

2 Samuel Chapter 8

Verses 1-18: This catalog of David's military activities emphasizes his many victories and offers details about the treasures he amassed during this time. In all these matters, he "administered judgment and justice".

These verses outline the expansion of David's kingdom under the hand of the Lord (verses 6, 14). Israel's major enemies were all defeated as David's kingdom extended north, south, east and west (see 1 Chron. 18:1-13). This conquering occurred before the event of chapter 7 (see 7:1).

2 Samuel 8:1 "And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines."

"Philistines ... subdued": David's first priority was to deal with the Philistines to the west, whom he quickly defeated and subjugated (see 5:25).

Probably this is a reference to the chief city of the Philistines (1 Chron. 18:1). He defeated his enemies to the west.

The war with the Philistines was a never-ending battle front. It seemed they would defeat them in one place and then there was another place to fight them. "Metheg-ammah" means the bridle of the mother city. This city is the same as the city of Gath, where David had run to for refuge when Saul was after him. David had already defeated the other four prominent cities. With the defeat here now, David would have control of the whole land. The LORD fought on the side of David, or he would not have been able to defeat this strong city.

2 Samuel 8:2 "And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive. And [so] the Moabites became David's servants, [and] brought gifts."

"Moab" David also defeated the Moabites who dwelt in Transjordan, east of the Dead Sea. This represented a change from the good relationship David once enjoyed with the Moabite royalty (1 Sam. 22:3-4). He defeated his enemies to the east.

Moab was the territory of the Philistines in which David had spent considerable time (1 Sam. 22:3-4). His great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabitess. The people of Moab were born of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter (Gen. 19:36-37).

"With two lines measured": This could mean that David spared the young Moabites (whose height was approximately one cord), and executed the adults (whose height was two cords), or that one out of 3 rows of soldiers was arbitrarily chosen to be spared from execution. Such was a common practice of eastern kings in dealing with deadly enemies.

It appears that David ordered at least half, and perhaps two-thirds, of the Moabites killed. The others became servants to David. The gifts were for saving their lives. Some of the historians

believe David killed these people because they had killed David's mother and father when they ran there for safety from Saul. I do not find that in the Bible however. It could be so, and that would answer why so much blood was shed here.

Verses 3-8: He defeated his enemies to the north. David had already defeated the Amalekites to the south (1 Sam. 20:16-17).

2 Samuel 8:3 "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates."

“Hadadezer”: Literally “Hadad (the personal name of the Canaanite storm god), is my help.” (Psalm 60), was written to commemorate this battle.

“Zobah”: An Aramaean kingdom north of Damascus (1 Sam. 14:47).

“River”: I.e., the most southwesterly point of the Euphrates River around the city of Tiphseh.

Hadadezer was the Armenian king of the state of Zobah. David led the battle against them and he was utterly destroyed.

Verses 4-5 (1 Chronicles 18:4), records the number taken in the fighting as a thousand “chariots” and seven thousand “horsemen” (or charioteers), a figure also read by the Septuagint (in 2 Samuel 8:4). The Hebrew text was probably miscopied, the higher figures being the correct ones (see the note on 1 Chronicles 19:18).

2 Samuel 8:4 "And David took from him a thousand [chariots], and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot [horses], but reserved of them [for] a hundred chariots."

“Took ... seven hundred horsemen”: The reading of “7000” (in 1 Chron. 18:4), is preferable (see note there).

It is unknown why David “hamstrung the horses” (cut the tendon above the hoof so that the animals could not run). It could be that he was trying to obey the command not to acquire horses (Deut. 17:16; Joshua 11:6-9), or perhaps he was simply preventing his enemies from using the horses in battle against him.

When David “houghed” the “chariot horses” (i.e., cut the back sinews of their rear legs), he rendered them unfit for further military use. David’s successful campaigning against the “Syrians” (Arameans), of “Damascus” brought the extension of his kingdom to its farthest northern boundary.

The number of chariots shows that Hadadezer was strong militarily. David kept only one hundred of the horses of the enemy here. It would be much faster travel with the horses than on foot. This means that they cut the hamstrings on 900 horses. This seems a terrible thing to do to the horses. They would not be able to walk. They would just lie down and die. The 20,000 men were either taken captive, or killed.

2 Samuel 8:5 "And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succor Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men."

"Syrians" Arameans, who were peoples located around the city of Damascus as well as in the area of Zobah.

"Succor" means protect, aid or help. This 22,000 is in addition to the 20,000 above. This is part of the reason David was known as a bloody king.

2 Samuel 8:6 "Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, [and] brought gifts. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went."

"Garrisons": The word is used for officers (in 1 Kings 4:5; 4:19), and some think that that is its meaning here. Perhaps, however, it is best to take it with the King James Version in the same sense (as in 1 Sam. 10:5; 13:3).

"Brought gifts": Rather, "tribute" (and in 2 Sam. 8:2); meaning they became subject and tributary.

Those, who were not killed in the massacre, became servants of David. The Syrians were allowed to stay on their land and work, but they had to pay tribute to David. The garrisons were outposts of strength to keep them from raising an army against David.

2 Samuel 8:7 "And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem."

"Shields of gold": Ceremonial or decorative insignias that were not used in battle, but for decoration.

There had to be an abundance of gold, for the servants to have gold. This was spoil from the battle that David took home.

2 Samuel 8:8 "And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass."

"Brass" (1 Chronicles 18:8), notes 3 towns belonging to Hadadezer which yielded brass that was later used in the construction of the temple.

This is believed to be the same brass that was used in the temple to make the laver. Solomon and David had much brass, gold and silver.

2 Samuel 8:9 "When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer,"

"Toi king of Hamath": Hamath was another Aramean territory located about 100 miles north of Damascus. The king, Toi, was thankful to see his enemy Zobah crushed and desire to establish good relations with David. So he gave David gifts to indicate that he voluntarily submitted to him as his vassal.

Toi was like many of the kings of the smaller countries, here. Hadadezer had them all under the yoke of his rule. David delivered them, when he defeated him.

2 Samuel 8:10 "Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And [Joram] brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:"

Who is called Hadoram (in 1 Chron. 18:10); though the Syriac and Arabic versions read Joram there.

"To salute him": To inquire of his welfare after his fatigue in the battles he had had with the Moabites and Syrians, and to wish him all happiness and prosperity for the future.

"And to bless him": To congratulate him on his victory, and to wish him success in all after wars he might be engaged in. And particularly to give him thanks for delivering him from so great an enemy as Hadadezer had been to him, as also to bring a present to him, which is sometimes called a blessing (see Gen. 33:11).

"Because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him": That is, David had, which had endeared him to Toi.

"For Hadadezer had wars with Toi": Was an enemy of his, sought to take his kingdom from him, and had had many battles with him: and though he could not conquer him, he sadly harassed him, being too mighty for him.

"And Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass": As a present to David, in gratitude for his deliverance from his enemy by him, and as a token of his homage and subjection to him. At least as a sign that he put himself under his protection, and desired to be his friend and ally. The word "Joram", though not in the Hebrew text, is rightly supplied; for none else can be supposed to bring the present.

This wonderful offering of precious metals was in appreciation to David for ridding them of their oppressor.

2 Samuel 8:11 "Which also king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;"

Solomon gave the "silver and gold" from the nations David conquered to the priests to use in building the temple (1 Kings 7:51).

King David dedicated these precious metals to the LORD, and they would be used in the fine things in the temple, that Solomon builds to the LORD.

2 Samuel 8:12 "Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah."

"Syria" These were David's enemies to the south.

These are some of the people defeated by David and spoiled of their precious metals, which were dedicated to the LORD for the use in the temple.

2 Samuel 8:13 "And David gat [him] a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, [being] eighteen thousand [men]."

"A name": The Lord began to fulfill His promise of giving David a great name (see 7:9).

"Syrians" There is an alternate manuscript reading that makes this a reference to David's defeat of the Edomites, not the Arameans. This reading is supported by (Psalm 60 and 1 Chron. 18:12).

"Valley of salt": An area south of the Dead Sea.

Because in Hebrew the *d* (*dalet*) and the *r* (*resh*) looked very much alike, they were often mistaken for one another. Probably Edomites rather than "Syrians" (i.e., Edom rather than Aram) should be read here (as in 1 Chronicles 18:12), and the title of (Psalm 60; see the note on 1 Chronicles 18:12).

The battles, we just read about, were hardly over, when the Edomites attacked them. On the way back, they battled and killed 18,000 more in the valley of salt near the Dead Sea. This made quite a reputation for David. David's victories were because the LORD was with him.

2 Samuel 8:14 "And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went."

To keep the inhabitants in subjection to him; as their forts and strong holds came into his hands, he placed companies of soldiers in them for the said purpose. Or governors, as the Targum, men of his own nation, into whose hands he put their principal cities, who governed them for him, and under him. Jarchi interprets it of officers appointed to collect the tribute he exacted of them.

"Throughout all Edom put he garrisons": This was observed to show that the whole country was brought into subjection to him.

"And all they of Edom became David's servants": And hereby were fulfilled the oracle delivered to Rebekah, and the prophetic blessing of Isaac (Gen. 25:23).

"And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went" (See 2 Sam. 8:6).

This is the same as we read about earlier. David allowed them to live in their own homes and do their regular work. They had to pay tribute to David however. David left soldiers in the garrisons to see that they did pay tribute.

Verses 15-18 (see 1 Chron. 18:14-17). This is the record of the cabinet under David's rule.

2 Samuel 8:15 "And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people."

Judgment and justice": David ruled his kingdom in a righteous manner, and in the future the "Messiah" will rule in a similar fashion (Isa. 9:7; Jer. 23:5; 33:15).

We know that David knew his power was of God. He would be just and would judge fairly, remembering that he would someday be judged of God himself.

2 Samuel 8:16 "And Joab the son of Zeruiah [was] over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud [was] recorder;"

"Joab": David's general (2:13; 1 Sam. 26:6).

"Jehoshaphat ... recorder": The keeper of state records, and possibly the royal herald (1 Kings. 4:3).

This was speaking of the officers of David who took care of these jobs for him. This would have been a time of great prosperity for David and his men that worked for him.

2 Samuel 8:17 "And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, [were] the priests; and Seraiah [was] the scribe;"

"Zadok the son of Ahitub": Zadok, meaning "righteous," was a Levitical priest descended from Aaron through Eleazar (1 Chron. 6:3-8, 50-53), who, along with his house, was the fulfillment of the oracle by the man of God (in 1 Sam. 2:35). Future sons of Zadok will be priests in the millennial kingdom of Messiah (Ezek. 45:15). Later, he became the only High-Priest in Solomon's reign, fulfilling God's promise to Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13).

“Ahimelech the son of Abiathar” (see 1 Sam. 22:20), which indicates that Abiathar is the son of Ahimelech. This is best accounted for by a scribal copying error (1 Chron. 18:16; 24:3, 6, 31). Abiathar was David’s priest along with Zadok (15:24, 35; 19:11). Abiathar traced his lineage through Eli (1 Kings 2:27), to Ithamar (1 Chron. 24:3). With Abiathar’s removal (1 Kings 2:26-27), God’s curse on Eli was completed (1 Sam. 2:33), and God’s promise to Phinehas of Eleazar’s line was fulfilled (Num. 25:10-13; 1 Sam. 2:35).

“Seraiah was the scribe”: His name means “The Lord prevails,” and he served as the official secretary of David.

Zadok was of the line of Eleazar. Zadok, at a later time, will be thrown out and Abiathar will replace him. At the time this was written, they were both priests. Seraiah was a scribe, which could be compared to a modern secretary of state.

2 Samuel 8:18 "And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was over] both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers."

“Benaiah”: His name means “The Lord builds,” and he served as the commander of David’s personal bodyguard. He later became the commander-in-chief of Solomon’s army (1 Kings 2:34-35; 4:4), after he killed Joab, David’s general (1 Kings 2:28-35).

“Cherethites” and “Pelethites” (see notes on 1 Sam. 30:14 and 1 Kings 1:38-40).

“Chief rulers”: Though the Hebrew text referred to the sons of David as priests, the LXX referred to them as “princes of the court”. The latter reading is supported by (1 Chron. 18:17), which refers to David’s sons as “chiefs at the king’s side.”

David had many sons, and they also had plenty to rule over. David was king of all Israel, but also had defeated the Philistines and the countries around them. This meant there were many places where these sons of David could actively rule as subordinate to David. The Cherethites and the Pelethites were small countries of people, who were basically Philistines. Benaiah and Jehoiada were over them.

2 Samuel Chapter 8 Questions

1. Who does David attack in verse 1?
2. What does "Metheg-ammah" mean?
3. What is another name for Metheg-ammah?
4. Why was David so successful in these wars?
5. Who did David measure with a line, to determine who would live?

6. The Moabites who lived became David's _____.
7. Why do some historians believe that David killed these Moabites?
8. Why did the living bring gifts to David?
9. Hadadezer was an _____ king.
10. How many chariots did David take from Hadadezer?
11. What does "houghed" mean?
12. How many horses did David keep for himself?
13. Who came to their rescue?
14. What does "succor" mean?
15. How many of the rescuers were killed?
16. David put _____ in Syria of Damascus.
17. The Syrians became _____ of David.
18. The Syrians were allowed to stay on their land and work, but they paid _____ to David?
19. Whose shields of gold did David take?
20. Where did David take brass from?
21. Who sent his son to king David to salute him?
22. Who had Toi been fighting against?
23. What did Toi send David as gifts?
24. Why did he send David gifts?
25. What did David do with these precious metals?
26. Who are listed, in verse 12, that David defeated?
27. How many Edomites did David kill at the valley of salt?
28. What did David do with the other Edomites?
29. David executed _____ and _____ unto all his people.
30. Who was Joab?

31. Who was recorder?
32. Who were priests to David?
33. What would a scribe be compared to in our society?