had been hardened by his terrible sin. And so David returned triumphant to his royal city!

A year had passed since David's terrible fall. The child of his sin had been born. And all this time God was silent! Yet like a dark cloud on a summer's day hung this Divine sentence over him: "But the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of Jehovah" (2 Samuel 11:27). Soon it would burst in a storm of judgment. A most solemn lesson this to us concerning God's record of our deeds, and His silence all the while. Yet, blessed be God, if judgment come on earth - if we be judged here, that we may "not be condemned with the world!" (1 Corinthians 11:32). And all this time was David's conscience quiet? To take the lowest view of it, he could not be ignorant that the law of God pronounced sentence of death on the adulterer and adulteress (Leviticus 20:10). Nor could he deceive himself in regard to the treacherous, foul murder of Uriah. But there was far more than this. The man whom God had so exalted, who had had such fellowship with Him, had sunk so low; he who was to restore piety in Israel had given such occasion to the enemy to blaspheme; the man who, when his own life was in danger, would not put forth his hand to rid himself of his enemy, had sent into pitiless death his own faithful soldier, to cover his guilt and to gratify his lust! Was it possible to sink from loftier height or into lower depth? His conscience could not be, and it was not silent. What untold agonies he suffered while he covered up his sin, he himself has told us in the thirty-second Psalm. In general, we have in this respect also in the Psalter a faithful record for the guidance of penitents in all ages - to preserve them from despair, to lead them to true repentance,

was a magnet to draw up the crown; that it was worn over the phylactery, etc. - the only one worth mention is, that its gems made up its value to a talent of gold.

and to bring them at last into the sunlight of forgiveness and peace.

Throughout one element appears very prominently, and is itself an indication of "godly sorrow." Besides his own guilt the penitent also feels most keenly the dishonor which he has brought on God's name, and the consequent triumph of God's enemies. Placing these Psalms, so to speak, in the chronological order of David's experience, we would arrange them as follows: Psalm 38, 6, 51, and 32 - when at last it is felt that all "transgression is forgiven," all "sin covered."

It was in these circumstances that Nathan the prophet by Divine commission presented himself to David. A parabolic story, simple, taken from every-day life, and which could awaken no suspicion of his ulterior meaning, served as introduction. Appealed to on the score of right and generosity, the king gave swift sentence. Alas, he had only judged himself, and that in a cause which contrasted most favorably with his own guilt. How the prophet's brief, sharp rejoinder: "Thou art the man" must have struck to his heart! There was no disguise now; no attempt at excuse or palliation. Stroke by stroke came down the hammer - each blow harder and more crushing than the other. What God had done for David; how David had acted towards Uriah and towards his wife - and how God would avenge what really was a despising of Himself: such was the burden of Nathan's brief-worded message. Had David slain Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites? Never, so long as he lived, would the sword depart from the house of David. Had he in secret possessed himself adulterously of Uriah's wife? Similar and far sorer evil would be brought upon him, and that not secretly but publicly. And we know how the one sentence came true from the murder of Amnon (2 Samuel 13:29) to the slaughter of Absalom (18:14), and even the execution of Adonijah after David's death (1 Kings 2:24, 25); and also how terribly the other prediction was fulfilled through the guilt of his own son (2 Samuel 16:21, 22).

The king had listened in silence, like one staggering and stunned under the blows that fell. But it was not sorrow unto death. Long before his own heart had told him all his sin. And now that the Divine messenger had broken through what

had hitherto covered his feelings, the words of repentance sprang to his long-parched lips, as under the rod of Moses the water from the riven rock in the thirsty wilderness. They were not many words which he spoke, and in this also lies evidence of their depth and genuineness (comp. Luke 18:13) - but in them he owned two realities: sin and God. But to own them in their true meaning: sin as against God, and God as the Holy One, and yet God as merciful and gracious - was to have returned to the way of peace. Lower than this penitence could not descend; higher than this faith could not rise. And God was Jehovah - and David's sin was put away.

Brief as this account reads, we are not to imagine that all this passed, and passed away, in the short space of time it takes to tell it. Again we say: in this respect also let the record be searched of the penitential Psalms, that Old Testament comment, as it were, on the three days' and three nights' conflict, outlined in Romans 7:5-25, the history of which is marked out by the words "blasphemer," "persecutor," "injurious," and "exceeding abundant grace" (1 Timothy 1:13-16). For, faith is indeed an act, and immediate; and pardon also is an act, immediate and complete; but only the soul that has passed through it knows the terrible reality of a personal sense of sin, or the wondrous surprise of the sunrise of grace.

Assuredly it was so in the case of David. But the sting of that wound could not be immediately removed. The child who was the offspring of his sin must die: for David's own sake, that he might not enjoy the fruit of sin; because he had given occasion for men to blaspheme, and that they might no longer have such occasion; and because Jehovah was God. And straightway the child sickened unto death. It was right that David should keenly feel the sufferings of the helpless innocent child; right that he should fast and pray for it without ceasing; right even that to the last he should hope against hope that this, the seemingly heaviest punishment of his guilt, might be remitted. We can understand how all the more dearly he loved his child; how he lay on the ground night and day, and refused to rise or be comforted of man's comforts. We can also understand - however little his servants might -

how, when it was all over, he rose of his own accord, changed his apparel, went to worship in the house of Jehovah, and then returned to his own household: for, if the heavy stroke had not been averted, but had fallen - his child was not gone, only gone before. And once more there came peace to David's soul. Bathsheba was now truly and before God his wife. Another child gladdened their hearts. David named him, symbolically and prophetically, Solomon, "the peaceful:" the seal, the pledge, and the promise of peace. But God called him, and he was "Jedidiah," the Jehovah-loved. Once more, then, the sunshine of God's favor had fallen upon David's household - yet was it, now and ever afterwards, the sunlight of autumn rather than that of summer; a sunlight, not of undimmed brightness, but amidst clouds and storm.

Volume V – Birth of Solomon to Reign of Ahab

Preface

THE period of Israel's history treated in this Volume has a twofold special interest: political and religious. Beginning with the later years of David's reign, when the consciousness and the consequences of the great sin of his life had, so to speak, paralyzed the strong hand which held the reins of government, we are, first, led to see how in the Providence of God, the possibility of a great military world-monarchy in Israel (comp. Psalm 18:43-45) - such as those of heathen antiquity - was forever frustrated. Another era began with Solomon: that of peaceful development of the internal resources of the country; of rapid increase of prosperity; of spread of culture; and through friendly intercourse with other nations of introduction of foreign ideas and foreign civilization. When it is remembered that the building of the Temple preceded the legislation of Lycurgus in Sparta by about one hundred and twenty years; that of Solomon in Athens by more than four hundred years; and the building of Rome by about two hundred and fifty years, it will be perceived that the kingdom of Solomon presented the dim possibility of the intellectual, if not the political Empire of the world. What Jerusalem was in the high-day of Solomon's glory is described in

a chapter of this history. But, in the Providence of God, any such prospect passed away, when, after only eighty years duration, the Davidic kingdom was rent into two rival and hostile states. Yet, although this catastrophe was intimated by prophecy - as Divine judgment upon Solomon's unfaithfulness - there was nothing either abrupt or out of the order of rational causation in its accomplishment. On the contrary, the causes of this separation lay far back in the tribal relations of Israel; they manifested themselves once and again in the history of the Judges and of Saul; made themselves felt in the time of David; appeared in that of Solomon; and only reached their final issue, when the difficult task of meeting them devolved upon the youthful inexperience and misguided folly of a Rehoboam. All this is fully explained in the course of this history. After their separation, the two kingdoms passed, in their relations, through three stages, the first one of hostility; the second one of alliance, which commenced with the reign of Jehoshaphat and of Ahab, and ended with the slaughter of the kings of Judah and Israel by Jehu; and the third again one of estrangement and of hostility. Of these three periods the first is fully traced, and the beginning of the second marked in the present Volume.

From the political we turn to the religious aspect of this history. It was indeed true that the empire of the world was to be connected with the Davidic kingdom (Psalm 2.) - but not in the sense of founding a great military monarchy, nor in that of attaining universal intellectual supremacy, least of all by conformity to the ways and practices of heathen worship, magic, and theurgy. The exaltation of Zion above the hills and the flowing of all nations unto it, was to be brought about by the going forth of the Law out of Zion, and of the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2, 3). This - to confine ourselves to the present period of our history - had been distinctly implied in the great promise to David (2 Samuel 7.); it was first typically realized in the choice of Jerusalem as the City of God (Psalm 46; 48; 87.); and further presented in its aspect of peace, prosperity, and happiness in the reign of Solomon (Psalm 72.) to which the prophets ever afterwards pointed as the emblem of the higher blessings in the Kingdom of God (Micah 4:4; Zechariah 3:10, comp. with 1

Kings 4:25). But the great work of that reign, alike in its national and typical importance, was the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. This also has been fully described in the following pages.

But already other elements were at work. The introduction of heathen worship commenced with the decline of Solomon's spiritual life. After his death, the apostasy from God attained fearful proportions, partially and temporarily in Judah, but permanently in Israel. In the latter, from the commencement of its separate national existence under Jeroboam, the God-chosen Sanctuary at Jerusalem, and the God-appointed priesthood were discarded; the worship of Jehovah transformed; and by its side spurious rites and heathen idolatry introduced, until, under the reign of Ahab, the religion of Baal became that of the State. This marks the high-point of apostasy in Israel. The evolving of principles of contrariety to the Divine Covenant slowly but surely led up to the final destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth. But, side by side with it, God in great mercy placed an agency, the origin, character, and object of which have already been indicated in a previous Volume. The Prophetic Order may be regarded as an extraordinary agency, by the side of the ordinary economy of the Old Testament; and as intended, on the one hand, to complement its provisions and, on the other, to supplement them, either in times of religious declension or when, as in Israel, the people were withdrawn from their influences. Hence the great extension of the Prophetic Order in such periods, and especially in the kingdom of the ten tribes. But when, during the reign of Ahab, the religion of Jehovah was, so to speak, repudiated, and the worship of Baal and Astarte substituted in its place, something more than even the ordinary exercise of the Prophetic Office was required. For the prophet was no longer acknowledged, and the authority of the God, whose Messenger he was, disowned. Both these had therefore to be vindicated, before the prophetic agency could serve its purpose. This was achieved through what must be regarded, not so much as a new phase, but as a further development of the agency already at work. We mark this chiefly in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, which was contemporary with the first open manifestation of Israel's national apostasy.

Even a superficial reader will observe in the ministry of these two prophets, as features distinguishing it from that of all other prophets, indeed, we might say, from the whole history of the Old Testament - the frequency and the peculiar character of their miracles. Three points here stand out prominently, their unwonted accumulation; their seeming characteristic of mere assertion of power; and their apparent purpose of vindicating the authority of the prophet. The reason and object of these peculiarities have already been indicated in our foregoing remarks. But in reference to the characteristic of power as connected with these miracles, it may be remarked that its exhibition was not only necessary for the vindication of the authority of the prophet, or rather of Him in Whose Name he spake, but that they also do not present a mere display of power. For it was always associated with an ultimate moral purpose in regard to the Gentiles or to Israel - the believing or the unbelieving among them; and in all the leading instances (which must rule the rest) it was brought about not only in the Name of Jehovah, but by calling upon Him as the direct Agent in it (comp. for the present Volume I Kings 17:4, 9, 14, 20-22). Thus viewed, this extraordinary display of the miraculous appears, like that in the first proclamation of Christianity among the heathen, "for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 Corinthians 14:22) - as Bengel explains, in order that, drawn and held thereby, they might be made to listen.

But even so, some further remarks may here be allowed; not, indeed, in the way of attempted disquisition on what must always be a prime postulate in our faith, but as helps in our thinking. It seems to me, that miracles require for their (objective) possibility - that is, subjectively viewed for their credibility ¹⁴ - only one postulate: that of the True and the Living God. It is often asserted, that miracles are not the traversing of the established, but the outcome of a higher order of things.

This, no doubt, must be metaphysically true; but practically it is only a hypothetical statement,

¹⁴ I do not mean for the credibility of one or another special miracle, but for that of miracles in general.

since, admittedly, and, as the very idea of miracles implies, we know nothing of this higher nature or order of things. But may we not assert that a miracle does not seem so much an interference with the laws of Nature - of which at most we have only partial and empirical knowledge - as with the laws and habits of our own thinking concerning Nature. And if so, does not this place the question on quite another footing?

Given, that there is a God (be the seeming hypothecation forgiven!), and in living connection with His rational creatures - and it seems to follow that He must teach and train them. It equally follows, that such teaching must be adapted to their stage and capacity (power of receptiveness). Now in this respect all times may be arranged into two periods that of outward, and that of inward spiritual communication (of Law and Persuasion). During the former, the miraculous could scarcely be called an extraordinary mode of Divine communication, since men generally, Jews and Gentiles alike, expected miracles. Outside this general circle (among deeper thinkers) there was only a "feeling after God," which in no case led up to firm conviction. But in the second stage personal determination is the great characteristic. Reason has taken the place of sense; the child has grown to the man. The ancient world as much expected an argument from the miraculous as we do from the purely rational or the logically evidential. That was their mode of apprehension, this is ours. To them, in one sense, the miraculous was really not the miraculous, but the expected; to us it is and would be interference with our laws and habits of thinking. It was adapted to the first period; it is not to the second.

It would lead beyond our present limits to inquire into the connection of this change with the appearance of the God-man and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Church. As we have shown in a previous Volume, under the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was chiefly known and felt as a power. The "still small voice" marks the period of transition.

"Prophetism" was, so to speak, the introduction of the "still small voice" into the world - first in a preparatory manner; in the fullness of time, as in

all fullness, in the Christ; and finally as indwelling in the Church of God. These remarks will show what kind of questions are incidentally raised in the course of this history. Even in this respect the reader will have noticed progression in the successive Volumes of this Bible History. Otherwise also, it is hoped, he will mark it in these pages and in the notes, in the fuller and more critical treatment of all questions. A new feature here is the introduction of a few Jewish and Rabbinical notices, which may prove interesting and useful. In general, while I have endeavored to make my investigations thoroughly independent, and, so far as I could, original, it will, I trust, be also found that I have not neglected any sources of information within my reach. But above all, I would ever seek to keep steadily in view, as my main object, the practical and spiritual interest of this history. It all leads up to the Person of Christ, the Miracle of Miracles - the Miracle which gives meaning and unity to all others, and which is the truest evidence of them all. Thank God, we have sufficient and most firm historical ground for our faith in Him, as well as the inward teaching and the assurance of the Holy Ghost; sufficient, not indeed to supersede the necessity of faith, but to make that "blessed faith," so well grounded, so glorious, so joyous, and so transforming in its power, not only reasonable to us, but of obligatory duty to all men.

V_01 - CLOSE OF DAVID'S REIGN

Jewish view of the history of David — Amnon's crime — Absalom's vengeance — flight of Absalom — the wise woman of Tekoah — Absalom returns to Jerusalem — his conspiracy — David's flight

2 Samuel 13 to 16

In studying the history of the Old Testament, every thoughtful Christian must feel that a special interest attaches to the views and interpretations of the ancient Synagogue. Too often they are exaggerated, carnal, and even contrary to the real meaning of Holy Scripture. But, on the other hand, there are subjects on which we may profitably learn from Jewish teaching. Among them are some of the opinions expressed by the Rabbis on the history and character of David. A brief review of these may be helpful, and serve both as retrospect

of the past, and as preparation for the study of the closing years of his reign.

Considering the important part which David sustains in the history of Israel, the views expressed by the ancient Synagogue are, on the whole, remarkably free from undue partiality. But beyond this there is a shrewd discernment of real under apparent motives, and a keen appreciation of the moral bearing of actions. The bright side of David's character is dwelt upon his true humility,¹⁵ the affectionateness of his disposition, the faithfulness of his friendship, and, above all, his earnest heart-piety, which distinguished him not only from the monarchs of heathen nations, but from all his contemporaries, and made him for all time one of the heroes of faith.

On the other hand, his failings and sins are noted, and traced to self-indulgence, to rashness in arriving at conclusions, to suspiciousness in listening to every breath of slander, and even to a tendency to revengefulness, - all, we may observe, truly Oriental failings, the undisguised account of which is, of course, evidential of the truthfulness of the narrative. But what the Rabbis lay special stress upon is, that, while David kept indwelling sin in check, he failed in the full subdual, or rather in the moral renovation, of the heart. This led to his final and terrible sin. Of course, the Rabbis take a defective view of the case, since it would be more correct to reverse their statement. Nor should we omit to notice their conception of the higher aspects of his history. The typical bearing of his life is not lost sight of, and in every phase of it they point forward to "David's better Son." They also delight in marking throughout the overruling guidance of God, how the early training and history of David were intended to fit him for his calling; how, in Divine Providence, his failings and sins were, so to speak, ever reflected in their punishment, as, for example, his rashness in dividing the inheritance of Mephibosheth with his unworthy servant in the similar loss sustained by Rehoboam, David's grandson; how his life is full of deeper lessons; and how in the fifteenth Psalm

¹⁵ Tradition instances this curious (if not historically accurate) evidence of it, that the coins which he had struck bore on one side the emblem of a shepherd's staff and scrip, and on the reverse a tower (Ber. R. 39).

he embodies in brief summary the whole spiritual outcome of the Law (this is noticed in Maccabees 24 a).

But of special interest in this history are the views taken of David's repentance, and of the consequences which followed from his great sin. David is here set before us as the model and ideal of, and the encouragement to, true repentance. In fact, tradition goes even further. It declares that the sin of Israel in making the golden calf and the fall of David were only recorded - it might almost seem, that they were only allowed - for the sake of their lessons about repentance. The former showed that, even if the whole congregation had erred and strayed, the door of mercy was still open to them; the latter, that not only for Israel as a whole, but for each individual sinner, however low his fall, there was assurance of forgiveness, if with true penitence he turned to God. The one case proved that nothing was too great for God to pardon; the other that there was not any one beneath His gracious notice. Be they many, or only one solitary individual, the ear of God was equally open to the cry of the repentant (comp. Av. Sar. 4. b, 5. a). The other point to which the Rabbis call attention is, that all the trials of David's later life, and all the judgments which overtook him and his house, might be traced up to his great sin, which, though personally pardoned, made itself felt in its consequences throughout the whole of his after-history (comp. especially Sanh. 107. a and b, where there are some interesting notices about David).

It cannot be doubted that there is deep truth in this view. For, although David was graciously forgiven, and again received into God's favor, neither he nor his government ever wholly recovered from the moral shock of his fall. It is not merely that his further history was attended by an almost continuous succession of troubles, but that these troubles, while allowed of God in judgment, were all connected with a felt and perceptible weakness on his part, which was the consequence of his sin. If the figure may be allowed, henceforth David's hand shook, and his voice trembled; and both what he did and what he said, alike in his own household and in the land, bore evidence of it.

As we reckon, it must have been about the twentieth year of his reign,¹⁶ when the sin of his son Amnon proved the beginning of a long series of domestic and public troubles.

In this instance also it was carnal lust which kindled the devouring flame. The gloss of the LXX. is likely to be correct, that David left unpunished the incest of Amnon with Tamar, although committed under peculiarly aggravating circumstances, on account of his partiality for him as being his first-born son. This indulgence on the part of his father may also account for the daring recklessness which marked Amnon's crime. The sentence of the Divine law upon such sin was, indeed, unmistakable (Leviticus 20:20:17). But a doting father, smitten with moral weakness, might find in the remembrance of his own past sin an excuse for delay, if not a barrier to action; for it is difficult to wield a heavy sword with a maimed arm.

Two years had passed since this infamous deed. But there was one who had never forgiven it. Absalom had not forgotten the day when his brave and noble sister, after having vainly offered such resistance as she could, driven with her shame from the door of her heartless brother, had brought back the tale of her disgrace, - her maiden-princess's "sleeved upper garment"¹⁷ rent, in token of mourning, her face defiled with ashes, her hand upon her head, as if staggering under its burden, and bitterly lamenting her fate. So fair had she gone forth on what seemed her errand of mercy; so foully had she been driven back!

These two years had the presence in his home of a loved sister, now "desolate" forever, kept alive the remembrance of an irreparable wrong. The king had been "very wroth" - no more than that; but Absalom would be avenged, and his revenge should not only be signal, but overtake Amnon

when least suspecting it, and in the midst of his pleasures. Thus Amnon's sin and punishment would, so to speak, be in equipoise. Such a scheme could not, however, be immediately carried out. It required time, that so all suspicion might be allayed. But then, as Absalom's plan of revenge was peculiarly Oriental, these long delays to make sure of a victim are also characteristic of the lands of still, deep passion. At the same time, the readiness with which Jonadab, Amnon's cousin (13:3) and clever adviser in wickedness, could suggest, before it was correctly known, what had taken place (vers. 32, 33), shows that, despite his silence, Absalom had not been able effectually to conceal his feelings. Perhaps the king himself was not quite without suspicion, however well Absalom had played his part. And now follows the terrible history. It is the time of sheep-shearing on Absalom's property, not very far from Jerusalem - a merry, festive season in the East. Absalom pressing to it the king and his court, well knowing that such an invitation would be declined. But if the king himself will not come, at least let the heir-presumptive be there; and, if the king somewhat sharply takes up this suspicious singling out of Amnon, Absalom does not ask him only, but all the king's sons.

The consent has been given, and the rest of the story is easily guessed. Absalom's well-concerted plan; the feast, the merriment, the sudden murder; the hasty flight of the affrighted princes; the exaggerated evil tidings which precede them to Jerusalem; the shock to the king and his courtiers; then the partial relief on the safe arrival of the fugitives, followed by the horror produced as they tell the details of the crime - all this is sketched briefly, but so vividly that we can almost imagine ourselves witnesses of the scene. It was well for Absalom that he had fled to his maternal grandfather at Geshur. For all his life long the king could not forget the death of his firstborn, although here also time brought its healing to the wound. Absalom had been three years in Geshur - and "King David was restrained from going out

¹⁶ Both Absalom and Tamar were the children of Maacah, daughter of the king of Geshur, whom David married after his enthronement in Hebron (2 Samuel 3:3). Amnon was the son of Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess (2 Samuel 3:2).

¹⁷ This is the correct rendering, and not "garment of divers colors," as in our Authorized Version (2 Samuel 13:18, 19). The maiden princesses seem to have worn as mark of distinction a sleeved cloak-like upper garment. Comp. the Hebrew of ver. 18.

after Absalom,¹⁸ because he was comforted concerning Amnon."

Great as Absalom's crime had been, we can readily understand, that popular sympathy would in large measure be on the side of the princely offender. He had been provoked beyond endurance by a dastardly outrage, which the king would not punish because the criminal was his favorite. To the popular, especially the Eastern mind, the avenger of Tamar might appear in the light of a hero rather than of an offender. Besides, Absalom had everything about him to win the multitude. Without any bodily blemish from head to foot, he was by far the finest-looking man in Israel. Common report had it that, when obliged once a year, on account of its thickness, to have his long flowing hair cut, it was put, as a matter of curiosity, in the scales, and found amounting to the almost incredible weight of twenty shekels.¹⁹ How well able he was to ingratiate himself by his manners, the after history sufficiently shows. Such was the man who had been left in banishment these three years, while Amnon had been allowed - so far as the king was concerned - to go unpunished!

Whether knowledge of this popular sympathy or other motives had induced Joab's interference, there seems no doubt that he had repeatedly interceded for Absalom;²⁰ until at last he felt fully assured that "the heart of the king was against²¹ Absalom" (14:1).

¹⁸ That is, in a hostile sense, as the same expression is used in Deuteronomy 28:7. The Hebrew text seems to admit no other translation than that which we have given. The Authorized Version, through following the Rabbis, is evidently incorrect.

¹⁹ The Hebrew "200 shekels" must depend on a copyist's mistake, the lower stroke of k, 20, having been obliterated, thereby making the numeral r, 200.

²⁰ We infer this not only from 2 Samuel 14:22, but also from the ready guess of the king (ver. 19).

²¹ This is certainly the correct translation. Comp. the similar use of the expression in Daniel 11:28. If, as the Authorized Version puts it, the king's heart had been toward Absalom, there would have been no need to employ the woman of Tekoah, nor would the king have afterwards left Absalom for two full years without admitting him to his presence (14:28).

In these circumstances Joab resorted to a not uncommon Eastern device. At Tekoah, about two hours south of Bethlehem, lived "a wise woman," specially capable of aiding Joab in a work which, as we judge, also commanded her sympathy. Arrayed in mourning, she appeared before the king to claim his interference and protection. Her two sons - so she said - had quarreled; and as no one was present to interpose, the one had killed the other. And now the whole family sought to slay the murderer!

True, he was guilty - but what mattered the "avenging of blood" to her, when thereby she would lose her only remaining son, and so her family become extinct? Would the death of the one bring back the life of the other - "gather up the water that was spilt"? Was it needful that she should be deprived of both her sons? Thus urged, the king promised his interference on her behalf. But this was only the introduction to what the woman really wished to say. First, she pleaded, that if it were wrong thus to arrest the avenging of blood, she would readily take the guilt upon herself (ver. 9). Following up this plea, she next sought and obtained the king's assurance upon oath, that there should be no further "destroying" merely for the sake of avenging blood (ver. 11). Evidently the king had now yielded in principle what Joab had so long sought. It only remained to make clever application of the king's concession. This the woman did; and, while still holding by the figment of her story (vers. 16, 17), she plied the king with such considerations, as that he was always acting in a public capacity; that lost life could not be restored; that pardon was God like, since He "does not take away a soul, but deviseth thoughts not to drive away one driven away;"²² and, lastly, that, to her and to all, the king was like the Angel of the Covenant, whose "word" was ever "for rest."

David could have no further difficulty in understanding the real meaning of the woman's mission. Accordingly, Joab obtained permission to bring back Absalom, but with this condition, that he was not to appear in the royal presence. We

²² This is the correct rendering of the latter clauses of 2 Samuel 14:14.

regard it as evidence of the prince's continued disfavor, that Joab afterwards twice refused to come to him, or to take a message to the king. It was a grave mistake to leave such a proud, violent spirit to brood for two years over supposed wrongs. Absalom now acted towards Joab like one wholly reckless - and the message which Joab finally undertook to deliver was in the same spirit. At last a reconciliation took place between the king and his son - but only outwardly, not really, for already Absalom had other schemes in view.

Once more we notice here the consequences of David's fatal weakness, as manifest in his irresolution and half-measures. Morally paralyzed, so to speak, in consequence of his own guilt, his position sensibly and increasingly weakened in popular estimation, that series of disasters, which had formed the burden of God's predicted judgments, now followed in the natural sequence of events. If even before his return from Geshur Absalom had been a kind of popular hero, his presence for two years in Jerusalem in semi-banishment must have increased the general sympathy. Whatever his enemies might say against him, he was a splendid man - every inch a prince, brave, warm-hearted, and true to those whom he loved - witness even the circumstance, told about Jerusalem, that he had called that beautiful child, his only daughter, after his poor dishonored sister (2 Samuel 14:27), while, unlike an Oriental, he cared not to bring his sons prominently forward.²³

Daring he was - witness his setting Joab's barley on fire; but an Eastern populace would readily forgive, rather like in a prince, what might almost be called errors on the side of virtue. And now Absalom was coming forward like a real prince! His state-carriage and fifty outrunners would always attract the admiration of the populace. Yet he was not proud - quite the contrary. In fact, never had a prince taken such cordial interest in the people, nor more ardently wished to see their wrongs redressed; nor yet was there one more condescending. Day by day he might be seen at the entering of the royal palace, where the crowd

of suppliants for redress were gathered. Would that he had the power, as he had the will, to see them righted! It might not be the king's blame; but there was a lack of proper officials to take cognizance of such appeal-cases - in short, the government was wrong, and the people must suffer in consequence. As we realize the circumstances, we can scarcely wonder that thus "Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

How long this intrigue was carried on we cannot accurately determine,²⁴ and only once more wonder at the weakness of the king who left it so entirely unnoticed. That the conspiracy which Absalom had so carefully prepared, though kept very secret, was widely ramified, appears from the circumstance, that, immediately on its outbreak, he could send "spies throughout all the tribes," to ascertain and influence the feelings of the people generally, and to bid his adherents, on a preconcerted signal, gather around him.

More than that, it seems likely that Ahithophel, one of David's privy councilors, and deemed the ablest of his advisers, had, from the first, been in the secret, and, if so, probably directed the conspiracy. This would explain the strange coincidence of Ahithophel's absence from Jerusalem at the time of the outbreak, and his presence at his native Giloh, not far from Hebron (Joshua 15:51). Nor is it likely that a man like Ahithophel would so readily have obeyed the summons of Absalom if he had been until then a stranger to his plans, and had not had good reason to expect success. And, indeed, if his advice had been followed, the result would have answered his anticipations.

The place chosen for the rising was Hebron, both on account of the facilities it offered for retreat in case of failure, and as the city where formerly (in the case of David) a new royalty had been instituted; perhaps also as the birthplace of Absalom, and, as has been suggested, because the transference of the royal residence to Jerusalem may have left dissatisfaction in Hebron. Absalom

²³ It is remarkable and exceptional that the name of his daughter is mentioned, and not those of his sons.

²⁴ The notice in the text: "after forty years" (2 Samuel 15:7) is manifestly a clerical error. Most interpreters (with the Syrian, Arabic, and Josephus) read "four years;" but it is impossible to offer more than a hypothesis.

obtained the king's permission to go thither, on pretense of paying a vow made at Geshur. It was a clever device for entrapping two hundred influential persons from Jerusalem to invite them to accompany him, on pretext of taking part in the sacrificial feast. Arrived at Hebron, the mask was thrown off, and the conspiracy rapidly assumed most formidable proportions. Tidings of what had passed speedily reached Jerusalem. It was a wise measure on the part of the king to resolve on immediate flight from Jerusalem, not only to avoid being shut up in the city, and to prevent a massacre in its streets, but to give his adherents the opportunity of gathering around him. Indeed, in the hour of danger, the king seemed, for a brief space, his old self again. We can quite understand how, in David's peculiar state of mind, trials in which he recognized the dealings of God would rouse him to energy, while the even tenor of affairs left him listless. No weakness now - outward or inward! Prudence, determination, and courage in action; but, above all, a constant acknowledgment of God, self-humiliation, and a continuous reference of all to Him, marked his every step. In regard to this, we may here notice the progress of David's spiritual experience, marking how every act in this drama finds expression in the Book of Psalms. As Abraham perpetuated his progress through the land by rearing an altar unto Jehovah in every place where he sojourned, so David has chronicled every phase in his inner and outer life by a Psalm - a waymark and an altar for lone pilgrims in all ages. First, we turn to Psalms 41 and 45 - the former in which the designation Jehovah, the latter in which that of Elohim, prevails, ²⁵ - which become more full of meaning if (with Professor Delitzsch) we infer from them, that during the four years Absalom's plot was ripening, the king was partially incapacitated by some illness. These two Psalms, then, mark the period before the conspiracy actually broke out, and find their typical counterpart in the treachery of Judas Iscariot. ²⁶

²⁵ The circumstance that some are "Jehovah" and some "Elohim" Psalms often determines their position in the Psalter.

²⁶ Psalm 55:22, in the version of the LXX, is quoted by St. Peter (2 Peter 5:7).

Read in this light, these Psalms afford an insight into the whole history of this risings political as well as religious. Other two Psalms, 3 and 63, refer to David's flight; while the later events in, and the overthrow of the conspiracy, form the historical background of Psalms 61, 39, and 62.

When leaving Jerusalem in their flight, the king and his followers made a halt at "the far house." ²⁷ Besides his family, servants and officials, his body-guard (the Cherethi and Pelethi), and the six hundred tried warriors, who had been with him in all his early wanderings, accompanied him. ²⁸ In that hour of bitterness the king's heart was also cheered by the presence and steadfast adherence of a brave Philistine chieftain, Ittai, who had cast in his lot with David and with David's God. He had brought with him to Jerusalem his family (2 Samuel 15:22) and a band of adherents (ver. 20); and his fidelity and courage soon raised him to the command of a division in David's army (18:2).

It was winter, or early spring, ²⁹ when the mournful procession passed through a crowd of weeping spectators over the Kidron, to take the way of the wilderness that led towards Jericho and the Jordan.

At the foot of the Mount of Olives they again paused. Here the Levites, headed by Zadok the priest, put down the Ark, which had accompanied David, until the high-priest Abiathar, and the rest of the people who were to join the king, came up out of the city. They were wise as well as good words with which David directed the Ark of God to be taken back. At the same time he established communication with the city through the priests.

³⁰ He would wait by "the fords" of the wilderness

²⁷ Probably the last house in the suburbs of Jerusalem. The rendering in our Authorized Version (2 Samuel 15:17): "in a place that was far off," is not only incorrect, but absolutely meaningless.

²⁸ It is impossible to suppose that these six hundred were natives of Gath. Everything points to his old companions-in-arms, probably popularly called "Gathites," as we might speak of our Crimean or Abyssinian warriors.

²⁹ Kidron - "the dark flowing" - was only a brook during the winter and early spring rains.

³⁰ The expression (2 Samuel 15:27), rendered in the Authorized Version: "Art thou not a seer?" is very difficult. Keil

until the sons of the two priests should bring him trustworthy tidings by which to guide his further movements.

It reads almost like prophecy, this description of the procession of weeping mourners, whom Jerusalem had cast out, going up "the ascent of the olive-trees," and once more halting at the top, "where it was wont to worship God!" ³¹

A little before, the alarming news had come that Ahithophel had joined the conspiracy. But now a welcome sight greeted them. Hushai, the Archite (comp. Joshua 16:2), David's friend and adviser, came to meet the king, and offered to accompany him. But the presence of unnecessary non-combatants would manifestly have entailed additional difficulties, especially if of the age of Hushai. Besides, a man like the Archite might render David most material service in Jerusalem, if, by feigning to join the conspirators, he could gain the confidence of Absalom, and so, perhaps, counteract the dreaded counsels of Ahithophel. Accordingly, Hushai was sent back to the city, there to act in concert with the priests.

Twice more David's progress was interrupted before he and his men reached Ayephim. ³²

First it was Ziba, who, deeming this a good opportunity for securing to himself the covered property of his master, came on pretext of bringing provisions for the fugitives, but really to falsely represent Mephibosheth as engaged in schemes for recovering the throne of Israel amidst the general confusion. The story was so manifestly improbable, that we can only wonder at David's haste in giving it credence, and according to Ziba what he desired. Another and sadder interruption was the appearance of Shimei, a distant kinsman of Saul. As David, surrounded by his soldiers and the people, passed Bahurim, on the farther side of the Mount of Olives, Shimei followed on the

opposite slope of the hill, casting earth and stones at the king, and cursing him with such words as these: "Get away! get away! thou man of blood! thou wicked man!" thus charging him, by implication, with the death, if not of Saul and Jonathan, yet of Abner and Ishbosheth. Never more truly than on this occasion did David act and speak like his old self, and, therefore, also as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in similar circumstances (comp. Luke 9:52-56). At that moment, when he realized that all which had come upon him was from God, and when the only hope he wished to cherish was not in human deliverance, but in God's mercy, he would feel more than ever how little he had in common with the sons of Zeruiah, and how different were the motives and views which animated them (2 Samuel 16:10). Would that he had ever retained the same spirit as in this the hour of his deepest humiliation, and had not, after his success, relapsed into his former weakness! But should not all this teach us, that, however necessary a deep and true sense of guilt and sin may be, yet if sin pardoned continueth sin brooded over, it becomes a source, not of sanctification, but of moral weakness and hindrance? Let the dead bury their dead, but let us arise and follow Christ and, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13, 14).

V_02 Ahithophel's twofold advice — Hushai prevents imminent danger — David is informed, and crosses the Jordan — the battle in the forest — death of Absalom — mourning of David — David's measures — return to Gilgal — Barzillai and Joab as representative men of their period — federal republican rising under Sheba — murder of Amasa — death of Sheba.

2 Samuel 16 to 20

DAVID had not left the capital a moment too soon. He had scarcely quitted the city when Absalom and his forces appeared, and took possession of it. Hushai the Archite was one of the first to welcome him with feigned allegiance. There was a touch of boastful self-confidence about the manner in which the new king received

and others, by slightly altering the punctuation, translate: "Thou seer!"

³¹ This is the correct rendering, and not as in the Authorized Version (2 Samuel 15:32): "where he worshipped God."

³² The Authorized Version translates 2 Samuel 16:14: "they came weary;" but the word, Ayephim, is evidently intended as the name of a place, though it may mean "weary," somewhat in the sense of our "Traveler's Rest."

his father's old counselor, which the experienced man of the world well knew how to utilize. By skillful flattery of his vanity, Absalom was soon gained, and Hushai obtained access to his counsels. Thus far everything had prospered with Absalom. Jerusalem had been occupied without a struggle; and the new king now found himself at the head of a very large force, though of wholly undisciplined troops. But Ahithophel at least must have known that, though David had fled, his cause was far from lost. On the contrary, he was at the head of veteran warriors, filled with enthusiasm for their leader, and commanded by the ablest generals in the land. Besides, account must also be taken of the reaction which would undoubtedly set in. The flush of confidence on the part of Absalom's raw levies, caused by success where no resistance had been offered, would pass away in measure as the real difficulties of their undertaking daily more and more appeared; while, on the other hand, sympathy with David, and adherents to his cause, would increase in the same proportion. In these circumstances even a much less sagacious adviser than Ahithophel, whose counsel was regarded in those days as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God, would have felt that Absalom's chief, if not his sole chance of success, lay in a quick and decisive stroke, such as should obviate the necessity of a protracted campaign. But first Ahithophel must secure himself, and, indeed all the adherents of Absalom.

Considering the vanity and folly of Absalom, of which his easy reception of Hushai must have afforded fresh evidence to Ahithophel, and David's well-known weakness towards his children, it was quite possible that a reconciliation might yet take place between the usurper and his father. In that case Ahithophel would be the first, the other leaders in the rebellion the next, to suffer. The great aim of an unscrupulous politician would therefore be to make the breach between father and son publicly and absolutely permanent. This was the object of the infamous advice which Ahithophel gave Absalom (2 Samuel 16:21, 22), though, no doubt, he represented it as affording, in accordance with Oriental custom, public evidence that he had succeeded to the throne. While recoiling with horror from this unnatural crime, we cannot but call to mind the judgment predicted

upon David (2 Samuel 12:11, 12), and note how, as so often was the case, the event, supernaturally foretold, happened, not by some sudden interference, but through a succession of natural causes.

Having thus secured himself and his fellow-conspirators, Ahithophel proposed to select 12,000 men, make a rapid march, and that very night surprise David's followers, weary, dispirited, greatly outnumbered, and not yet properly organized. Had this advice been followed, the result would probably have been such as Ahithophel anticipated. A panic would have ensued, David fallen a victim, and with his death his cause been forever at an end. But a higher power than the wisdom of the renowned Gilonite guided events. In the language of Holy Scripture, "Jehovah had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel" (Samuel 17:14).

But, as first explained to Absalom and the council of Israelitish elders, Ahithophel's advice at once commended itself to their acceptance. Hushai seems not to have been present at that meeting. He was too prudent to intrude unbidden into the king's council-chamber. Besides, he had made arrangements for communicating with David before any measure of his enemies could have been executed. Just outside the city wall, by the "En-Rogel," "the Fuller's Fountain" - for they dared not show themselves in the city, the two young priests, Jonathan and Ahimaaz the swift-footed (2 Samuel 18:3), waited in readiness to carry tidings to David.

Although Absalom had followed Ahithophel's vile advice, by which no immediate danger was incurred, it was another thing to take so decisive a step as to risk the flower of his army in a night attack upon David. If Ahithophel had retired from the royal presence in the expectation of seeing his counsel immediately carried out, he was soon to find himself disappointed. Hushai was next sent for, and consulted as to the measure proposed by Ahithophel. It was easy for the old statesman to conjure up difficulties and dangers to one so inexperienced and so irresolute as Absalom, and still more, by means of unlimited flattery, to turn one so vain into another course. Absalom had only to speak, and all Israel would gather to him from

Dan even to Beer-Sheba, - they would light upon David like the dew upon the grass; or if he fled into a city, why, cart-ropes would suffice to drag it, to the smallest stone, into the nearest river! On the other hand, this was the worst time for attacking David and his men when they were desperate. The idea of a night surprise was altogether inadmissible, bearing in mind David's great experience in such warfare; while any mishap, however small, would be fatal to Absalom's cause. We scarcely wonder, even taking the merely rational view of it, that in such a council-chamber the advice of Hushai should have prevailed, although we recognize none the less devoutly, the Hand of God in ordering all. There was one, however, who did not deceive himself as to the consequences of this fatal mistake. Ahithophel knew, as if he had already witnessed it, that from this hour Absalom's cause was lost. His own course was soon and decisively chosen. He returned to his city, set his affairs in order, and, with the deliberate cynicism of a man who has lost all faith, committed that rare crime in Israel, suicide. Typical as the history of David is throughout, we cannot fail to see here also a terrible prefigurement of the end of him, who, having been the friend and companion of the Lord Jesus - perhaps regarded as the "wise adviser" among the simple disciples - betrayed his Master, and, like Ahithophel, ended by hanging himself (Matthew 27:5). Meanwhile, Hushai had communicated with the priests in Jerusalem. His counsel had, indeed, been adopted; but it was impossible to know what one so irresolute as Absalom might ultimately do. At any rate, it was necessary David should be informed, so as to secure himself against a surprise. A trusty maidservant of the priest carried the message to the young men by the "Fuller's Fountain." At the last moment their enterprise was almost defeated. A lad - probably one of those stationed to watch any suspicious movement - noticed their hurried departure in the direction of David's camp. Happily, the young men had observed the spy, and got the start of those sent after them. It was not the first nor yet the last time that an Israelitish woman wrought deliverance for her people, when at Bahurim the two young priests were successfully hidden in an empty well, and their pursuers led

astray (2 Samuel 17:18-20). And here we gladly mark how different from the present inmates of Eastern harems were the mothers, wives, and daughters of Israel, - how free in their social intercourse, and how powerful in their influence, the religious and social institutions of the Old Testament forming in this respect also a preparation for the position which the New Testament would assign to woman. But to return. Coming out of their concealment, the two priests reached the encampment safely, and informed David of his danger. Ere the morning light he and all his followers had put the Jordan between them and their enemies; and anything like a surprise was henceforth impossible.

It all happened as Ahithophel had anticipated. The revolution now changed into a civil war, of which the issue could not be doubtful. David and his forces fell back upon Mahanaim, "a strong city in a well-provisioned country, with a mountainous district for retreat in case of need, and a warlike and friendly population."

Here adherents soon gathered around him, while wealthy and influential heads of clans not only openly declared in his favor, but supplied him with all necessities. We are inclined to regard the three mentioned in the sacred narrative (2 Samuel 17:27) as representative men; Shobi, of the extreme border-inhabitants, or rather foreign tributaries (comp. 2 Samuel 10:2); Machir, of the former adherents of Saul; and Barzillai, of the wealthy land-owners generally. With Absalom matters did not fare so well. Intrusting the command of his army to a relative, Amasa, the natural son of one Ithra, an Ishmaelite,³³ and of Abigail, David's stepsister.³⁴

He crossed the Jordan to offer battle to his father's forces. These must have considerably increased since his flight from Jerusalem (comp. 2 Samuel 18:1, 2), though, no doubt, they were still greatly

³³ This is the correct reading, as in 1 Chronicles 2:17. The word "Israelite" in 2 Samuel 17:25 is evidently a clerical error.

³⁴ From 2 Samuel 17:25, it appears that both Abigail and Zeruiah, though David's sisters, were not the daughters of Jesse, David's father, but of Nahash. It follows, that David's mother had been twice married: first to Nahash and then to Jesse, and that Abigail and Zeruiah were David's stepsisters.

inferior in number to the undisciplined multitude which followed Absalom. David divided his army into three corps, led by Joab, Abishai, and Ittai - the chief command being entrusted to Joab, since the people would not allow the king himself to go into battle. The field was most skillfully chosen for an engagement with undisciplined superior numbers, being a thick forest near the Jordan,³⁵ which, with its pitfalls, morasses, and entanglements, destroyed more of Absalom's followers than fell in actual contest. From the first the battle was not doubtful; it soon became a carnage rather than a conflict.

One scene on that eventful day had deeply and, perhaps, painfully impressed itself on the minds of all David's soldiers. As they marched out of Mahanaim on the morning of the battle, the king had stood by the side of the gate, and they had filed past him by hundreds and by thousands. One thing only had he been heard by all to say, and this he had repeated to each of the generals. It was simply. "Gently, for my sake, with the lad, with Absalom!"

If the admonition implied the existence of considerable animosity on the part of David's leaders against the author of this wicked rebellion, it showed, on the other hand, not only weakness, but selfishness, almost amounting to heartlessness, on the part of the king. It was, as Joab afterwards reproached him, as if he had declared that he regarded neither princes nor servants, and that it would have mattered little to him how many had died, so long as his own son was safe (2 Samuel 19:6). If such was the impression produced, we need not wonder that it only increased the general feeling against Absalom. This was soon to be brought to the test. In his pursuit of the rebels, one of Joab's men came upon a strange sight. It seems that, while Absalom was riding rapidly through the dense wood in his flight, his head had somehow been jerked in between the branches of one of the large spreading terebinths - perhaps, as Josephus has it (Ant. 7. 10, 2), having been entangled by the flowing hair. In this position the mule which he

rode, perhaps David's royal mule - had run away from under him; while Absalom, half suffocated and disabled, hung helpless, a prey to his pursuers. But the soldier who first saw him knew too well the probable consequences of killing him, to be tempted to such an act by any reward, however great. He only reported it to Joab, but would not become his tool in the matter. Indeed, Joab himself seems to have hesitated, though he was determined to put an end to Absalom's schemes, which he must have resented the more, since but for his intervention the prince would not have been allowed to return to Jerusalem. And so, instead of killing, he only wounded Absalom with pointed staves,³⁶ leaving it to his armor-bearers finally to dispatch the unhappy youth. His hacked and mangled remains were cast into a great pit in the wood, and covered by a large heap of stones. A terrible contrast, this unknown and unhonored criminal's grave, to the splendid monument which Absalom had reared for himself after the death of his sons! Their leader being dead, Joab, with characteristic love for his countrymen, sounded the rappel, and allowed the fugitive Israelites to escape.

But who was to carry to the king tidings of what had happened? Joab knew David too well to entrust them to any one whose life he specially valued. Accordingly, he sent a stranger, a Cushite; and only after repeated entreaty and warning of the danger, allowed Ahimaaz also to run with the news to Mahanaim. Between the outer and the inner gates of that city sat the king, anxiously awaiting the result of that decisive day. And now the watchman on the pinnacle above descried one running towards the city. Since he was alone, he could not be a fugitive, but must be a messenger. Soon the watchman saw and announced behind the first a second solitary runner. Presently the first one was so near that, by the swiftness of his running the watchman recognized Ahimaaz. If so, the tidings which he brought must be good, for on no other errand would Ahimaaz have come. And so it was! Without giving the king time for question, he rapidly announced the God-given

³⁵ It is impossible to decide whether this "Wood of Ephraim" was west or east of the Jordan. From the context, the latter seems the more probable.

³⁶ The Hebrew word here used (Shevet) generally means scepter, or else staff or rod, but not dart, as in the Authorized Version (2 Samuel 18:14).

victory. Whatever relief or comfort the news must have carried to the heart of David, he did not express it by a word. Only one question rose to his lips, only one idea of peace³⁷ did his mind seem capable of contemplating, "Peace to the lad, to Absalom?"

Ahimaaz could not, or rather would not, answer. Not so the Cushite messenger, who by this time had also arrived. From his language - though, even he feared to say it in so many words - David speedily gathered the fate of his son. In speechless grief he turned from the two messengers, and from the crowd which, no doubt, was rapidly gathering in the gateway, and crept up the stairs leading to the chamber over the gate, while those below heard his piteous groans, and these words, oft repeated, "My son Absalom, my son! My son Absalom! Oh, would that I had died for thee! Absalom, my son - my son?"

That was not a joyous evening at Mahanaim, despite the great victory. The townsmen went about as if there were public mourning, not gladness. The victorious soldiers stole back into the city as if ashamed to show themselves - as if after a defeat, not after a brilliant and decisive triumph.

It was more than Joab could endure. Roughly forcing himself into the king's presence, he reproached him for his heartless selfishness, warning him that there were dangers, greater than any he had yet known, which his recklessness of all but his own feelings would certainly bring upon him. What he said was, indeed, true, but it was uttered most unfeelingly - especially remembering the part which he himself had taken in the death of Absalom - and in terms such as no subject, however influential, should have used to his sovereign. No doubt David felt and resented all this. But, for the present, it was evidently necessary to yield; and the king received the people in the gate in the usual fashion.

³⁷ The first word of Ahimaaz as he came close to the king was: "Shalom," "Peace" (in our Authorized Version "All is well"). David's first word to Ahimaaz also was "Shalom." Only Ahimaaz referred to the public weal, David to his personal feelings.

The brief period of insurrectionary intoxication over, the reaction soon set in. David wisely awaited it in Mahanaim. The country recalled the national glory connected with his reign, and realized that, now Absalom had fallen, there was virtually an interregnum equally unsatisfactory to all parties. It certainly was neither politic nor right on the part of David under such circumstances to employ the priests in secret negotiations with the tribe of Judah for his restoration to the throne. Indeed, all David's acts now seem like the outcome of that fatal moral paralysis into which he had apparently once more lapsed. Such, notably, was the secret appointment of Amasa as commander-in-chief in the room of Joab, a measure warranted neither by moral nor by military considerations, and certainly, to say the least, a great political mistake, whatever provocation Joab might have given. We regard in the same light David's conduct in returning to Jerusalem on the invitation of the tribe of Judah only (2 Samuel 19:14). Preparations for this were made in true Oriental fashion. The men of Judah went as far as Gilgal, where they had in readiness a ferry-boat, in which the king and his household might cross the river. Meantime, those who had cause to dread David's return had also taken their measures. Both Shimei, who had cursed David on his flight, and Ziba, who had so shamefully deceived him about Mephibosheth, went over Jordan "to meet the king."³⁸ As David was "crossing,"³⁹ or, rather, about to embark, Shimei, who had wisely brought with him a thousand men of his own tribe, Benjamin - the most hostile to David - entreated forgiveness, appealing, as evidence of his repentance, to his own appearance with a thousand of his clansmen, as the first in Israel to welcome their king.

In these circumstances it would have been almost impossible not to pardon Shimei, though David's rebuff to Abishai, read in the light of the king's dying injunctions to Solomon (1 Kings 2:8, 9),

³⁸ This is the correct rendering, and not, as in the Authorized Version, 2 Samuel 19:17, last clause: "They went over Jordan before the king."

³⁹ This is the proper translation of the Hebrew word, and not, as in our Authorized Version (19:18): "As he was come over Jordan."

sounds somewhat like a magniloquent public rebuke of the sons of Zeruiah, or an attempt to turn popular feeling against them. At the same time, it is evident that Shimei's plea would have lost its force, if David had not entered into separate secret negotiations with the tribe of Judah.

Ziba's motives in going to meet David need no comment. There can be little doubt that, well-informed as David must have been of all that had passed in Jerusalem, he could not but have known that the bearing and feelings of Mephibosheth had been the reverse of what his hypocritical servant had represented them (comp. 2 Samuel 19:24). All the more unjustifiable was his conduct towards the son of Jonathan.⁴⁰

Both the language of irritation which he used towards him, and the compromise which he attempted (19:29), show that David felt, though he would not own, himself in the wrong. Indeed, throughout, David's main object now seemed to be to conciliate favor and to gain adherents - in short, to compass his own ends by his own means, which were those of the natural, not of the spiritual man; of the Oriental, though under the influence of religion, rather than of the man after God's own heart. For, at the risk of uttering a truism, we must insist that there are only two courses possible - either to yield ourselves wholly to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or else to follow our natural impulses. These impulses are not such as we may, perhaps, imagine, or suppose them to have become under the influence of religion. For the natural man always remains what he had been - what birth, nationality, education, and circumstances had made him. This consideration should keep us from harsh and, probably, erroneous judgments of others, and may likewise serve for our own warning and instruction.

Happily, this history also presents a brighter picture. It is that of the grand patriarchal chieftain, Barzillai, who had supported David in his adversity, and now came, despite the weight of his

years, to escort the king over the Jordan. No reward or acknowledgment did he seek - in fact, the suggestion seemed almost painful. A good and true man this, happy in his independence, though not too proud to allow his son Chimham to go to court - all the more that he had nothing to gain by it. May we not legitimately infer, that his conduct was influenced not merely by loyalty to his earthly sovereign, but by the recognition of the higher spiritual truths, and the hope for Israel and the world, symbolized by the reign of David. For nearly eighty years Barzillai had watched in distant Rogelim the varying fortunes of his loved people. He remembered the time when Samuel was "judge;" he recalled the hope enkindled in the hearts of Israel when, after the brilliant exploit in his own Jabesh-gilead, Saul was proclaimed king. He had followed the waning glory of that same Saul - for far and wide are tidings carried in the East, told by watch-fires, and borne from home to home - until hope had almost died out in his soul. Then came the story of David, and increasingly, as he followed his career, or when some one would repeat one of those new Psalms - so different from the old war-songs in which Jewish deeds of valor had been recorded - ascribing all to Jehovah, and making man of no account, it all seemed to mark a new period in the history of Israel, and Barzillai felt that David was indeed God's Anointed, the symbol of Israel's real mission, and the type of its accomplishment. And at last, after the shameful defeat of Israel and the sad death of Saul, he had hailed what had taken place in Hebron. The capture of Jerusalem, the erection of a central sanctuary there, and the subjection of Israel's enemies round about, would seem to him bright links in the same chain. And though David's sad fall must have grieved him to the heart, it could never have influenced his views of Absalom's conduct, nor yet shaken his own allegiance. And now that David's reign, so far as its spiritual bearing was concerned, was evidently coming to a close - its great results achieved, its spiritual meaning realized - he would feel that nothing could undo the past, which henceforth formed part of the spiritual inheritance of Israel, or rather of that of the world at large. And so, in the spirit of Simeon, when he had witnessed the incipient fulfillment of Israel's hopes, Barzillai was content

⁴⁰ The Talmud makes the following significant application: "In the hour when David said to Mephibosheth, Thou and Ziba shall divide the land, a Bath Kol (voice of God) came forth and said to him: Rehoboam and Jeroboam shall divide the kingdom" (Shabb. 56 b.).

to "turn back again" to his own city, to die there, and be laid in the grave of his father and mother, who had lived in times far more troubled than his own, and had seen but "far off" that of which he had witnessed the happy accomplishment.

On the other hand, we may, at this stage of our inquiries, be allowed to place by the side of Barzillai another representative man of that period. If Barzillai was a type of the spiritual, Joab was of the national aspect of Judaism. He was intensely Jewish, in the tribal meaning of the word, not in its higher, world-wide bearing, only Judaeen in everything that outwardly marked Judaism, though not as regarded its inward and spiritual reality.

Fearless, daring, ambitious, reckless, jealous, passionate, unscrupulous, but withal most loving of his country and people, faithful to, and, no doubt, zealous for his religion, so far as it was ancestral and national - Joab represented the one phase of Judaism, as Barzillai the other. Joab stands before us as a typical Eastern, or rather as the typical Eastern Judean. Nor is it without deep symbolical meaning, as we trace the higher teaching of history, that Joab, the typical Eastern Judaeen, - may we not say, the type of Israel after the flesh? - should, in carrying out his own purposes and views, have at last compassed his own destruction.

David's difficulties did not end with the crossing of Jordan. On the contrary, they seemed rather to commence anew. He had been received by the tribe of Judah; a thousand Benjamites had come for purposes of their own; and probably a number of other tribesmen may have joined the king during his progress.⁴¹ He had been asked to take part in the matter, and both David and Judah had acted as if they were of no importance. Accordingly, when the representatives of Israel arrived in Gilgal, there was fierce contention between them and the men of Judah about this unjustifiable slight - the men of Judah being the more violent, as usual with those who do a wrong.

It needed only a spark to set the combustible material on fire. A worthless man, one Sheba, a

Benjamite, who happened to be there, blew a trumpet, and gave it forth to the assembled representatives of the tribes that, since they had no part in David, they should leave him to reign over those who had selected him as their king. It was just such a cry as in the general state of excitement would appeal to popular feeling. David soon found himself deserted by his Israelitish subjects, obliged to return to Jerusalem with only his own tribesmen, and threatened by a formidable revolution in front. To suppress the movement before it had time to spread and disintegrate the country by everywhere exciting tribal jealousies - such was David's first care on his return to Jerusalem, after setting his household in order (2 Samuel 20:3). But the fatal consequences of David's late conduct now appeared. True to his promise, he proposed to entrust to Amasa the command of the expedition against Sheba and what, to borrow a modern term, we may call the "Federal Republic." But, whether from personal incapacity, or, more probably, from the general want of confidence in, and dissatisfaction with, the new commander, Amasa did not even succeed in bringing together a force. As time was of the greatest importance,⁴² David felt himself obliged again to have recourse to Abishai, or rather, through him, to Joab.⁴³ There was now no lack of trusty warriors, and the expedition at once moved northwards.

The forces, under the leadership of Abishai and Joab, had reached the great stone at Gibeon, when Amasa "came to meet them" from the opposite direction, no doubt, on his way to Jerusalem. Joab was, as usual, "girt with his armor-coat as a garment, and upon it the girdle of the sword, bound upon his loins, in its scabbard; and it [the scabbard] came out, and it [the sword] fell out."

⁴¹ It is thus that we interpret the expression - "half the people of Israel" - in 2 Samuel 19:40. Of course, it must not be taken literally, as appears from the whole context.

⁴² To use the pictorial Hebrew expression (2 Samuel 20:6): "lest he find him fenced cities, and tear out our eye." This seems to us a more suitable rendering than that either of our Authorized Version or of Ewald.

⁴³ The text mentions only dealings between David and Abishai, but the subsequent narrative shows that Joab was in command. From the relations between Joab and the king, it seems likely that David may have preferred to communicate with Joab through his brother.

Amasa seems to have been so startled by this unexpected appearance of a host with another leader as to have lost all presence of mind. He saw not the sword which Joab picked up from the ground, and now held low down in his left hand, but allowed his treacherous relative to take him by the beard, as if to kiss him, so that the sword ran into the lower part of his body. Probably Joab, while determined to rid himself of his rival, had adopted this plan, in the hope of leaving it open to doubt whether Amasa's death had been the result of accident or of criminal intention. Then, as if there were not time for delay, Joab and Abishai left the body weltering where it had fallen, and hastened on their errand.

It was a dreadful sight; and not all the urgency of the soldier whom Joab had posted by the dead or dying man could prevent the people from lingering, horror-stricken, around him. At last the body had to be removed. It had been left on the ground, probably alike as a mark of contempt and a warning to others not to provoke the jealousy of Joab. And now David's army was in full chase after Sheba and his adherents. They followed him through the whole land up to the far north among the fortresses⁴⁴ by the Lake Merom, where he was at last tracked to Abel, or rather, Abel-Beth-maachah.

To this fortress Joab now laid siege. Its destruction, however, was averted by the wisdom of one of its women. Demanding speech of Joab from the city-wall, she reminded the general that the people of Abel had been famed, not for being rash in action, but rather wise and deliberate in counsel. Had Joab ever asked whether the town of Abel, which he was about to destroy, shared the views of Sheba, or took part in the rebellion? She, and, by implication, her fellow-citizens, were quite the contrary of turbulent conspirators. How, then, could Joab act so unpatriotically, so un-Jewishly, as to wish to destroy a city and a mother in Israel, and to swallow up the inheritance of Jehovah? And when Joab explained that it was not the

destruction of a peaceable city, but the suppression of a rebellion which he sought, she proposed, as a speedy end to all trouble, that Sheba should be killed, and, in evidence of it, his head thrown over the wall. It was an easy mode of ridding themselves both of a troublesome visitor and of a terrible danger, - and the gory head cast at his feet convinced Joab that the rebellion was at an end, that he might retire from the city, dismiss his army, and return to Jerusalem. So ended the last rising against David - and, we may add, the political history of his reign.

V_03 - APPENDIX TO THE HISTORY OF DAVID **The famine — the pestilence — the temple arrangements — David's last hymn and prophetic utterance.**

2 Samuel 21 to 24; 1 Chronicles 21 to 27

WITH the suppression of the federal revolution under Sheba, the political history of David, as related in the Second Book of Samuel, closes. Accordingly, the account of this, the second part of his reign, concludes, like that of the first (2 Samuel 8:16), with an enumeration of his principal officers (2 Samuel 20:23 to the end). What follows in the Second Book of Samuel (21-24), must be regarded as an Appendix, giving, first, an account of the famine which desolated the land (21:1-14), probably in the earlier part, and of the pestilence which laid it waste, probably towards the close of David's reign (24); secondly, some brief notices of the Philistine wars (21:15-22), and a detailed register of David's heroes (23:8-39), neither of which will require comment on our part; and, lastly, David's final Psalm of thanksgiving (22), and his last prophetic utterances (23:1-7). All these are grouped together at the end of the Second Book of Samuel, probably because it was difficult to insert them in any other place consistently with the plan of the work, which, as we have repeatedly noted, was not intended to be a biography or a history of David, chronologically arranged. Perhaps we should add, that the account of the pestilence was placed last in the book (24), because it forms an introduction to the preparations made for the building of the Temple by Solomon. For, as we understand it, no sooner had the place been divinely pointed out where the Sanctuary should be reared, than David

⁴⁴ These fortresses are grouped together in 1 Kings 15:20; 2 Kings 15:20; 2 Chronicles 16:4. It has been ingeniously suggested that the expression: "all the Berites" (2 Samuel 20:14), which gives no meaning, should be regarded as a masculine form of the word, and rendered: "all the fortresses."

commenced such preparations for it as he could make. And here the First Book of Chronicles supplements most valuable notices, not recorded in any other part of Scripture. From these we learn what David did and ordered in his kingdom with a view to the building of the Temple and the arrangement of its future services (1 Chronicles 22-29). We have thus four particulars under which to group our summary of what we have designated as the Appendix to the History of David, the famine; the pestilence; the Temple arrangements; and the last Psalm and prophecy of the king.

1. The Famine (2 Samuel 21:1-14). - There is not a more harrowing narrative in Holy Scripture than that connected with the famine which for three years desolated Palestine. Properly to understand it, we require to keep two facts in view. First, the Gibeonites, who, at the time of Joshua, had secured themselves from destruction by fraud and falsehood (Joshua 9:3, etc.), were really heathens - Hivites, or, as they are called in the sacred text, Amorites, which was a general designation for all the Canaanites (Genesis 10:16; 15:16; Joshua 9:1; 11:3; 12:8, etc.). We know, only too well, the character of the Canaanite inhabitants of the land; and although, after their incorporation with Israel, the Gibeonites must have been largely influenced for good, their habits of thinking and feeling would change comparatively little,⁴⁵ - the more so because, as there would be few, if any, intermarriages between them and native Israelites, they would be left, at least socially, isolated. This will account for their ferocious persistence in demanding the uttermost punishment prescribed by the law.

The provisions of this law must be our second point of consideration. Here we have again to bear in mind the circumstances of the times, the existing moral, social, and national conditions, and the spiritual stage which Israel had then reached. The fundamental principle, laid down in Numbers 35, was that of the holiness of the land in which Jehovah dwelt among His people. This holiness must be guarded (ver. 34). But one of the worst

defilements of a land was that by innocent blood shed in it. According to the majestic view of the Old Testament, blood shed by a murderer's hand could not be covered up - it was, so to speak, a living thing which cried for vengeance, until the blood of him that had shed it silenced its voice (ver. 33), or, in other words, until the moral equipoise had been restored. While, therefore, the same section of the law provided safety in case of unintentional homicide (vers. 10-29), and regulated the old practice of "avenging blood," it also protected the land against crime, which it would not allow to be compensated for by money (ver. 31). Hence the Gibeonites were strictly within the letter of the law in demanding retaliation on the house of Saul, in accordance with the universally acknowledged Old Testament principle of the solidarity of a family; and David had no alternative but to concede their claim. This is one aspect of the question. The other must be even more reverently approached. We can only point out how they who lived in those times (especially such as the Gibeonites) would feel that they might cry to God for vengeance, and expect it from the Just and True One; and how the sternest lessons concerning public breach of faith and public crimes would be of the deepest national importance after such a reign as that of Saul.

The story itself may be told in few sentences. For some reason unrecorded - perhaps in the excess of his carnal zeal, but certainly without sufficient grounds - Saul had made havoc among the Gibeonites, in direct contravention of those solemn engagements into which Israel had entered, and which up to that time had been scrupulously observed. When, afterwards, a famine desolated the land for three years, and David sought the face of Jehovah, he was informed that it was due to the blood-guilt⁴⁶ which still rested on the house of Saul.

Upon this the king summoned the Gibeonites, and asked them what atonement they desired for the wrong done them, so that the curse which they had invoked might no longer rest on the inheritance of Jehovah. Their answer was characteristic. "It is not

⁴⁵ In a previous volume of this History we have shown how much even a woman like Jael was influenced by tribal traditions - so to speak, the inherited taint of blood.

⁴⁶ It is thus we understand the expression (2 Samuel 21:1): "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house."

a matter to us of silver or of gold, in regard to Saul and his house, nor is it ours to put to death any one in Israel." "And he said, What say ye then? and I will do it for you."⁴⁷ Then came the demand, made with all the ferocity and irony of which they were capable, that the blood-vengeance which they, as Gibeonites, did not venture to take, should be executed for them, and that seven of Saul's descendants should be handed over to them that they might be nailed to the cross - of course after they were dead, for so the law directed⁴⁸ - as they termed it: "To Jehovah in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of Jehovah."

Terrible as their demand was, it could not be refused, and the two sons of Rizpah, a foreign concubine of Saul, and five sons of Merab,⁴⁹ Saul's eldest daughter, were selected as the victims. Then this most harrowing spectacle was presented.

From the commencement of the barley harvest in April until the early rains of autumn evidenced the removal of the curse from the land, hung those lifeless, putrescent bodies, which a fierce Syrian sun shriveled and dried; and beneath them, ceaseless, restless, was the weird form of Saul's concubine. When she lay down at night it was on the coarse hair-cloth of mourners, which she spread upon the rock; but day and night was she on her wild, terrible watch to chase from the mangled bodies the birds of prey that, with hoarse croaking, swooped around them, and the jackals whose hungry howls woke the echoes of the night. Often has Judaea capta been portrayed as weeping

over her slain children. But as we realize the innocent Jewish victims of Gentile persecution in the Middle Ages, and then remember the terrible cry under the Cross, this picture of Rizpah under the seven crosses, chasing from the slaughtered the vultures and the jackals, seems ever to come back to us as its terrible emblem and type.

"And it was told David what Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. And David went [himself] and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa. and he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were crucified. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulcher of Kish his father."

2. The Pestilence. - In regard to this event, it is of the greatest importance to bear in mind that it was sent in consequence of some sin of which Israel, as a people, were guilty. True, the direct cause and immediate occasion of it were the pride and carnal confidence of David, perhaps his purpose of converting Israel into a military monarchy. But this state of mind of their king was, as we are expressly told (2 Samuel 24:1), itself a judgment upon Israel from the Lord, when Satan stood up to accuse Israel, and was allowed thus to influence David (1 Chronicles 21:1). If, as we suppose, the popular rising under Absalom and Sheba was that for which Israel was thus punished, there is something specially corresponding to the sin alike in the desire of David to have the people numbered, and in the punishment which followed. Nor ought we to overlook another Old Testament principle evidenced in this history, that of the solidarity of a people and their rulers.

It seems a confirmation of the view, that the sin of David, in wishing to ascertain the exact number of those capable of bearing arms, was due to carnal elation and pride, and that the measure was somehow connected with military ambition on his part, that both in 2 Samuel and in 1 Chronicles. This story follows an enumeration of the three

⁴⁷ We have translated literally 2 Samuel 21:4.

⁴⁸ The punishment of crucifixion, or impaling, is mentioned in Numbers 25:4. But that criminals were not crucified or impaled alive, but only after they were slain, appears from ver. 5. Similarly, in hanging, death always preceded the hanging (Deuteronomy 21:22, where our Authorized Version is not sufficiently distinct). The same remark applies to the punishment of burning, which was only executed on the dead body of the criminal (Leviticus 20:14), as appears from Joshua 7:15 comp. with ver. 11. In these respects the Rabbinical Law was much more cruel, ordering literal strangulation, and burning by pouring down molten lead (comp. specially Mishnah Sanh. 7:1-3).

⁴⁹ In 2 Samuel 21:8, by a clerical error, we have Michal instead of Merab. But it was the latter, not the former, who was married to Adriel the Meholathite (comp. 1 Samuel 18:19).

classes of David's heroes, and of some of their most notable feats of arms.⁵⁰

The unwillingness of Joab and of the other captains, to whom the king entrusted the census, arose partly from the knowledge that such an attempt at converting all Israel into a large camp would be generally disliked and disapproved - a feeling with which he and his fellow-captains would, as Israelitish patriots, fully sympathize. But religious considerations also came in, since all would feel that a measure prompted by pride and ambition would certainly bring judgment upon the people (1 Chronicles 21:3). Remonstrance having been vain, the military census was slowly and reluctantly taken, the Levites being, however, excluded from it (Numbers 1:47-54), and the royal order itself recalled before the territory of Benjamin was reached.⁵¹ For already David's conscience was alive to the guilt which he had incurred. It was after a night of confession and prayer on the part of David, that Gad was sent to announce to him the punishment of his sin. For, the temporal punishment appropriately followed - not preceded - the confession of public sin. Left to choose between famine,⁵² defeat, and pestilence, David wisely and well cast himself upon the Lord, finding comfort only in the thought, which has so often brought relief to those who realize it, that, even when suffering for sin, it is well to fall into the hands of Jehovah. Nor was his unuttered hope disappointed.

The pestilence, terrible as it was in its desolations, was shortened from three days to less than one

⁵⁰ The same inference may be drawn from 1 Chronicles 27:23, 24, where the enumeration is evidently connected with the military organization of the nation.

⁵¹ Comp. 1 Chronicles 21:6; 27:24. From this latter notice we also gather that the result of the census was not entered in the Chronicles of King David. We can therefore the less hesitate in supposing some want of accuracy in the numbers given. Of the two enumerations we prefer that in 2 Samuel 24:9. However, 1,300,000, or even, according to 1 Chronicles 21:5, 1,570,000 men capable of bearing arms, would only imply a total population of about five or six millions, which is not excessive.

⁵² According to 1 Chronicles 21:12, the famine was to be of three years duration. The number "seven" in 2 Samuel 24:13 must be a clerical error.

day, "from the morning to the time of the assembly," viz. for the evening sacrifice.

Meanwhile "David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth" (1 Chronicles 21:16), were lying on their faces in humiliation before the Lord. Significantly, it was as the Divine command of mercy sped to arrest the arm of the Angel messenger of the judgment, that he became visible to David and his companions in prayer. Already he had neared Jerusalem, and his sword was stretched towards it - just above Mount Moriah, at that time still outside the city, where Aravnah the Jebusite had his threshing-floor.

It was a fitting spot for mercy upon Israel, this place where of old faithful Abraham had been ready to offer his only son unto God; fitting also as still outside the city; but chiefly in order that the pardoning and sparing mercy now shown might indicate the site where, on the great altar of burnt-offering, abundant mercy in pardon and acceptance would in the future be dispensed to Israel. At sight of the Angel with his sword pointed towards Jerusalem, David lifted his voice in humblest confession,⁵³ entreating that, as the sin had been his, so the punishment might descend on him and his household, rather than on his people. This prayer marked the beginning of mercy. By Divine direction, through Gad, David and they who were with him, went to Araunah to purchase the place thus rendered forever memorable, in order to consecrate it to the Lord by an altar, on which burnt and peace-offerings were brought. And this was to be the site for the future "house of Jehovah God," and for "the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel" (1 Chronicles 22:1).

And God had both prepared and inclined the heart of the Jebusite for the willing surrender of the site for its sacred purposes. No doubt he was a proselyte, and probably (analogously to Rahab) had been an ally in the taking of Jerusalem under Joab. It seems that Araunah and his four sons, while busy in that threshing-floor, had also seen the figure of the Angel high above them, and that it had struck terror into their hearts (1 Chronicles

⁵³ 2 Samuel 24:23, reads in the Hebrew: "The whole, O king, does Aravnah give unto the king," and not as in the Authorized Version.

21:20). When, therefore, David and his followers came, they were prepared freely to give. not only the threshing-floor, but also all within it,¹¹ if only Jehovah were pleased to accept the prayer of the king (2 Samuel 24:23). Thus most significantly, in its typical aspect, were Jew and Gentile here brought together to co-operate in the dedication of the Temple-site. It, no doubt, showed insight into Oriental character, though we feel sure it was neither from pride nor narrow national prejudice, that David refused to accept as a gift what had been humbly and, as we believe, heartily offered. But there was evident fitness in the acquisition of the place by money⁵⁴ on the part of David, as the representative of all Israel. And as if publicly and from heaven to ratify what had been done, fire, unkindled by man, fell upon the altar and consumed the sacrifices (1 Chronicles 21:26). But from that moment the destroying sword of the Angel was sheathed at the command of God.

3. David's Temple arrangements. Since the Lord had, in His Providence, pointed out the place where the Sanctuary was to be reared, David, with characteristic energy, began immediate preparations for a work, the greatness of which the king measured by his estimate of Him for Whose service it was designed (1 Chronicles 22:5). It almost seems as if in these arrangements all David's former vigor had come back, showing where, despite his weaknesses and failings, the king's heart really was. Besides, the youth of his son and successor Solomon,⁵⁵ and the consideration that probably no other monarch would wield such influence in the land as he had possessed, determined David not to neglect nor defer anything that he might be able to do. First,

⁵⁴ Of the two statements of the price, we unhesitatingly take that in 1 Chronicles 21:25 (the other in 2 Samuel depending on a clerical error, very common and easily accounted for in numerals). Bearing in mind that the common shekel was of half the value of the sacred, and that the proportion of gold to silver was about ten to one, the six hundred shekels of gold would amount to about £380. In Siphre 146 a., various attempts are made to conciliate the two diverging accounts - it need scarcely be said ineffectually. The learned reader will find a full discussion of the question in Ugolini's tractate Altare Exterior (Ugolini Thesaurus, Fol. Vol. 10. pp. 504-506).

⁵⁵ Solomon was probably at this time about twenty years of age.

he took a census of the "strangers,"⁵⁶ and set them to prepare the stone, iron, and timber work.

His next care was to give solemn charge to Solomon concerning what was so much on his own heart. Recapitulating all that had passed, when he first proposed to "build an house unto the Name of Jehovah," he laid this work upon his son and God-appointed successor, as the main business of his reign. Yet not as a merely outward work to be done, but as the manifestation of spiritual religion, and as the outcome of allegiance to God and His law (1 Chronicles 22:6-12). Only such principles would secure true prosperity to his reign (ver. 13). For himself, he had "by painful labor" gathered great treasures,⁵⁷ which were to be devoted to the building of the new Temple; and he had made all possible preparations for it. Finally, summoning "the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites" (1 Chronicles 23:1, 2), and presenting to them his son Solomon as successor in the kingdom, he entreated their co-operation with him in what was to be the great work of the future - making it not a personal, but a national undertaking, expressive of this, that they had "set heart and soul to seek Jehovah" their God (1 Chronicles 22:19).

It was in this solemn assembly of laity and priesthood that Solomon's succession was announced and accepted, and that the future organization of the Temple Services was determined and fixed.

A census of the Levites gave their number, from thirty years and upwards, at 38,000 men. Of these 24,000 were appointed to attend to the general ministry of the sanctuary (23:28-32), 6,000 to act

⁵⁶ These were not only foreign settlers, but the descendants of the original inhabitants of the land whose lives had been spared. Such was their number that Solomon could employ no fewer than one hundred and fifty thousand of them to bear burdens, and to hew stones (1 Kings 5:15; 2 Chronicles 2:17).

⁵⁷ Although, as we have often explained, clerical errors occur in the numerals in the historical books, it may be well to give the real equivalent of the silver and gold, mentioned in 1 Chronicles 22:14. Bearing in mind the distinction between the sacred and the common shekel (2 Samuel 14:26; 1 Kings 10:17, compared with 2 Chronicles 9:16), it would amount to under £4,000,000. Immense as this sum is, Keil has shown that it is by no means out of proportion with the treasures taken as booty in antiquity (comp. Bibl. Comment. Vol. 5. pp. 181-184).

as "officers and judges," 4,000 for instrumental music, and 4,000 as choristers - the latter (and probably also the former class) being subdivided into adepts, of which there were 288 (25:7), and learners (25:8). As all the Levites, so these 288 adepts or trained choristers were arranged by lot into twenty-four courses, a certain number of "learners" being attached to each of them. Each course of Levites had to undertake in turn such services as fell to them. Those who had charge of the gates were arranged into classes, there being altogether twenty-four posts in the Sanctuary in which watch was to be kept (1 Chronicles 26:1-19). Similarly, the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were arranged by lot into twenty-four courses for their special ministry (1 Chronicles 24:1-19). Lastly, the sacred text gives a brief account of the work of those 6000 Levites whom David appointed as "scribes and judges" (1 Chronicles 26:29-32), and of the final arrangement of the army, and of all the other public offices (1 Chronicles 27.).

4. David's last hymn and prophetic utterance (2 Samuel 22-23:2-7). - The history of David appropriately closes with a grand hymn, which may be described as alike the program and the summary of his life and reign in their spiritual aspect. Somewhat altered in language, so as to adapt it to liturgical purposes, it is inserted in our present Psalter as Psalm 18, to which we accordingly refer. This grand hymn of thanksgiving is followed - to use the language of an eminent German critic - by the prophetic testament of the king, in which he indicates the spiritual import and bearing of his kingdom.

If Psalm 18 was a grand Hallelujah, with which David quitted the scene of life, these his "last words" are the Divine attestation of all that he had sung and prophesied in the Psalms concerning the spiritual import of the kingdom which he was to found, in accordance with the Divine message that Nathan had been commissioned to bring to him. Hence these "last words" must be regarded as an inspired prophetic utterance by David, before his death, about the King and the Kingdom of God in their full and real meaning. The following is the literal rendering of this grand prophecy:

The Spirit of Jehovah speaks by me,

And His Word is on my tongue! ⁵⁸

Saith the God of Israel,

Speaks to me the Rock of Israel:

A Ruler over man, ⁵⁹ righteous,

A Ruler in the fear of God -

And as the light of morning, ⁶⁰ when riseth the sun ⁶¹ -

Morning without clouds -

From the shining forth out of (after) rain (sprouts the green out of the earth! ⁶²

For is not this my house with God? ⁶³

Since an everlasting covenant He hath made with me,

Provided (prepared) in all things, and preserved (kept, watched over). -

Then, all my salvation and all good pleasure,

Shall He not cause it to spring forth?

And (the sons of) Belial, as thorns cast away are they all -

For they are not taken up in the hand ⁶⁴

⁵⁸ The Rabbis and others regard this as referring to all David's Psalms and prophecies.

⁵⁹ Not merely over Israel, but over mankind, indicating the future Kingdom of God, and the full application of the prophecy in its Messianic sense.

⁶⁰ Here the effects of that great salvation are described. The Rabbis, however, connect it with the previous verse, and regard it as a farther description of this ruler.

⁶¹ The light of the morning of salvation - in opposition to the previous darkness of the night, the sun being the Sun of Righteousness.

⁶² After a night of rain the sun shines forth and the earth sprouts. Comp. Psalm 72:6; Isaiah 45:8.

⁶³ Pointing to the promise in 2 Samuel 7 - as it were: Does not my house stand in this relationship towards God, that alike the Just Ruler and the blessings connected with His reign shall spring from it ?

⁶⁴ Here is an indication of the judgment to come upon the enemies of the Messianic Kingdom. Mark here the contrast between the consequences of Belial and those of the morning light when green sprouts from the earth. Mark also how, while the sprouting of the grass is a gradual and continuous process, the burning of the castaway thorns is the final but immediate judgment. Comp. Matthew 13:30.

And the man who toucheth them,
 Provides himself (lit., fills) with iron and shaft of
 spear,⁶⁵
 And in fire⁶⁶ are they utterly burned in their
 dwelling⁶⁷
 (where they are).

V_04 - REIGN OF SOLOMON Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne — anointing of Solomon — great assembly of the chiefs of the people — dying charge of David — Adonijah's second attempt and punishment — execution of Joab and of Shimei.

1 Kings 1, 2; 1 Chronicles 23:1, 28 to 29

THE history of David, as told in the Book of Chronicles, closes with an account of what, in its bearing on the theocracy, was of greatest importance, the public charge to Solomon in regard to the building of the Temple and the preparations for the work. On the other hand, the Book of Kings⁶⁸ takes up the thread of prophetic

⁶⁵ That is, they are not gathered together with the naked hand in order to burn them, but people provide themselves with iron instruments held by wooden handles.

⁶⁶ The fire a symbol of the Divine wrath.

⁶⁷ Other renderings have been proposed, but the one in the text conveys the idea that the thorns are burned where they lie.

⁶⁸ It should always be kept in view that (as stated in Vol. 4: p. 163) the history of Israel is presented in the Book of Kings from the prophetic point of view. In other words, it is a history written from the standpoint of 2 Samuel 7:12-16. In the language of Winer (Real-Wörterb. vol. 1. p. 412, note), "The history of the Old Testament was not regarded as an aggregate of facts, to be ascertained by diligent research and treated with literary ability, but as the manifestation of Jehovah in the events which occurred, for the understanding of which the influence of the Spirit of God was an essential condition." The Old Testament contains not merely secular history. Accordingly, its writers are designated in the Canon as "prophets." The "Book of Kings" was originally one work. Its division into two books was made by the LXX translators. Thence it passed into the Vulgate, and was introduced into our printed editions of the Hebrew Bible by Dan. Bomberg, at the beginning of the 16th century. In the LXX and Vulgate the books of Samuel and of Kings form one work, divided into four books. The Talmud (Baba B. 15 a) ascribes the authorship of the Book of Kings to Jeremiah, but the evidence seems insufficient. The author of the "Book of Kings" mentions three sources from which, at least partially, his information was derived: the Acts of Solomon (once, 1 Kings 11:41), the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (sixteen times), and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (seventeen times) - making in

history where the previous writers had dropped it. The birth of Solomon had been the beginning of the fulfillment of that glorious promise (2 Samuel 7:12-16), which gave its spiritual meaning and import to the institution of royalty in Israel. And the promises and the warnings embodied in that prediction form, so to speak, the background of the whole later history of the people of God.

Naturally, the first event recorded in this history is the formal installation of Solomon as the God-appointed successor of David (2 Samuel 7:12; 12:25; 1 Kings 8:20; 1 Chronicles 28:5-7). It was somewhat hastened by an incident which, like so many others that caused trouble in Israel, must ultimately be traced to the weakness of David himself. It has already been noticed, in the history of Amnon and in that of Absalom, to what length David carried his indulgence towards his children, and what terrible consequences resulted from it. Both Amnon and Absalom had died violent deaths. A third son of David, Chileab, whose mother was Abigail, seems also to have died. At least, so we infer from the silence of Scripture concerning him. These were the three eldest sons of David. The next in point of age was Adonijah the son of Haggith (2 Samuel 3:2-4). Like his elder

all thirty-four references. At the time of the composition of the Book of Chronicles the two last-mentioned works seem to have been either combined, or re-cast into one: the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel (2 Chronicles 16:11; 24:27, and other passages). Another important inference is to be derived from a comparison of the Books of Kings with those of Chronicles. Not unfrequently the two relate the same event in almost the same words. But while in the history of Solomon, as told in the Book of Kings, the reference is to the Acts of Solomon, in Chronicles (2 Chronicles 9:29) it is to the "Book of Nathan the prophet, the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the Visions of Iddo the Seer," showing that the work called the Acts of Solomon was based on these three prophetic compositions. Again, in the history of Rehoboam, we have in 2 Chronicles 12:15, a reference to the "Book of Shemaiah the Prophet," and to that of "Iddo the Seer, concerning genealogies," in the history of Abijah to the "Midrash of the prophet Iddo" (2 Chronicles 13:22); in that of Uzziah to "the writing of Isaiah the prophet" (2 Chronicles 26:22); and in that of Manasseh to "the Book of Chosai" (2 Chronicles 23:19). Without entering into further details, we only remark that passages from the prophecies of Isaiah (26-39.), and of Jeremiah (53.) are inserted in 2 Kings, where, however, they are ascribed not to these prophetic books, but to the "Book of the Kings of Judah" (2 Kings 20:20). These facts seem to show that the works from which the author of the Book of Kings quoted, were themselves based on earlier prophetic writings. It is only necessary to add in this note that the period embraced in the Books of Kings extends over 455 years.

brother, Amnon, he had been born in Hebron; ⁶⁹ like Absalom, he was distinguished by personal attractions. But he also, as Amnon and Absalom, had all his life been fatally indulged by David. In the expressive language of Holy Scripture, "his father had not made him sorry all his days, saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1 Kings 1:6.)

The consequence may be easily guessed. By right of primogeniture the succession to the throne seemed his. Why, then, should he not attempt to seize upon a prize so covered? His father had, indeed, sworn to Bathsheba that Solomon should be his successor (1 Kings 1:13, 30), and that on the ground of express Divine appointment; and the prophet Nathan (ver. 11), as well as the leading men in Church and State, not only knew (as did most people in the land), but heartily concurred in it. But what mattered this to one who had never learned to subject his personal desires to a higher will? This supposed Divine appointment of his younger brother might, after all, have been only a matter of inference to David, and Nathan and Bathsheba have turned it to account, the one because of the influence which he possessed over Solomon, the other from maternal fondness and ambition. At any rate, the prospect of gaining a crown was worth making an effort; and the more quickly and boldly, the more likely of success.

It must be admitted that circumstances seemed specially to favor Adonijah's scheme. David was indeed only seventy years old; but premature decay, the consequence of a life of exposure and fatigue, had confined him not only to his room (ver. 15), but to his bed (ver. 47). Such was his weakness, that the body had lost its natural heat, which could not be restored even by artificial means; so that the physicians, according to the medical views of those times, had advised bodily contact with a young, healthy subject. ⁷⁰ For this

⁶⁹ Accordingly, Adonijah must have been between thirty-three and forty years of age at the time of his attempt to seize the throne.

⁷⁰ Josephus (Ant. 7. 2) expressly states this to have been the advice given by his physicians. The practice was in accordance with the medical views entertained not only in ancient, but even in comparatively modern times. Dr. Trusen devotes to the medical consideration of this subject a special paragraph (§ 21,

purpose Abishag, ⁷¹ a fair maiden from Shunem, had been brought into the king's harem. In David's utter physical prostration, Adonijah might reckon on being able to carry on his scheme without interference from the king.

Indeed, unless David had been specially informed, tidings of the attempt would not even have reached his sick chamber until it was too late. The rebellion of Absalom had failed because David was in full vigor at the time, and so ably supported by Abiathar the priest and Joab the captain of the host. But Adonijah had attached these two to his interests. It is not difficult to understand the motives of Joab in trying to secure the succession for one who would owe to him his elevation, not to speak of the fact that the rival candidate for the throne was Solomon, the "man of peace," the pupil of Nathan, and the representative of the "religious party" in the land. But it is not so easy to account for the conduct of Abiathar, unless it was prompted by jealousy of Zadok, who officiated at Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39). As the latter was considered the principal Sanctuary (1 Kings 3:4), the high-priest who officiated there might have been regarded as entitled to the Pontificate, when the temporary dual service of Gibeon and Jerusalem should give place to the permanent arrangements of the Temple. If such was his motive, Abiathar may have also wished to lay the new king under personal obligations.

From such a movement - which took advantage first of the indulgence, and then of the illness of David; which compassed aims that every one would know to be equally contrary to the Divine appointment and the express declarations of the aged king; and in which the chief agents were an ambitious priest and an unscrupulous military chieftain, those who were faithful to their God or to their monarch would, of course, keep aloof. Adonijah knew this, and accordingly excluded such from the invitation to the feast, at which it

pp. 257-260) in his curious work, *Sitten, Gebr. u. Krankh. d. alten Hebr.*

⁷¹ The story of Abishag is only introduced in order to explain the occasion of Adonijah's later execution. Of course it must be viewed in the light of the toleration of polygamy, nor could the object which the physicians had in view have been otherwise secured.

had been arranged his accession to the throne should be proclaimed. In other respects his measures closely resembled those taken by Absalom. For some time previous to his attempt he had sought to accustom the people to regard him as their future king by assuming royal state (1 Kings 1:5).

At length all seemed ready. It is characteristic that, in order to give the undertaking the appearance of religious sanction, the conspirators prepared a great sacrificial feast. We know the scene, and we can picture to ourselves that gathering in the shady retreat of the king's gardens, under an over-arching rock, close by the only perennial spring in Jerusalem - that of the Valley of Kidron - which now bears the name of the "fountain of the Virgin," at that time the En-Rogel ("Spring of the Spy," or else "of the Fuller").

But a higher power than man's overruled events. To outward appearance the danger was indeed most urgent, the more so that it was not known in the palace. But already help was at hand. Nathan hastened to Bathsheba, and urged on her the necessity of immediate and decisive action. If Adonijah were proclaimed king, Solomon, Bathsheba, and all their adherents would immediately be put out of the way. In such circumstances court-ceremonial must be set aside; and Bathsheba made her way into the king's sick-chamber. She spoke respectfully but earnestly; she told him fully what at that very moment was taking place in the king's gardens; she reminded him of his solemn oath about the succession, which had hitherto determined her own conduct and that of Solomon's adherents; and, finally, she appealed to him as alone competent at this crisis to determine who was to be king. The interview had not terminated when, according to previous arrangement, Nathan was announced. He had come on the same errand as Bathsheba' to inform the king of what Adonijah and his adherents were doing, and that Solomon and the king's most trusted servants had been excluded from a feast, the object of which was not concealed. Had all this been done by direction of the king? If so, why had not he, so old and faithful a counselor, been informed that Adonijah was to be proclaimed successor to the throne?

With whatever weakness David may have been chargeable, he always rose to the requirements of the situation in hours of decisive importance, when either the known will of God or else the interests of his kingdom were in question. In this instance his measures were immediate and decisive.

Recalling Bathsheba, who had withdrawn during the king's interview with Nathan, he dismissed her with words of reassurance. Then he sent for Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, and gave them his royal command for the immediate anointing of Solomon as king over Judah and Israel. The scene is vividly portrayed in Scripture. The king's body-guard - the Cherethi and Pelethi - under the command of Benaiah, was drawn up in front of the royal palace. Soon a vast concourse of people gathered. And now the king's state-mule, richly caparisoned, was brought out. It was an unwonted sight, which betokened some great state event. Presently, the great news became known, and rapidly spread through the streets and up the bazaars, Solomon was about to be anointed king! The people crowded together, in hundreds and thousands, from all parts of the city. And now Solomon appeared, attended by Zadok the high priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the chief of the royal guard. The procession formed, and moved forward. To avoid collision with the party of Adonijah, it took an opposite or western direction to the valley of Gihon. Here, by authority and express command of David, Solomon was anointed king with the sacred oil by the joint ministry of the high priest and the prophet. The ceremony ended, the blast of the trumpets proclaimed the accession of the new monarch, and the people burst into a ringing shout, "God save King Solomon!" The enthusiastic demonstrations of joy were truly Eastern.

There were music of pipes and acclamations of the people, until the ground beneath seemed to rend with the noise. As the procession returned, the city rang with the jubilee, until it reached the royal palace, where King Solomon seated himself in solemn state on his father's throne, and received the homage of the court, while David gave public thanks that he had lived to see that day.

Meanwhile, out in the king's gardens, the strange shouts from the city had reached Adonijah and his

guests. Joab had grown uneasy as he heard the well-known sound of the trumpet. The tidings traveled quickly, and already one was in waiting to explain its meaning. But it was not as Adonijah had hoped against hope. The son of Abiathar had come to inform the conspirators of what had just taken place in Gihon and in the royal palace. And now sudden terror seized those who had but lately been so confident in their feasting. Every one of the conspirators fled, foremost among them Adonijah; nor did he deem himself safe until he had reached the sacred precincts, and laid hold on the horns of the altar. This asylum he refused to quit, until Solomon had assured him by oath that his life would be spared - though on condition that his future conduct should give the king no cause for complaint.

The events just recorded, which are only briefly indicated in 1 Chronicles 23:1, were followed by a great assembly of the chief dignitaries in Church and State (1 Chronicles 28, 29.), when the accession of Solomon to the throne was formally confirmed, and he was anointed a second time (1 Chronicles 29:22). We remember, that similarly both Saul and David were anointed a second time, on publicly receiving the homage of their subjects (1 Samuel 11:15; 2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3). It was in this great assembly that the aged king, speaking, as it were, from his death-bed, laid before his people the deepest wishes of his heart, and told his inmost thoughts concerning the character, the stability, and the object of royalty in Israel. Beginning with an evident reference to the great promise given to him and his house, David first solemnly owned, that the appointment to the royal office - more particularly his own election and that of Solomon as his successor - was of God as Israel's supreme King, and that the stability and welfare of the kingdom depended upon faithful allegiance to Jehovah, to which he accordingly admonished Solomon and the people (1 Chronicles 28:2-10).

Then, following further the line indicated in the covenant-promise, David pointed out that the grand object of his son's reign must be to build an house unto the LORD. This would be the initial typical fulfillment of that to which the prophetic promise pointed. So deeply had the king this work at heart, that he had already prepared all the plans

for the Temple; and that he dedicated to this work the vast treasures which during his long reign he had accumulated, always with this great purpose in view (1 Chronicles 28:11-29:5). But this was not a work which Solomon either could or should undertake by himself. He must be supported in it by a willing people. And when the representatives of Israel in that great assembly readily and liberally promised of their substance, David seemed to feel that the work of his life was indeed done, and that God would now let "His servant depart in peace." The solemn and joyous eulogy, and the earnest prayer for his people, and for his son and successor on the throne, with which David dismissed this assembly, form a most appropriate close to his public career.

Gladly would we here end our record of David's life. But Scripture, in its truthful narration, calls us to witness yet another scene. We stand by the death-bed of David, and hear his last injunctions to his son and successor. At this time Solomon could not have been more than twenty years of age. Probably he was even younger. However wise and well-disposed, the temptations and difficulties of his position could not but awaken fears in the heart of his father, and that in proportion as he kept in view the terms of the Divine prediction concerning his house, with its warnings as well as its promises. In regard to matters Divine and spiritual, only one plain advice need he give to Solomon. Spiritual decidedness, faithfulness, and obedience to God, such simply were the means by which the promises given to David and his house would be inherited. But all the greater were the political dangers which beset the path of the youthful king, an unscrupulous military party, headed by Joab; a dissatisfied priestly faction, ready to plot and join any rebellious movement; and ill-suppressed tribal jealousies, of whose existence Shimei had, at a critical period, given such painful evidence. The leaders of two of these parties had long forfeited their lives; indeed, only the necessities of the time could have excused either the impunity with which Joab's treachery and his murder of Abner and Amasa had been passed over, or the indulgence extended to such conduct as that of Shimei. On the other hand, gratitude to such tried adherents in adversity as the family of Barzillai had proved, was alike dictated by duty and by policy. It was

not, as some would have us believe, that on his death-bed David gave utterance to those feelings of revenge which he was unable to gratify in his lifetime, but that, in his most intimate converse with his son and successor, he looked at the dangers to a young and inexperienced monarch from such powerful and unscrupulous partisans. In these circumstances it was only natural that, before dying, he should have given to his son and successor such advice for his future guidance as his long experience would suggest; and similarly that, in so doing, he should have reviewed the chief dangers and difficulties which had beset his own path, and have referred to the great public crimes which, during his reign, had necessarily been left unpunished. The fact that, even before his death, an attempt had been made to elevate Adonijah to the throne, contrary alike to the known will of God and the appointment of David, and that the chief actors in this had been Joab and Abiathar, must have recalled the past to his mind, and shown him that the fire had been smoldering these many years, and might at any time burst into flame. But, however natural, and even lawful, such feelings on the part of David, it is impossible to read his parting directions and suggestions to Solomon without disappointment and pain. Truly, even the most advanced of the "children were in bondage under the elements of the world" (Galatians 4:3).

How far did the type fall short of the reality, and how dim and ill-defined were the foreshadowings of Him, "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously!"

And yet events soon proved that David's apprehensions had been only too well grounded. The aged king died, and was buried in his own "City of David," amidst the laments of a grateful nation, which ever afterwards cherished his memory (Acts 2:29). It seems that Adonijah, although obliged to submit to Solomon's rule, had not given up all hope of his own ultimate accession. The scheme which he conceived for this purpose lacked, indeed, the courage of open rebellion, but was characterized by the cunning and trickery of a genuine Oriental intrigue. To

marry any of the late king's wives or concubines was considered in the East as publicly claiming his rights (2 Samuel 12:8; 16:21, 22). If such were done by a rival, it would be regarded as implying an insult to which not even the weakest monarch could submit without hopelessly degrading his authority in public opinion (2 Samuel 3:7). If Adonijah's primary object was to lower Solomon in public estimate, and that in a manner which he could neither resist nor resent, no better scheme could have been devised than that of his application for the hand of Abishag. By combined flattery and parade of his supposed wrongs and injuries, he gained the queen-mother as unconscious accomplice and even instrument of his intrigue. Any scruples might be set aside by the plea, that there could be no wrong in his request, since, in the strict sense, Abishag had neither been the wife nor the concubine of David. To punish with death so cunning and mean an intrigue can scarcely be called excessive severity on the part of Solomon. It was rather a measure necessary, if tranquillity was to be preserved in the land, all the more that, by his own admission, Adonijah still entertained the opinion that rightfully the kingdom was his, and that "all Israel set their faces on him that he should reign" (1 Kings 2:15).

Whether or not Abiathar and Joab were involved in this intrigue, is matter of uncertainty. At any rate an attempt so daring, and coming so soon after that in which these two had taken a leading part, called for measures which might prevent rebellion in the future, and serve as warning to the turbulent in Israel. That Joab felt conscious his conduct deserved the severest punishment, appears from the circumstance that he anticipated his sentence. On hearing of Adonijah's execution, he sought refuge within the sacred precincts of the Tabernacle. It would have been not only a dangerous precedent, but contrary to the express direction of the law (Exodus 21:12; Deuteronomy 19:11-13), to have allowed a criminal by such means to escape justice. However, it was not for his part in Adonijah's recent schemes that Joab now suffered the extreme penalty of the law, but for his former and still unpunished crimes, which his recent treasonable conduct seemed to bring afresh to view, just as some accidental ailment does a long latent fatal disease. As for Abiathar, in

consideration of his office and former services to David, he was only removed from the Pontificate, and banished to his ancestral property at Anathoth, the city of the priests. But Holy Scripture calls us to mark, how by the deposition of Abiathar the Divine prediction against the house of Eli (1 Samuel 2:31-36) was fulfilled, though in this instance also through a concurrence of intelligible causes.

There was now only one other left, who in heart and mind, as well as in popular opinion, belonged to the party opposed to the reigning house. That old offender, Shimei, was still at large, and enjoying ill-deserved safety. Had he during those years learned to respect the dynasty which he had once so wantonly insulted, or did he still consider it too weak to resent insubordination on his part? The question was soon to be decided; for Solomon now ordered Shimei to remain permanently within the bounds of Jerusalem, at the same time warning him that any infringement of this command, from whatever cause, would be punished by death. Shimei, who had probably expected a far more severe sentence, received with gratitude this comparatively slight restriction upon his liberty. He must have known that most Eastern monarchs would have acted towards him in a very different spirit. Besides, the restriction was not more irksome than that which limited the safety of an ordinary manslayer by the condition of his remaining within the bounds of the city of refuge. Nor was the command in itself unreasonable, considering the necessity of watching Shimei's movements, and the importance of convincing the people that a strong hand now held the reins of government. But whatever outward acquiescence Shimei had shown, he had no idea of yielding such absolute obedience as in his circumstances seemed called for. On the first apparently trivial occasion,⁷² Shimei left Jerusalem for the capital of Philistia without having sought the king's permission, and, upon his return, suffered the penalty which, as he

well knew, had been threatened. By such measures of vigor and firmness "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon."

⁷² It can scarcely be pretended that Shimei's personal presence at Gath was absolutely necessary for the recovery of his fugitive slaves. But even had it been so, if Shimei had been allowed to transgress the king's injunction, his obedience in this or any other matter could never afterwards have been enforced.

