

2 Samuel Chapter 6

Verses 6:1-23

After a few skirmishes with the Philistines, the first item on David's royal agenda was to restore the ark to its place of prominence within Israel.

We might think that to be a rather strange priority for the king's agenda, but the ark of the Covenant was the center point of worship in the tabernacle and it was mandatory to be returned to Jerusalem.

This section demonstrates who really ruled Israel during David's reign: The LORD.

He set the course for David's kingdom.

Verses 1-11 (see 1 Chronicles 13:1-14).

2 Samuel 6:1 "Again, David gathered together all [the] chosen [men] of Israel, thirty thousand."

Which was done by the advice of his officers (1 Chron. 13:1).

The word "again" refers either to the gathering of them when they made him king in Hebron, as the Jewish writers generally observe; but then they gathered themselves, and not David.

Or rather to his gathering them to fight the Philistines a little while ago; and as they were the choice and young men that were gathered for war, as being the fittest, so now to fetch up the ark with dancing and singing, and to protect it.

The Septuagint version says they were about seventy thousand; but the Targum, Syriac, and Arabic versions, have thirty thousand, agreeably to the Hebrew text.

Thirty thousand of the chosen men were representative of each of the tribes.

There were the choicest of the military from all the tribes, but there were elders and well respected men from each tribe, as well. David tried to impress upon them the necessity of them being one nation under God.

Jerusalem has been recognized as their capital.

Verses 2-4

The ark of the Covenant had been separated from Israel for 50 years (1 Sam. 6:19-20).

While David did the right thing by bringing it back to Jerusalem, he did so in the wrong way, using a “new cart” to carry it.

This was contrary to God’s instructions, which required that it be transported using poles inserted through its rings (Exodus 25:14-15; Num. 4:4-6; Deut. 10:8; 31:9).

2 Samuel 6:2 "And David arose, and went with all the people that [were] with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth [between] the cherubims."

Now that the Philistines had been routed in two successful campaigns (5:17-25; 1 Chron. 14:8-17); the recently taken Jerusalem could serve as David’s new capital.

It was defensible and strategically located in a territory that had belonged neither to the northern nor southern tribes.

The new capital would serve not only as the political center, but also as the religious center for David’s kingdom.

Hence, it was time for the “ark,” which was still quartered at “Baale of Judah” (or Kirjath-jearim; Joshua 15:9; 1 Chron. 13:6), to be brought to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 13:1-4).

The bringing up of the ark was by agreement of the leadership of Israel (see the note on 1 Samuel 7:1).

“Baale of Judah”:

Literally “lords of Judah.”

Also known as Kirjath-jearim (1 Samuel 7:1-2), this town itself was located about 10 miles west of Jerusalem.

“The ark of God”:

The ark of the Covenant has represented the glorious reputation and gracious presence of the LORD to Israel.

“The name”:

See note on Deut. 12:5.

“LORD of hosts”:

See note on 1 Sam. 1:3.

Jerusalem will not be truly thought of as their capital, until they get the ark of the Covenant permanently headquartered there.

This mutual place of worship will draw them even closer together as one nation.

It appears, there is a break in the fighting, and they are going after the ark.

The ark symbolized the presence of the LORD with them.

Baale here, is probably the same as the city of Beersheba.

It is just out of Jerusalem about 8 miles.

It appears these 30,000 men had agreed that it was time to bring the ark to their capital.

Verses 3-7:

The whole episode of that concerning “the ark” reflects the peril of doing a noble deed in an ignoble manner.

The law prescribed that the ark should be carried by the sons of Kohath (Num. 4:4-15; 7:9), and specifically prohibited the use of a “cart” (Exodus 25:14-15; Num. 4:5-8).

Nor was a human “hand” allowed to touch it (Num. 4:15).

Doing God’s work is a serious business and must never be perfunctorily performed (compare 1 Sam. 15:22-23), or done irreverently or in accordance with mere expediency (1 Sam. 6:19-20).

2 Samuel 6:3 "And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that [was] in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart."

“New cart”:

The Philistines had used a cart to transport the ark (1 Sam. 6:7).

But the Old Testament law required that the sacred ark be carried by the sons of Kohath (Num. 3:30-31; 4:15; 7:9), using the poles prescribed (Exodus 25:12-15).

God’s work must be done God’s way.

When it is not, the workers either suffer delay, or God passes the blessing on to someone else who will do His work as He intends.

By using a “cart” to transport the ark as the Philistines had done (1 Sam. chapter 6), David was doing the work of God with the methods of the world (1 Chron. 13:1-2).

“House of Abinadab”:

See 1 Sam. 7:1.

“Uzzah and Ahio”:

Descendants of Abinadab, possibly his grandsons.

David had made an error here.

He was not supposed to have the ark on a cart.

It was to be carried by the family of the Levites, and even they were supposed to have it covered with a cloth that it might not be seen.

Even they were not to touch the ark itself.

It was carried by poles through loops on the sides.

This is not a willful act of sin on the part of David.

Much of the teaching of the proper way to handle the ark in travel had long since been forgotten.

David wanted deeply in his heart to please God.

The ark had been in safe keeping in the house of Abinadab.

Uzzah and Ahio could have been the great grandsons of Abinadab.

Sometimes, the word son means grandson, or descendent of.

2 Samuel 6:4 "And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which [was] at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark."

That is, the new cart, which is the last thing spoken of 2 (Sam. 6:3); and the bringing of the ark out of his house is mentioned before.

Though some take this to be the coffer in which were the presents of the Philistines, which was now brought out along with the ark (see 1 Sam. 6:8).

"Accompanying the ark of God":

Or "with the ark of God"; that is, they brought the new cart "from" the house of Abinadab on the hill, with the ark of God upon it.

"And Ahio went before the ark":

Guiding the oxen that drew it, and Uzzah might go behind, or on one side, to take care that the ark fell not out of it.

It seems, from this, that Ahio was in the front of the ark leading the way, and Uzzah was at the side watching it.

2 Samuel 6:5 "And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of [instruments made of] fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals."

That is, before the ark; that was a symbol of the presence of the LORD.

"On all manner of instruments made of fir wood":

Which is a general expression, the particulars follow; though instruments of different sorts are mentioned, and even some of metal, as cymbals, which were vessels of brass, they struck one against another, and gave a very acute sound, their being hollow:

"Even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals": Harps, psalteries, and timbrels, are frequently met with; cornets, according to Kimchi, and are such sort of instruments, that in playing upon them it required an agitation of the whole body.

Now it was that David penned the sixty eighth psalm, which begins, "let God arise" (Psalm 68:1), words used by Moses when the ark set forward (Num. 10:35).

This was like a joyful parade taking the ark to their capital.

There was music and dancing by David and many of the chosen people in front of the ark.

This was like a marching band in a parade, but the parade here, was of a spiritual nature.

They were singing praises to the LORD, playing wooden instruments, such as guitars and harps, and dancing in front of the ark.

Verses 6-8

Uzziah's motive for putting out "his hand" to steady the ark is not in question; he was trying to keep it from falling, and perhaps his action was even an involuntary reflex.

But if David had followed God's commands for transporting the ark, it would then have needed no steadying.

This was vivid reminder of God's holiness to the Israelites, and is a poignant warning to leaders today: when a leader disobeys God, it is probable that innocent people will suffer in the wake of his or her disobedience.

See 1 Chronicles 13:9-12.

2 Samuel 6:6 "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth [his hand] to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook [it]."

The use of the Hebrew word here is unusual.

Some take the word as (in 2 Kings 9:33), and render the passage: "The oxen were throwing, or had thrown it down," very likely by turning aside to eat what grain there might be on the threshing-floor.

It seemed, the ark was about to fall over, and Uzzah reached up to stop its fall.

It was strictly forbidden to touch the ark.

He had made a bad mistake.

2 Samuel 6:7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for [his] error; and there he died by the ark of God.

"For his error":

No matter how innocently it was done, touching the ark was in direct violation of God's law and was to result in death (see Num. 4:15).

This was a means of preserving the sense of God's holiness and the fear of drawing near to Him without appropriate preparation.

Uzzah had not deliberately done the forbidden thing.

He had reached out to the ark on impulse, when he thought it was falling.

Some modernist would question why such a thing would happen.

We must realize the holiness of the ark.

God had given specific instructions about the caring and moving of it.

Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

This probably benefited those around it.

It would leave a lasting impression on those who saw this, not to touch the ark.

In Numbers 4:15, there are specific instructions not to touch the holy things, lest ye die.

2 Samuel 6:8 "And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day."

“David was displeased”:

Probably anger directed at himself because the calamity resulted from David’s own carelessness.

He was confused as to whether to carry on the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem (verse 9), and would not move it, fearing more death and calamity might come on him or the people (see verse 10).

It is likely that he waited to see the wrath of God subside before moving the ark.

David was displeased with such a harsh punishment, when he, or Uzzah, meant no harm at all.

It seemed to David, as if the LORD was suddenly angry with them.

"Perez-Uzzah" means breach of Uzzah.

Verses 9-11

Rather than using God’s judgment on Uzzah as an opportunity to uncover his sin and repent, David let his anger and fear of God determine his actions.

Obedience to the LORD produces joy in the soul.

Disobedience dispels joy and introduces fear (1 Chron. 13:11-14).

2 Samuel 6:9 "And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?"

Apprehensive it seems that he himself was in danger.

Hence he dared not bring the ark into his city; either thinking, in great humility, that he was unworthy to have it so near him.

Or that he did not sufficiently understand how to treat it.

This however, he understood better afterward, as we learn from (1 Chron. 15:2-15).

David, suddenly, is afraid of the LORD.

Now, David was not so sure he wanted the ark to go with him to Jerusalem.

He had meant no harm.

David will not take the ark into the city of David at this time.

He realizes there is much about the ark he does not understand.

He takes it to the home of the nearest Levite.

2 Samuel 6:10 "So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite."

"Obed-edom the Gittite":

Literally "servant of Edom."

The term "Gittite" can refer to someone from the Philistine city of Gath, but here it is better to see the term related to Gath-rimmon, one of the Levitical cities (Joshua 21:24-25).

Obed-edom is referred to as a Levite in 1 Chronicles (1 Chron. 15:17-25; 16:5, 38; 26:4-5, 8, 15; 2 Chron. 25:24).

Obed-edom was spoken of as a Gittite, but was of the Levitical tribe.

He was actually a Kohathite which is of the Levitical tribe.

He was born in one of the Levitical cities of Dan.

2 Samuel 6:11 "And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household."

David, and those with him, returned to their habitations, where they continued during this time.

"And the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household":

He and all his family, with spiritual blessings, and with an affluence of temporal good things; for godliness has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.

Men are not losers but gainers, even in things temporal, for their attachment to the cause of religion, and the service of God, and their regard to that in their own houses, as well as in the house of God.

Josephus says, that Obed-edom was very poor before, and in a low condition, out of which he soon emerged, and came into affluent circumstances, so as to be taken notice of by his neighbors.

We see that for the three months' time that the ark is in the hands of Obed-edom, that they are greatly blessed.

It is not a curse, but a blessing, when it is properly handled.

It appears that this three months was spent finding out exactly what they had done wrong when they first moved the ark.

Verses 12-15

According to the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles, David, who was now back in fellowship with the LORD, had the ark transported in the way that was commanded by God through Moses (see 1 Chronicles 15:15):

He first prepared a place for it to rest in Jerusalem ("which was the the City of David"), and then he had the Levites carry it using the designated poles while offering sacrifices along the way (see 1 Chronicles 15:1-15).

God's way of doing things can be known by searching His Word.

Verses 12-19

See 1 Chron. 15:25 – 16:3.

2 Samuel 6:12 "And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that [pertaineth] unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness."

"Blessed ... because of the ark of God":

During the 3 months when the ark remained with Obed-edom, the LORD blessed his family.

In the same way God had blessed Obed-edom, David was confident that with the presence of the ark, the LORD would bless his house in ways that would last forever (7:29).

"The ark", which had been placed in the "house of Obed-edom," a Levite of the family of Korah (1 Chron. 13:13-14), was now "brought up" to Jerusalem in the prescribed manner.

It was done with careful forethought (1 Chron. 15:1-2).

The transferal of the ark was accompanied by sacrifices, pomp, and great rejoicing.

David's dancing or whirling about (see verse 14), was an expression of spiritual joy (see 1 Chronicles 15:25-28).

David wanted the presence of the LORD, of which the ark symbolized, to be with him in the city of David.

Again, there was music, and dancing, and singing of praise, as then was carried to the city of David from Obed-edom.

This time the priests had been consulted, and they knew more about how to carry the ark.

2 Samuel 6:13 "And it was [so], that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings."

"They that bare the ark":

In David's second attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, it was transported in the manner prescribed by Old Testament law (see note on verse 3).

"Six paces":

I.e., after the first 6 steps, not after every 6 steps.

David wanted to be sure; this trip with the ark was blessed of God.

The sacrifices were for that purpose.

They were sacrificed to insure the blessings of the LORD in the moving of the ark.

2 Samuel 6:14 "And David danced before the LORD with all [his] might; and David [was] girded with a linen ephod."

"David danced before the LORD":

See Psalm 150:4.

The Hebrews, like other ancient and modern people, had their physical expressions of religious joys as they praised God.

David was so overcome with joy at the return of the Lord's presence to Jerusalem that he expressed it in a lively "dance" (Psalms 149:3; 150:4).

In wearing the "linen ephod", David assumed the role of both king and priest.

"Linen ephod":

See 1 Samuel 2:18.

David was overwhelmed by the Spirit of the LORD and danced before the ark.

He had taken off his kingly robes and danced as a child would.

He wore the linen garment which indicated righteousness.

He was symbolically clothed in the righteousness the LORD provides for those who believe.

The linen ephod showed that he was wrapped in the righteousness of the LORD.

2 Samuel 6:15 "So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet."

The elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands (1 Chron. 15:25); besides the common people; there might be as large a number with him now as before.

"With shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet":

With the shouts of the people in common, and with blowing of trumpets by those who were appointed for that purpose, and with other instruments of music (see 1 Chron. 15:27).

Josephus says, that seven choirs went before the priests bearing the ark, as the king commanded, he himself playing on the harp; so the Septuagint version.

This was a happy occasion bringing the ark to their capital.

The shouting was expressing their happiness at their worship being restored in their capital.

The trumpet was blown to gather the people to worship.

Verses 16-23

David's wife "Michal" had been given in marriage to another man while David was a fugitive (1 Sam. 24:44), and then returned to David, perhaps unwillingly (3:14-16).

Perhaps she thought he should have worn royal robes instead of the priestly ephod; in any case, she was more concerned for her reputation than for the return of the ark.

David came home to "bless his household" and was instead greeted with sarcastic, biting words from his wife.

2 Samuel 6:16 "And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."

“Michal ... despised him in her heart”:

Michal's contempt for David is explained by her sarcastic remark in verse 20.

She considered David's unbridled, joyful dancing as conduct unbefitting for the dignity and gravity of a king because it exposed him in some ways.

“Michal” saw in David's actions a conduct unbefitting a “king”.

She doubtless neither appreciated nor entered into the spirit of the occasion.

Accordingly, “David” rebuked her and consigned her to separation from the king's graces, a condemnation that left her childless (verses 20-23).

A negative and critical spirit born of spiritual shallowness and insensitivity is a dangerous thing!

Michal thought of David as the mighty king.

She was ashamed that he had humbled himself in such a manner.

Verses 17-19

According to (1 Chronicles Chapter 16), the joyous feast held on this occasion was followed by David's singing of a psalm of thanksgiving and the installation of the Levites into various positions of temple service.

2 Samuel 6:17 "And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD."

“Tabernacle”:

David had made a tent for the ark of the Covenant until a more permanent building for it could be built.

(Psalm 30), could refer possibly to this tent or to David's own home. (5:11-12).

David had probably found out from the priests, the way the tabernacle should be set up, and he has this one as nearly like the tabernacle in the wilderness as he can.

The actual offerings were taken care of by the priests, but they also had been given by David for this occasion.

David was pleased to have the ark at home, at last in the city of David.

2 Samuel 6:18 "And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts."

While the "burnt offerings" were dedicatory, the peace offerings were Eucharistic, and were also intended here (as in 1 Kings 8:62-65), to supply the wants of the people by a religious feast of communion with God.

He blessed the people":

As Solomon did at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:14; 8:55), and in both cases this was eminently fitting.

But such blessing is by no means to be mistaken for the peculiar priestly blessing for which the form was prescribed in (Num. 6:22-26).

David was not the high priest, but was the anointed of God to lead His nation Israel.

It would be proper for David to speak the blessing of the LORD upon these people.

2 Samuel 6:19 "And he dealt among all the people, [even] among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece [of flesh], and a flagon [of wine]. So all the people departed every one to his house."

Gave a dole unto them as he divided among them.

"Even among the whole multitude of Israel":

And if there were so many as at first, there were thirty thousand of them (2 Sam. 6:1); and perhaps more, since it follows.

"As well to the women as men":

To both the one and the other; and the women, it is very probable, were not among those that went to fetch the ark.

But they had assembled to attend the entrance of it into the city, and they were present at the solemnities of its settlement.

"To everyone a cake of bread":

Or a loaf of bread, of what quantity is not said, no doubt sufficient for any one person, or more.

"And a good piece of flesh":

Not only that was good in quality, but large in quantity, a very large piece of it; the Jews said the sixth part of a bullock, they dividing it into six parts as we into four quarters; but it is not likely that such a quantity of flesh should be given to each person.

"And a flagon of wine":

But what such a vessel held cannot be said, though at least we may suppose it equal to a bottle of ours, or more (see SOS 2:5).

"So all the people departed everyone to his house":

To refresh themselves with the provisions David had given them.

The sacrifice offered by David, is now shared by all the people.

He gives each person a piece of the meat, a portion of bread, and a portion of wine.

A city is not home to a believer, until their place of worship is there.

Joy has returned to Israel.

Everyone went home happy.

2 Samuel 6:20 "Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!"

"Bless his household":

David desired the same inevitable success from the LORD as experienced in the household of Obed-edom (see verse 11).

The attitude of Michal aborted the blessing at that time, but the LORD would bless David's house in the future (7:29).

"Uncovereth":

A derogatory reference to the priestly attire that David wore (verse 14), in place of his royal garments.

David had blessed all the other families, now it is time to care for his own family.

The feast that took place in his house would be attended by his wives and children.

Michal was too proud.

She thought David should have worn his kingly robes in front of the ark, instead of clothes fit for a servant.

"Vain" here means worthless.

She did not want David to appear as an ordinary man and especially in front of the servant girls.

2 Samuel 6:21 "And David said unto Michal, [It was] before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD."

“Before the LORD”:

David’s actions were for the delight of the LORD, not for the maidens.

David had humbled himself before the LORD in public.

He was not ashamed to be thought of as the LORD's servant.

He knew that what authority he had come from the LORD.

This was the same LORD who had chosen David and anointed David king of all Israel, and had put down the house of Saul and elevated David to king.

Michal was like her father Saul.

She put too much emphasis on the superiority of people and not the superiority of the LORD over all.

2 Samuel 6:22 "And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor."

“Base in mine own sight”:

David viewed himself with humility.

It is the humble whom the LORD will exalt (1 Sam. 7:7-8).

These maidservants understood, better than Michal did, that David was humbling himself before Almighty God.

David did not think of himself more highly than he should.

He humbled himself before the LORD and would do it again, if the occasion arose.

His only regret was that he could not have humbled himself even more.

The maidservants will honor David even more, knowing that he regards the LORD that greatly.

2 Samuel 6:23 "Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death."

“Michal ... had no child”:

Whether David ceased to have marital relations with Michal or the LORD disciplined Michal for her contempt of David, Michal bore no children.

In Old Testament times, it was a reproach to be childless (1 Sam. 5:6).

Michal’s childlessness prevented her from providing a successor to David’s throne from the family of Saul (1 Sam. 15:22-28).

Having children was thought of by the Hebrews as a blessing from God.

The blessings of God were not upon her, because she would not humble herself.

She never had any children because of her pride.

2 Samuel Chapter 6 Questions

1. How many chosen men of Israel did David assemble?
2. Who did they represent?
3. What was David trying to impress upon the people?
4. Where did David go, and take these people with him?
5. When will Jerusalem be thought of as the capital of the people?
6. How did they carry the ark?
7. What was the only way permissible to carry the ark?
8. Whose house had the ark been in?
9. Why was the ark to be covered with a cloth?
10. Why did they not know this way of carrying the ark would be a sin?
11. Who were the two young relatives of Abinadab that went to help with the ark?

12. Where did David go in this group of people carrying the ark?
13. What was David doing?
14. How did this differ from a marching band in a parade?
15. Where was the ark, when Uzzah put forth his hand and touched it?
16. Where in the Bible do we find specific instructions not to touch the holy things?
17. What happened to Uzzah?
18. Why was David displeased with what happened?
19. Why did David not continue on with the ark?
20. Where do they take the ark?
21. _____-_____ was a Levite.
22. While the ark was in his possession, what happened to Obed-edom?
23. How long did the ark remain with him?
24. What did David do, after they had gone 6 paces with it?
25. What was David wearing before the ark?
26. How did he show his gladness?
27. What did the people with David do in celebration?
28. What caused Michal to despise David in her heart?
29. Where did they put the ark?
30. What was the first thing done by David, after the ark arrived?
31. He blessed the people in the _____ of the _____.
32. Who came to meet David?
33. "Vain", in verse 20, means what?
34. Why had David done the dancing before the ark in the linen ephod?