

## STUDIES IN SAMUEL

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 9

- Vv. 1- 4 *David seeks Saul's heirs.* It was customary for a king to seek out the heirs of his predecessor. Generally the motive was to exterminate them. David had a different reason for looking for the heirs of Saul. He had made a covenant with Jonathan that he would deal kindly with any descendants of the royal family.
- Vv. 5-13 *Mephibosheth brought to David.* David's courtiers knew one heir of Saul's. He was a lame prince, the son of Jonathan. He was introduced to the narrative in Chapter four (v. 4), and the nature of his lameness was explained. David gave Mephibosheth a place in his court. He was treated as one of the king's own family.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*Pay thy vows*" (Psalm 58:14). David wrote in a psalm that the God-fearing man should pay his vows "unto the most high." David had made a covenant with Jonathan that they would befriend each other and the descendants of their families. This was a sacred vow to David. As soon as he was in a position to do so, he sought out the heirs of Saul's family. God-fearing people through the years have considered their words as their bonds. They try to make good on their promises. This is a quality that is sorely needed in today's society.
2. "*The king's favor is towards a wise servant*" (Proverbs 14:35). Ziba showed himself to be a wise servant. He spoke kindly concerning the king and his master, Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth came before David with all the humility of a servant. David made him as one of his own sons. Although none is expected to grovel at the feet of his superiors, Christian people will do well to give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7).

## 4. David's Kindness to the House of Saul, 9:1-13.

*David Seeks Saul's Heirs. 9:1-4*

And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

2 And *there was* of the house of Saul a servant whose name *was* Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, *Art* thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant *is he*.

3 And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? and Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, *which is* lame on *his* feet.

4 And the king said unto him, *Where is* he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he *is* in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

1. *Why was David interested in survivors of Saul's house?*  
9:1

Quite often a king would seek out survivors of his predecessor's royal house in order that he might put all of them to death. David's motive was quite different as he made inquiry about any survivors of Saul's house. David knew that Saul's sons—Jonathan, Malchi-shua, and Abinadab—were all slain in the battle on Mount Gilboa. Ish-bosheth's head had been brought to him by his assassins, and this was the fourth member of Saul's house to die. David had made a covenant with Jonathan that he would show kindness to any of his house; and so when he was settled in his kingdom, he made inquiry about any survivors. David would probably have spared not only descendants of Jonathan but any other of the house of Saul, for he had made essentially the same covenant with Saul when they parted after David spared Saul's life the first time (I Samuel 24:21, 22).

2. *Who was Ziba?* 9:2

Ziba was a former servant of Saul's who knew about the existence of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. The word Ziba is apparently from Semitic stem of a word meaning "branch" or "twig." Since he was Saul's servant, it is reasonable to suppose that he was from the tribe of Benjamin. He had been left behind when Saul went to battle, but had kept a record of the activities of the family.

3. *What had caused the boy's lameness?* 9:3

The nurse, taking care of the five-year-old boy, had dropped him while fleeing from the invading Philistines. This was made clear in II Samuel 4:4, but it does not indicate that she was actually carrying him in her arms or on her back. She may have lost her hold on his hand as they were fleeing from the mountains, causing the lad to fall and become permanently injured. The exact nature of the injury is not given, but when David returned from his successful suppression of Absalom's revolt, Mephibosheth said that he had not gone with David because he could not walk. He also said that he had not dressed his feet all the time David was gone (II Samuel 19:24). Such a circumstance would indicate that his feet had open sores.

4. *Who was Machir?* 9:4

Machir was a former friend of Saul. Mephibosheth had been living in his house. Machir was the son of Ammiel, a resident in the area of Lo-debar. We gather from this fact that Mephibosheth was in his house and from a reference in II Samuel 17:27, that he was a man of wealth and prominence. The home was beyond the Jordan, and probably not very far from the Mahanain.

*Mephibosheth Brought to David.* 9:5-13

5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and

did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

8 And he bowed himself, and said, What *is* thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I *am*?

9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits*, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, who name *was* Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants unto Mephibosheth.

13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

5. *What was Mephibosheth's attitude toward David? 9:6*

Mephibosheth showed reverence for David. When he came unto David's presence, he fell on his face and honored the king. Later, David told him that he should not be afraid and assured him that he would show kindness to him. Mephibosheth was not like Ish-bosheth, his uncle, who had tried to keep David off the throne. He evidently harbored no ill will towards David, although Ziba later

accused him of staying behind in Jerusalem at the time of the revolt of Absalom in hope that the people of Israel would make him king. Mephibosheth denied this after David returned, and so it is impossible to tell whether he ever had any hope of ruling himself (II Samuel 16:3). Had anybody else become king, he might well have killed Mephibosheth as the sole surviving heir of the preceding regal family.

6. *What land was owned by Saul?* 9:7

With all the misfortune self-inflicted upon Saul and his family, he would retain possession of the ancestral home of Kish. This land was restored to the house of Saul in the person of Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was grateful. He asked David why he had deigned to look upon “. . . such a dead dog.” The character displayed by Mephibosheth here and in the later appearances he makes in the Biblical narrative depict the results of chronic disappointment, disaster, suspicion, and treachery upon a sensitive mind. Mephibosheth was broken in spirit, and taking possession of the family's tract of land in the tribe of Benjamin was small compensation for all he must have suffered.

7. *Was David's kindness unusual?* 9:8

It was very uncommon for any member of a kingly family to treat the heir of a rival house in such consideration. This was a very unusual kindness. It is almost without parallel in the history of mankind.

Receiving this kind of treatment at the hand of the new king was so surprising to Mephibosheth that he referred to himself as a “dead dog.” He knew that he did not personally deserve the treatment that he received from David, but he was grateful for it. The recognition afforded Mephibosheth was sufficient to humble even the proudest oriental. The special mark of favor in giving him a place at the king's table is all the more noteworthy in view of Mephibosheth's physical imperfection.

8. *What duties were given to Ziba?* 9:10

Ziba had cared for the land of Saul at one time, and so David arranged that Ziba should cultivate the land and bring its produce to Mephibosheth. The income from the property would provide for his support, since his presence in the court of David would rather increase than diminish his expenses. The extent of the estate is indicated by the force that is needed to cultivate it—Ziba's fifteen sons, and twenty servants (verse 10 b).

9. *Who was Mephibosheth's son?* 9:12

Verses twelve and thirteen are something of an appendix to the actual narrative of chapter nine, although they are evidently by the same author. The verses give further information as to the line of Saul. Mephibosheth had one son whose name was Micha. He is also mentioned in the genealogy in I Chronicles 8:34. David had remembered his covenant and had shown kindness to Jonathan's descendants. Mephibosheth was given the rank of a prince, eating at the king's table and having jurisdiction over suitable property as well as a group of servants. The unfortunate nature of his infirmity was the only thing that could detract from his happy state, and it is mentioned as the final statement of the chapter.

## CHAPTER 9 IN REVIEW

1. What was the name of Saul's servant? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the name of Saul's living heir? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Whose son was he? \_\_\_\_\_
4. With whom was he living? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where did he live? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What was his physical ailment? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many sons did Ziba's servant have? \_\_\_\_\_
8. By what figure did Saul's heir refer to himself? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What position did David give to Saul's heir? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What land was given to Saul's heir? \_\_\_\_\_

PART THREE

TROUBLE IN  
DAVID'S FAMILY

10:1—14:33