

Containing the freshest Advertiser, Foreign and Domestic

WEDNESDAY, November 8, 1749.

From the CURIOUS TRAVELLER

SIR,

THO' there was no Historie more instructive or entertaining than those recorded in the sacred Scriptures; yet it must be allowed, that there are some particular Circumstances to be met with here and there, which are too intricate and perplex'd, and carry with them too much of the Marvellous; to be perfectly relied on as real Facts. Amongst many others, that of Sampson's Foxes, related in the Book of Judges, appears to me almost incredible, and inconsistent with the Politics of so great a Warrior. The Ambiguity thereof, however, is principally owing, I presume, to some casual Misconstruction of the Text. In order therefore to reconcile that Stratagem with Reason, I consulted several Commentators on that obscure Passage, and none of them, in my Opinion, have set it in so fair and important a Light, as the Author of the inclosed Dissertation; which I have sent you, in hopes you will look upon it as an ingenious Amusement.

Your humble Servant,

And constant Reader,

PHILADELPHUS.

A DISSERTATION concerning SAMPSON'S FOXES.

Sampson, the brave and heroic Leader of the Israelites, being exasperated by the Philistines, meditated a just Revenge; but his Indignation did not precipitate the Execution of his Designs: He laid 'til Harvest time, thinking that the Destruction of their Corn would be the greatest Calamity he could expose them to, for the Affront he had received. When he observ'd that the Philistines had put together all their Sheaves, and made three hundred Shocks, he form'd a Stratagem to burn them, and took the Advantage of the Night to prevent a Discovery. This Adventure did not depend so much upon his great Strength, as his Prudence, Courage, and Dispatch. I need not enquire whether he had with him any Friends or Servants, since he wanted no Help on such an Occasion. He found three hundred Shocks of Corn in the Fields, which could not be set on Fire one after another without a Loss of Time, and the Danger of a Discovery. To make the Game sure, he judg'd it necessary to lay two Sheaves at length upon the Ground, to make a Communication between every two Shocks; and then he put some other combustible Matter between the two Sheaves, such as Flax, Hemp, &c. which he could easily carry with him into the Fields. The Execution might easily be made without any Loss of Time: The whole Parade was accordingly finish'd with great Expedition, under Cover of the Night, without giving the Philistines the least Jealousy of his Contrivance:

At last, every Thing being ready, he resolutely took the Fire, which 'til then lay conceal'd, and touch'd the combustible Matter in the middle of the two Sheaves; and so pass'd through all the Fields, where he had join'd the Shocks together. This he effected with so much good Order, Cunning, and Dispatch, that all the Heaps of Corn were instantly reduced to Ashes.

This is the Conflagration which Sampson accomplished, without being observ'd by the Philistines: The Fire, fan'd by the Wind, soon blaz'd all round; and overflow'd the neighbouring fields, consuming the standing Corn, the Vineyards, the Caves.

This is the Stratagem so artfully contriv'd and carried on only by Sampson, who, without any Difficulty or Discovery, involv'd a whole Harvest in a Flame.

Hence it appears very evident, that Sampson, who was a Warrior, not a Sportsman, did not undergo the Fatigue of chasing Foxes, but directly attacked the Magazines of his Enemies, did not hunt down three hundred Beasts, but only found so many Shocks of Corn. He did not tie three hundred Tails, but only join'd so many Sheaves together. What has misled Interpreters, has been the Custom of the ancient Jews, who always affected the Hieroglyphical, or Myssical Sense, in Words of an equivocal Signification. In this Story they insinuated to the Reader, that Sampson had deceived his Enemies, who before had been too cunning for him by tampering with his Wife. This gave Occasion to the saying, Sampson pursued the Foxes, that is to say, he revenged himself with great Damage to the Philistines. They conceal'd this Thought under the Ambiguity of the Word *Sekulim*, instead of *Sequalim*, which properly signifies Sheaves: For Words must be explained according to the Subject, Scope, and Series of the Discourse. It is observable too, that the Word *Sanab*, which we translate Tail, thro' the whole Tenor of the Jewish Law, signifies the utmost Part of any Thing whatsoever. For Example, if a Garden had five Trees; by the Law of the Jews, the fifth and last is always called *Sanab*: So the last sheaf of a whole shock was called *Sanab*, the Tail, by a Figure very agreeable to the Genius of the Jewish Language.

No Wonder therefore Interpreters have not hit upon the real Matter of Fact, when they did not apprehend the Design of the Antients. They fatigue themselves in chasing the poor Foxes, and bringing them by whole Drones to Sampson. But all the while they are at a Loss to know when and how he surpris'd them, where he kept and maintain'd them 'til Occasion serv'd: In a Word, how he could enchant so many savage Beasts, and make them follow him to the Place appointed. What an Alarm must this have given to the whole Country? The Philistines would soon have been upon him, and quash'd his Enterprize. Not to mention the strange Adventure of tying their Tails together, and in a Number no less than just three hundred. Besides, how could they move on with Fire at their Tails, and yet preserve their Druggs from being in a Flame? How would this have embarrass'd them, and retarded their March in the most critical and dangerous Juncture?

Interpreters have undergone more Drudgery and Fatigue to provide Sampson with Foxes, than he himself would have suffer'd, if he had attempted to surprize them in a hundred different Coverts.

To conclude, there was no Need to maintain a whole Army of wild Beasts, since the prudent Captain, without such an unpracticable Method, could in a Trice have reduced to Ashes the Harvest of the Philistines, and that with no other Advantage than the Assistance of his own Hands, and a two penny Flambeau. Let the Foxes then be for ever condemn'd to their Kennels, with all the Rubbish of Commentators, not much better acquainted with the ancient Customs of the Jews.

NIX-LA CHAPELLE, July 28. ON the 26th, about two in the afternoon, we had here a dreadful storm of thunder, lightning, rain, and which in a few minutes rais'd the River Guir and Guir to such a height, that the vessels of a port were...