



## First Chronicles - Chapter Eighteen

### **II 1 Chronicles 10:1-2 Chronicles 9:31 - The United Kingdom of David and Solomon (continues)**

#### Summary of Chapter Eighteen

This chapter summarises the many military campaigns in which the Lord gave David success. Many led to their enemies becoming vassal states and pay tribute to Israel. Others agreed peace treaties with David. The chapter concludes with a summary of the officials under David.

#### **II.d 1 Chronicles 18:1-20:8 - David's Wars**

First Chronicles Chapters 18-20 deal with David's wars and the extension of his power over the surrounding nations. The Chronicler has drawn very selectively from 2 Samuel Chapters 8-21, passing over a mass of material relating to David's personal life, most notably the Bathsheba affair of 2 Samuel 11:2-12:25, and the troubles that engulfed his family and throne recorded in 2 Samuel Chapters 13-20. The writer has omitted this material not in order to whitewash David's reputation, since other matters that reflect positively on him, e.g. his kindness to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel Chapter 9, are also passed over, but to show how God's promises to David especially that given in 1 Chronicles 17:8-10 are being fulfilled and how David as a warrior and king contributed to the preparations for building the temple. As elsewhere in Chronicles, i.e. Chapters 11, 12 and 14, the materials do not always follow a strict chronology, but are used as illustrations from traditional sources.

#### **II.d.i 1 Chronicles 18:1-13 - David's Kingdom Established and Extended**

David's victories – over the Philistines in the southwest, the Moabites to the east of the Dead Sea, the Edomites in the southeast, and Hadadezer of Zobah in the distant northeast – brought security to Israel and extended its boundaries, or at least its zones of influence, to their farthest point in history. The divine promise

<<*I will subdue all your enemies*>> (1 Chronicles 17:10), compares to <<*I will give you rest from all your enemies*>> (2 Samuel 7:11), and is expressly recalled in v.1, with the victories being ascribed to the Lord. David dedicated the gifts he received and the spoils of war to the Lord; that is, for the provisioning and upkeep of the temple; refer to 1 Chronicles 26:27 and 2 Chronicles 5:1. The Chronicler's addition to his source in v.8b <<*with it Solomon made the bronze sea and the pillars and the vessels of bronze*>> amplifies this point and stresses that the temple, as well as the people, benefited from David's wars.

<sup>1</sup> Some time afterwards, David attacked the Philistines and subdued them; he took Gath and its villages from the Philistines.

### 1 Chronicles 18:1

Some time afterwards. This is a reference to David bringing the ark to Jerusalem as recorded in Chapter 16. This was a time before the events that are described in Chapter 17.

David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. The Philistines had troubled Israel for centuries, and they often dominated the people of God. In the reign of David, he both attacked and subdued these troublesome enemies. David did not avoid fighting the Philistines just because Israel had lost to them so many times before. After the time of David, there are no references to battles with the Philistines until the time of Hezekiah, when: <<*He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watch-tower to fortified city*>> (2 Kings 18:8).

He took Gath and its villages from the Philistines. When David became king the Philistines were taking territory from God's people. Under his leadership, God's people began to take territory from the enemy. Evidence for David's conquest of Gath and its surrounding villages is found in the presence of six hundred Gittites in David's entourage; refer to 2 Samuel 15:18.

<sup>2</sup> He defeated Moab, and the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute.

### 1 Chronicles 18:2

He defeated Moab. David's war against Moab and his harsh treatment of their army seemed out of place considering that David's great-grandmother Ruth was a Moabite and that he entrusted his mother and father into the care of the Moabites in 1 Samuel 22:3-4. It may be that the Moabites killed or mistreated David's parents, although there is no historical or scriptural information available to support this.

The Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute. Moab became a vassal state to Israel. This would not only mean an income for the national treasury but also a time of peace between the two nations.

<sup>3</sup> David also struck down King Hadadezer of Zobah, towards Hamath, as he went to set up a monument at the river Euphrates. <sup>4</sup> David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand foot-soldiers. David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left one hundred of them. <sup>5</sup> When the Aramæans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand Aramæans. <sup>6</sup> Then David put garrisons in Aram of Damascus; and the Aramæans became subject to David, and brought tribute. The Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. <sup>7</sup> David took the gold shields that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> From Tibhath and from Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took a vast quantity of bronze; with it Solomon made the bronze sea and the pillars and the vessels of bronze.

### 1 Chronicles 18:3-8

Zobah and Damascus were both in Syria, Hebrew 'Aram. Zobah was in the northern part of the Valley of Lebanon, in what is now called the Bekaa Valley.



The Bekaa Valley

As he went to restore his monument at the river Euphrates. The king of Zobah, who ruled over a Syrian kingdom, ran into David on his way to capture territory to the Euphrates. David's dominance extended all the way to the great river.

By his actions here, David saw the promises fulfilled that God had made to Abraham regarding the extent of Promised Land: <<On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates'>> (Genesis 15:18).

While the verse says that David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand foot-soldiers, elsewhere it says that <<David took from him one thousand seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot-soldiers. David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left enough for a hundred chariots>> (2 Samuel 8:4). The Septuagint agrees with Chronicles. Although there is not enough information available to account for this

difference, one possible explanation is that a scribe miscopied the text of Samuel, and the Septuagint along with Chronicles retains the true reading.

**The Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.** The narrator continues to point to God's blessing, not David's skill, as the reason for David's victories. Although the primary meaning here is in a military sense, **gave victory** is sometimes the nuance of the verb to save. As the prophet says: *<<Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation>>* (Isaiah 12:2).

**David hamstringed all the chariot horses.** This was military necessity instead of mere animal cruelty. David could not care for so many horses during a prolonged military campaign and he could not give them back to the enemy or else they may have used them against Israel once more.

**But left one hundred of them.** That David kept such a small number shows remarkable self-control and trust in God. David obeyed the principle of: *<<you may indeed set over you a king whom the Lord your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community. Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You must never return that way again'>>* (Deuteronomy 17:15-16), and absolutely refused to trust in horses as military weapons. His trust was in God instead: *<<Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God>>* (Psalm 20:7), and: *<<A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save>>* (Psalm 33:16-17).

**King Hadadezer** does not appear outside of the Bible, but there are similarities to an unnamed Syrian king of David's time mentioned in Assyrian annals. Having captured chariot horses, David apparently decided to experiment with a small chariot force.

**David took the gold shields that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.** David took what was the glory of the enemy and transformed them into trophies of the power and goodness of God. Those shields of gold were later set in the temple and testified to God's work in and through David.

<sup>9</sup> When King Tou of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of King Hadadezer of Zobah, <sup>10</sup> he sent his son Hadoram to King David, to greet him and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him. Now Hadadezer had often been at war with Tou. He sent all sorts of articles of gold, of silver, and of

bronze; <sup>11</sup> these also King David dedicated to the Lord, together with the silver and gold that he had carried off from all the nations, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek.

### 1 Chronicles 18:9-11

Hamath was on the middle Orontes River; it bordered Zobah on the north. The treasures later became part of Solomon's treasure, used either to build the temple or, like Hadadezer's golden shields, were placed in the temple treasury: <<***Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the Lord was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, the silver, the gold, and the vessels, and stored them in the treasuries of the house of the Lord***>> (1 Kings 7:51).

King Tou of Hamath sent his son Hadoram to King David, to greet him and to congratulate him. Neighbouring nations saw the hand of God on David and brought him honour and gifts. They knew that a strong, godly leader of Israel was good for the whole community of nations, not just good for Israel itself. Not every pagan nation surrounding Israel was hostile to Israel or their God, and David did not treat them as if they were hostile. Christians make a mistake if they treat every unbeliever or member of a different faith group as an openly hostile enemy of the Lord. Instead, the command from Jesus is: <<***You shall love your neighbour as yourself***>> (Mark 12:31a).

These also King David dedicated to the Lord. When David received this acclaim from the nations he dedicated it all to the Lord. He knew that the praise and glory belonged to God, and not to himself. David could handle success as well as apparent failure.

From Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek. By citing these subdued nations that David's victories were complete. God used David to lead Israel to victory over enemies in every direction. Israel possessed more of the land God promised to Abraham under David's and Solomon's reigns than at any other time. David was able to accomplish so much against God's enemies because he, unlike Saul, was not consumed with fighting against the people of God. Later, it can be seen how Solomon used diplomacy to maintain the peace won by David.

<sup>12</sup> Abishai son of Zeruah killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. <sup>13</sup> He put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became subject to David. And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went.

### 1 Chronicles 18:12-13

Second Samuel 8:13 states that David killed eighteen thousand Edomites. The deeds of David's generals were often ascribed to David, just as the deeds of Abishai's men were ascribed to Abishai. Joab seems to have led the campaign; it was at this time that Hadad, of the royal house of Edom, escaped to Egypt; refer to 1 Kings 11:14-22 and title of Psalm 60.

The Valley of Salt must have been in the Edomite territory south and east of the Dead Sea.

And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went. This is the summary of this whole chapter. Every victory and every enemy subdued was a testimony to the Lord's preserving power in the life and reign of David. This repetition from v.6a should be noted for it is important for the reader to remember that, despite all the great deeds of David and others like him throughout history, it is the Lord who gives the victory.

#### II.d.ii 1 Chronicles 18:14-17 - David's Administration

As David's empire expanded, his government was organised, apparently on the model of contemporary Egyptian practice, to oversee the major spheres of national life: army, court, and official worship.

<sup>14</sup> So David reigned over all Israel; and he administered justice and equity to all his people. <sup>15</sup> Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; <sup>16</sup> Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Shavsha was secretary; <sup>17</sup> Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were the chief officials in the service of the king.

### 1 Chronicles 18:14-17

So David reigned over all Israel. This chapter of victory, blessing, and prosperity describes the national life of Israel during the reign of David. This is one reason why he is generally regarded as the greatest king or ruler Israel ever had. This is how God wanted to reign in the life of Saul, but Saul resisted the Lord and rejected his Spirit. Because David allowed God to subdue him, the nations were subdued before David.

This is a list of David's officials; for similar lists refer to 2 Samuel 20:23-26 and 1 Kings 4:1-6. Like the list in Kings, this one starts with the office of the king. It was the task of the king to establish justice and equity; refer to 1 Kings 10:9. This

is also the expectation of all governments and administrations, as Paul confirms in Romans 13:1-7.

Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army throughout the reign of David. However, he had a particularly bloodthirsty nature and was involved in the killing of men he should have spared including David's son Absalom. David passed on instructions to Solomon that Joab should not be the leader of his army after David's death.

Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud appears as recorder in all three lists. The offices of recorder and secretary were common in surrounding countries. Jerusalem, like other city-states of the time, had a long history of civil administration, which David could take over and use.

Zadok helped David during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15:27-28, 17:15 and 19:11), and later supported Solomon in his struggle for the crown with Adonijah: *<<But the priest Zadok, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the prophet Nathan, and Shimei, and Rei, and David's own warriors did not side with Adonijah>>* (1 Kings 1:8). His father Ahitub was probably a different person from Ahitub the father of Ahimelech, priest at Nob; refer to 1 Samuel 22:9.

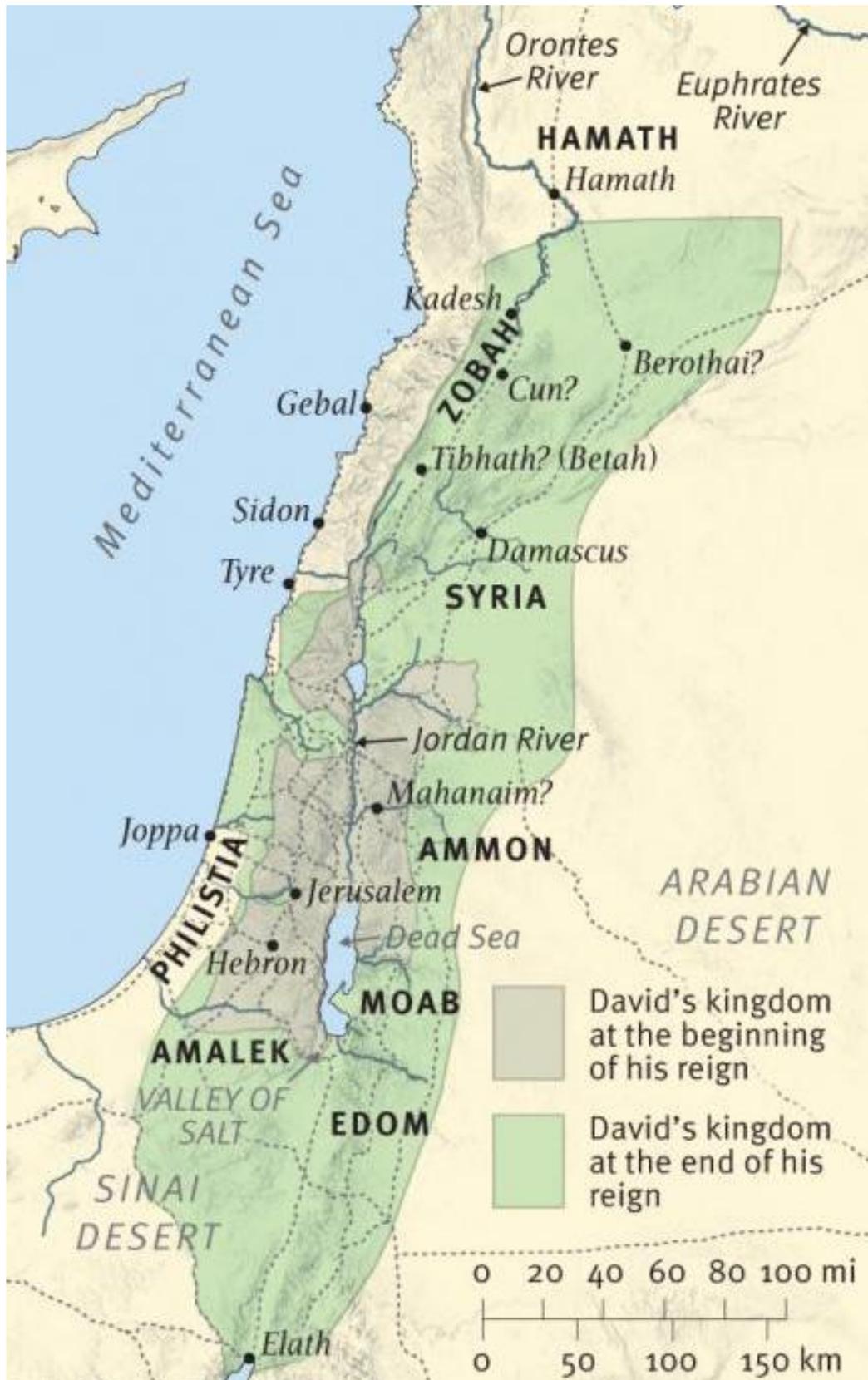
Abiathar appeared in First Samuel accompanying David as his priest (1 Samuel 22:20, 23:6 and 30:7), and worked with Zadok during Absalom's rebellion. Abiathar apparently named his son Ahimelech after his father, a common practice. For Abiathar's genealogy, refer to the comment made on 1 Samuel 2:27-28. Other passages such as the account of Absalom's rebellion and the lists of officials in 2 Samuel 20:25 and 1 Kings 4:4, refer to the priests as Zadok and Abiathar. It is often suggested that 'Ahimelech the son of Abiathar' is a scribal error for 'Abiathar son of Ahimelech.' Another possibility is that Abiathar retired his position as one of the chief priests in favour of a son, as Zadok later did in 1 Kings 4:2, and then perhaps the son later died or had some other problem, so Abiathar resumed the position.

The secretary Shavsha might be the same as Seraiah in 2 Samuel 8:17, Sheva in 2 Samuel 20:25 and Shisha in 1 Kings 4:3, as mentioned in the other lists, but this is not established. It may be that it was a foreign name, which would be especially liable to variant spellings.

Benaiah was in charge of David's personal force of Cherethites and Pelethites. He was one of David's 'mighty men' listed in 2 Samuel 23:20-22. Like Zadok, he supported Solomon against Adonijah and became commander of the whole army under Solomon; refer to 1 Kings 1:1-2:46 and 4:1-6. The Cherethites and Pelethites were soldiers who originated from Crete and who made up the king's bodyguard.

**David's many battles eventually established Israel as the dominant power in Syria and Palestine. David expanded Israel's borders from Saul's fledgling territory until, by the end of his reign, he controlled all of Israel, Edom, Moab,**

Ammon, Syria, and Zobah. Other kingdoms, such as Tyre and Hamath, established treaties with him.



The Extent of David's Kingdom 1010-971 BC