

2ND SAMUEL

Week 6, chapter 5

2nd Samuel chapter 5 presents us with an opportunity for several detours, and we'll take some of them. On the surface this chapter seems to be simple and straightforward but in actuality it is full of all kinds of twists, turns, and is brimming with information and mystery that we need to exam as students of the Bible. In some cases it speaks of things that were common knowledge to the people of that day but for us moderns it needs some explanation. So expect the unexpected as we spend more time in this chapter than you might have thought we would. I think you'll find it interesting and useful.

Ishbosheth, king of the northern group of Israelite tribes (King Saul's former kingdom), is dead at the hands of assassins who brought **Ishbosheth's** head to David in hopes of receiving a reward. 2nd Samuel chapter 4 set the historical stage for David becoming the first king of Israel to rule over a united nation of all the Israelite tribes.

The use of the name (or term) "Israel" is complex and its meaning and intent changes as we work our way through the Bible. So here is our first detour and it is to explain the term "Israel". Israel is at the center of all Bible stories since late in Genesis; and Israel is at the heart of all Bible prophecies (fulfilled or yet future to us) so it's vital to understand the various applications the term. And the first thing to know is that the term "Israel" is highly anachronistic; that is, one must know the precise era and the setting to understand what "Israel" meant at any given time because it changed and evolved.

The first use of the term "Israel" was merely as a new name or title for the great Patriarch Jacob. Since that title was given to Jacob by Yehoveh, then obviously it carries much weight. So to be clear, the original use of the word "Israel" applied to but a single individual. Only after Jacob had a number of sons and his clan grew in number and influence did "Israel" come to denote Jacob's descendants as a people group. Centuries after Jacob's death Joshua led this people group called Israel into the Promised Land but immediately they fractured into tribal alliances and their common ancestral heritage became a matter of secondary importance to them.

Some of the people group called “Israel” decided not to enter the Promised Land at all and instead settled in land on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. The group that did cross the river and enter the Promised Land divided into two main coalitions: the northern and the southern. Since the northern coalition held itself up as the majority and said that they represented 10 of the 12 Israelite tribes (which was an exaggeration) they claimed the right to consider themselves as “Israel”. The southern coalition that consisted of Judah and Simeon (but was always totally dominated by Judah) was considered a break-away group; they were seen as a separate entity from Israel and even went by the name “Judah” (stay with me; when, shortly, we begin talking about Jerusalem this information becomes all the more important).

So when David first became a king he was only the king over a modest sized entity called Judah. He was NOT the king of Israel (at least not in the eyes of the 12 tribes). When Saul was king he tried to be king over all the tribes, but only those of the northern coalition accepted him as such. Judah condescended to King Saul’s administration to some degree but only so far as to gain whatever benefit they could from the relationship and to prevent a direct confrontation with the north. But the tension between Israel and Judah was palpable and often spilled over into armed conflict. The people of Judah (and Simeon) certainly acknowledged that they shared a common ancestor with the northern tribes (Jacob), but at that time the reality of a common heritage took a back seat to the manmade political realities.

Thus as we approach chapter 5 keep in mind that by the northern coalition of tribes agreeing to make David their king, it was not unlike a new state being added to the USA. Judah and Israel were separate entities and what was about to happen was that they would join together as single entity under one king. Since this separateness was many centuries old, it was quite a traumatic event when the northern and southern coalitions became joined together and (as one can imagine) not all the clans and families agreed with doing it. Benjamin, most of all, hated the idea; after all the first 2 kings of Israel were Benjamites and with that came much prestige and benefit. It’s one thing to turn the kingship over to one of the other members of the northern tribal coalition; it’s quite another matter to voluntarily give yourself over to the rule of the southern tribal coalition, Judah.

Thus beginning with chapter 5 it can quickly get confusing as to when the term “Israel” means the northern tribes ONLY, versus when it means all the tribes of Israel as a newly unified group under David. And then there is the issue that in one context Israel is the people of the 12 tribes, and in another context Israel is the land of the 12 tribes. I’ll try to point out which is which as we go along.

Let's read 2nd Samuel chapter 5.

READ 2ND SAMUEL CHAPTER 5 all

Hebron is the unofficial capital city of Judah. This city had a heritage that could be traced back to father Abraham. David chose to move from Ziklag (in Philistine territory) to Hebron because it was so thoroughly understood in the region that Hebron was the most prominent city of the entity called Judah. This bought him a couple of things: first, it placed him in the power center of Judah (which is, of course, where the prospective leader of Judah was obligated to reside). Second, Judah (and therefore Hebron) was not seen by the Philistines as their enemy as was Israel to the north. King Saul fought against the Philistines as the King of Israel. When Saul died *Ishbosheth* became the new King of Israel and was thus instantly an enemy of the Philistines. David first became king over Judah (not Israel) and so while this may have rankled the Philistines a bit Judah was not the Philistines' enemy and so they remained on relatively peaceful terms with David's administration. However all that was about to change.

Verse 1 has an entourage of elders from the northern tribal coalition (the Israel formerly governed by Saul and then Ishbosheth) coming to Hebron to finalize a joining together (or perhaps better, a re-joining) of Israel with Judah. When they addressed David they stated 4 reasons why they see this joining as the right thing to do. First, David was already a king. Even though he was only king over Judah, he had established himself as royalty, he was accepted as a legitimate monarch, and so for the northern coalition there was no shame in placing themselves under this existing king. Second, the northern elders pointed out that they were related by blood to David ("we are your own flesh and bone"). Their common connection to Jacob (that really hadn't mattered all that much over the last few centuries and was only used when convenient) was now invoked as a good and proper reason for them to give their allegiance to David and thus for David to treat them not as vassals but as brethren (which they were). Third (as it says in verse 2) they always saw David as the real leader of Israel (King Saul's northern coalition) because David led so many of Saul's successful military campaigns. And fourth they acknowledge that Yehoveh had decreed that David was to be king over all of Israel (here meaning all 12 tribes). So we again run into a statement that God had anointed David as king over all Israel and while we find no surviving Biblical narrative of such a public statement by God, or by a prophet of God, there was no doubt some recorded and commonly known divine oracle to that effect that has been lost to history.

So the elders of the north saw David as their natural brother and as a proven and demonstrated leader of the northern tribal army in times past and thus were comfortable to place themselves under his monarchy. They made a covenant with David and there was an anointing ceremony. I want to stress yet again that for us, in hindsight, we easily view the 12 tribes as a unity and therefore as natural brethren as all of the tribes came from the loins of Jacob. But in that era what we are witnessing here (in the north anointing David as their king) would be akin to the USA renouncing our sovereignty that we had earned in war against King George of England, and voluntarily re-joining ourselves to England under their governance. While we might be able to rationalize such a thing by saying that historically we at one time were literally connected to England through common ancestors, to do such a thing would be terribly radical and (likely) widely unpopular, wouldn't it?

Also recognize that approximately the same amount of time has passed since the USA gained it's independence from England until today, as when Judah and Israel split apart from one another until David's time. So a lot of time had passed, the two kingdoms warred against one another, their separateness was well established, and generations came and went with people who identified themselves either to Israel OR to Judah; so any sense of kinship between Judah and Israel would not have been very strong by David's day. This is a good context to hang onto as we go forward to help us understand many of the actions we'll see unfold in the coming chapters.

Verse 4 states that David was 30 years old when he began to rule and he ruled for 40 years. First understand that these are round numbers that are also idealized numbers. Thirty was seen as the prime of life when mental and physical capabilities are at their greatest, and when sufficient wisdom has been gained to properly utilize those capabilities. The age of 30 was eventually adopted as the earliest age allowable for a Hebrew to become a Rabbi. It is no coincidence that Yeshua began His ministry at 30 years of age. That David ruled for 40 years is also an approximate and idealized number. In fact the very next verse says that he ruled over Judah for 7 ½ years and then ruled from Yerushalayim (as king over all of Israel) for 33 more years. A little quick math has those two numbers adding up to 40 ½ years. The number 40 is often indicative of a generation; and a generation is often meant to be seen more as an era than as how we tend to think of a generation as being the way we divide families into parents, children, grandchildren and so on. 40 is also thought of as a fullness of time (the proper amount of time for all that God intended to happen to be brought about) and as the divine number of time (whether expressed in days, months, or years) for testing and trials. So the bottom line is that neither David's quoted age of 30 nor the quoted years of his reign of 40 are meant to be precise. No doubt they are extremely close but could be off by a few months or a year or so according to an exact calendar date. Those two round numbers carry a much greater significance in their spiritual meaning than merely as historically appropriate data.

Notice something else about David becoming king: it was a long process that took place on a winding and unlikely road. I think we should see this process as a pattern that was fulfilled in Messiah Yeshua. Jesus was designated by the Father as the king (the prince really, the *nagid*, the king in waiting) long before it ever becomes a reality. Yehoveh ordained David as king over His people long before the actual earthly event caught up to this spiritual reality. So many things had to be accomplished along the way, and so much had to align in order for David to gain the throne of Israel. The same thing is happening for Messiah. In fact the earthly reality of Yeshua's kingship is still in our future, even though it was predicted in the Prophets more than 2500 years ago and it happened to largely a spiritual extent 2000 years ago. Christ becoming king over God's Kingdom is a long process, with much that has to happen along the way, far more than it is a singular event.

Verse 6 briefly tells the story of a critical event that affects the entire world (in fact it is probably more important today than it was when it first happened). Verse 6 begins the story of the establishment of Jerusalem, *Yerushalayim*, as the capital of David's (and thus God's) Kingdom. The first part of this verse explains that the "king and his men" went to *Yerushalayim* to attack it. These men were David's private army, not the tribal or national army. So it was not a huge contingent of men but they were loyal, well trained, and experienced warriors. This fact is going to play an important role that we'll get to shortly.

In order to understand what is going on we need to understand the nature of Jerusalem in this era as well as its past so we're going to make another detour to see what we can find out about this wonderful city. Modern archeology along with the discovery and translation of some ancient clay tablets has helped to piece together the astounding history of this place. If we were to pin a date on a calendar for David's attack on Jerusalem it would probably be around 990 B.C. (give or take a couple of years). But this city was known and its existence recorded long before that. Jerusalem is one of the most ancient cities in the world. It is mentioned by name in the famous Ebla archives. These Ebla archives consist of some 15,000 clay tablets that were uncovered starting in the late 1960's in northern Syria. Written in the ancient Akkadian language these tablets tell of the reign of King Ibbit-Ilim, the ruler of a place called Ebla that lay only 150 miles from Haran, the place where Abraham lived for a time. The tablets have been dated to 2500 B.C. And in them is found the record of the Canaanite city of *Yerushalayim* along with a description of where it was located. There is no doubt that it is the same place that we call Jerusalem today. How much before 2500 B.C. *Yerushalayim* existed is debatable. The point is that it existed at least 500 years before the time of Abraham and 1500 years before David set about conquering it.

Akkadian is the mother language of Hebrew. In scholarly terms it is the cognate language of Hebrew and so as more and more has recently been understood about the Akkadian language, we have learned more and more about the meanings of the earliest known Hebrew

words (as we find them in the Torah). There has always been debate about the precise meaning of the term **Yerushalayim**, but the reality turns out that it is an Akkadian word and NOT a Hebrew word. Now that this fact has been recognized it is clear that the meaning is something like, “the foundation of Shalem”. It is also clear that “Shalem” was the name (or better chief attribute) of a god so perhaps a better way to say it is, “the foundation of the god Shalem”.

Shalem I’m sure sounds familiar as it should because the word shalom is taken from it. So the idea is that the god of this city of 2500 BC was a god with the attribute of shalom. I wonder who that can be? Turn you Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 14.

READ GENESIS 14:14 – 20

Here we find the story of the mysterious Melchizedek, king and priest of the city of Shalem (yes, the same Shalem as in the Ebla archives documents). And we know from the narrative that Melchizedek worshipped the one true Creator God that he also called El Elyon (the most high God). There is little doubt that the language Abraham spoke at this time was Akkadian (he was an Amorite recently arrived from Mesopotamia), and certainly it is also Akkadian that Melchizedek spoke. Hebrew was not yet its own language. Akkadian is a Semitic language; let me remind you that the term Semitic is essentially a mispronunciation; it ought to be pronounced Shemitic. Semite means, “From the line of Shem”. Shem was one of Noah’s 3 sons. So Akkadian is a language that is traced back towards Shem, and Abraham and Melchizedek both speak some form of it. And we know from ancient non-Biblical records that the city of Shalem existed at least 500 years before Abraham.

The most ancient Hebrew Tradition on the subject insists unequivocally that Melchizedek was none other than a very aged Shem. Why didn’t they just call Melchizedek Shem, then? Because Melchizedek is NOT a name, it’s a title. It means, “The king of righteousness”. So while Shem is a formal name (just like Yeshua is a formal name), Melchizedek is a title or an attribute (like Messiah is a title or attribute). And Biblical genealogical records make it clear that Shem was still living when Abraham was alive. While proof is much too big a word to use in this situation, the circumstantial evidence just keeps getting greater that indeed Shem was the king and priest of the God Most High, that he lived at the city of Shalem, that he held the title of Melchizedek and that this is who Abraham met at the city of Shalem, called **Yerushalayim** in Akkadian.

Now; another name that we'll find in the Bible for this same place is **Jebus**. And the name of the inhabitants of this place (as we read of David getting ready to attack) is the Jebus-ites.

CJB Judges 19:10 But the man wouldn't stay that night; so he got up and left with his concubine and his two saddled donkeys; and they arrived at Y'vus, also known as Yerushalayim. (Jdg 19:10 CJB)

So we know without doubt that **Jebus and Yerushalayim** are the same place just spoken in two different languages or under two different circumstances. Since many places and locations in the Bible have existed for hundreds and thousands of years, their place names have changed and/or are called by a number of different names at the same time. Las Vegas is at times called Sin City (or just Vegas for short). Los Angeles is at times called the City of Angels or just L.A. and was called the place of 10,000 smokes before that by the Chumash Indians who lived there.

So laymen and scholars have had a hard time trying to understand what the many words for this place, **Yerushalayim**, have meant over the ages. So far we've seen this place called Yerushalayim, Jebus and the city of Shalem. The story of the taking of Yerushalayim by David adds the terms The Stronghold, the City of David, the Millo, and Zion. So which is which and what is what? Let's try to straighten some of that out, which I think will result in your general Bible reading being more meaningful at times and will also lend some needed help in understanding prophecies.

Ancient cities don't generally begin as walled cities. Rather they usually begin as small villages and then for some important reason or another, the settlement is seen as more valuable than usual so an enemy covets it and then it is walled for protection against that enemy. Building a wall around a city was a formidable undertaking; it took a strong and powerful leader to order it and see it through, and a substantial population to provide the manpower to construct it. The original **Yerushalayim**, before it was a walled city, would have been a village with farmers and herders with their fields and pastures surrounding it.

Further, these ancient villages and cities didn't have precise boundaries. Today we measure the boundaries of everything from residential lots right up to the boundaries of nations down to the millimeter. But in ancient times the boundaries were general and approximate. A valley. A

hillside. A plain. Up to a river or near a boulder. But once you wall off an area you have by definition created a precise boundary. And in ancient times when an ill defined but named area had a walled city built upon some part of it, usually the walled city was given a separate name from the area where it was built. Or it was called the city of so and so meaning the city that was built upon an area of land of a certain name. Often it was named for a god or a king.

Yerushalayim was the name for the village and the general surrounding area. We don't know of another name going back any further than this. At some point the place also became known as Jebus because Jebus was the name of a tribe or a clan of Canaanites who either inhabited the place or perhaps built it up. In any case it was these Jebusites who currently inhabited the area in David's time, and also currently held the walled city. One of the names assigned to the walled city portion of the place was Zion.

A walled city is also a stronghold. It is a fall back place where one can defend against intruders. The reason it is sometimes termed a stronghold is because the vast majority of the people living at the place lived OUTSIDE the city walls. So you would have a walled city where the king, his family, his royal court, merchants and others with reason and status to have the privilege of living inside the walls resided; and then the general and larger population lived in buildings outside of the walls. These villagers gave their allegiance to the king of the city for the very reason that if danger from an attacker came, then the gates would be opened to allow the villagers to come inside and the place became their stronghold.

Thus the general area was called Yerushalayim and Jebus, but the walled city portion was called Zion. When David captured it, he changed the name from Zion to the City of David but as is obvious the name Zion has been retained and applied for other purposes that we won't get into right now.

There is another reference in these passages to a place called the **Millo**. The term means earth mound or rampart, or in modern language a terrace is probably apt. I am confident that this is referring to what is today called the Ophel that is located just outside the ancient wall at the north end of the City of David. Ophel is another word for mound or even slope. If one looks at a map of ancient Jerusalem you see that the City of David is the oldest and original walled portion, and is located well down the slope from Mt. Moriah. The City of David is bordered by canyons and ravines (including the Kidron Valley), which made it more difficult to attack. Then there is a substantial open space between the northern wall of the City of David and the Temple Mount that would eventually be built on Mt. Moriah. In between those two places is called the Ophel and there many villagers built their homes to expand the city. I suspect that the plan was to in time extend the wall to encompass that area and thus expand the City of

David. That is essentially what is being described in verse 9.

The reason David attacked Yerushalayim is to make it his capital. Hebron was the very symbol of the Kingdom of Judah and so the northern tribal coalition would never accept Hebron as a capital for all Israel. In fact I highly suspect that part of the covenant treaty that the elders from the north signed with David specifically demanded that a new capital be found that was more neutral in its location.

Well Yerushalayim was right on the border between Israel and Judah. It was claimed by neither entity. It wasn't even inhabited by Hebrews (so you can't get much more neutral than that). But there is another aspect that is invariably overlooked so before we move on let me explain something else that I have rarely (if ever) heard discussed. Over and over in the Bible, just as we'll see the two terms Judah and Israel tied together, we'll often see the two terms Jerusalem and Judah tied together. As you now know the reason Judah and Israel are tied together is NOT because they were 2 different names for the same place, but rather because indeed they were 2 separate entities. Only when tied together do they form all of Israel; separately they each represent only part of Israel.

So why are Judah and Jerusalem so often spoke of in similar fashion? All the evidence and circumstances indicate that at the very least, that portion of Yerushalayim called the City of David was held onto by David as his private estate. Let me say that another way: the City of David belonged strictly to David as his private property and it was NOT considered as national territory. This explains why it is that David used his private army instead of his national army to conquer Jebus. By doing so this would be seen as more of a private than a national endeavor. Had he used the tribal troops to conquer the walled city, the tribal leaders would have expected this to be seen as a joint expedition and thus the walled city as national property.

Don't let that confuse you because in the USA we have a similar situation. Washington D.C. was chosen to be the capital of the USA precisely because it wasn't part of any state and it remains so to this day. Therefore Washington D.C. is considered as a neutral site and is not affiliated with any coalition of states making it the ideal place for the central government.

The main difference between what David did and what happened in America is that Washington D.C. is not privately owned, while it seems that the City of David was David's personal property. So one way to think about it is that while the City of David was located in Jerusalem, it was a privately held section of Jerusalem that was walled off and owned by the

king and treated very differently than the rest of Yerushalayim that lay outside the walls.

That kind of philosophy seems to have embedded itself in the very essence of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel from David's day forward. That is, Jerusalem was in Israel, and was the capital of Israel, but it is seen as a somewhat separate entity. Washington D.C. is in America, and it is the capital of America, but it is seen as a somewhat separate entity apart from the confederation of 50 states that form America.

Even in Jesus' day, when the Holy Land was divided up into the Roman Provinces of Idumea, Perea, Samaria, Galilee, and Judah, Jerusalem was spoken of as a separate entity. Thus we have numerous mentions even in the New Testament of Judah (or Judea) and Jerusalem.

It is interesting how even today many Jews (and many Christians for that matter) can accept the idea of Jerusalem being an International City that is located in the heart of Israel but at the same time could be seen as a separate entity that is operated by some international body such as the UN. Thus it could perhaps be the capital of Israel AND the capital of a Palestinian State simultaneously. In fact that is more or less how Jerusalem was envisioned by the UN when the land was apportioned into Jewish and Arab states over 6 decades ago. Jerusalem was to be owned by neither the Jews nor the Arabs; it was to be neither Jewish nor Arab territory. Rather it was to be a neutral site, a World Heritage site, for all to enjoy.

Of course many more Jews (and Arabs) reject that idea than those who accept it, but I think we'll see the International City concept arise again in the near future as the demand intensifies for Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders. In case you might be thinking that there is Biblical backing based on David's actions for that idea, forget it. Jerusalem was the capital ONLY of Israel; it was not an International City. David was the king and he owned ONLY the City of David, not all of Jerusalem. So we must be clear that correctly speaking, the City of David was not Israel's capital but Yerushalayim was. The City of David was just David's private and secure personally owned compound. Which also explains why the Temple was built NOT in the City of David but rather in Yerushalayim, upon Mt. Moriah.

We'll continue with another interesting and different unexplored aspect about David's taking of Jerusalem next week.