



## First Chronicles - Chapter Twenty

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

#### **II.d 1 Chronicles 18:1-20:8 - David's Wars (continues/concludes)**

##### Summary of Chapter Twenty

The chapter starts by concluding the campaign against the Ammonites with the fall of Rabbah and its king. This is followed by brief summaries of three battles against the Philistines.

#### **II.d.iv 1 Chronicles 20:1-3 - Siege and Capture of Rabbah**

The climax of these wars is Joab's destruction of the Ammonite capital, Rabbah, and David's coronation with the crown of the Ammonites' king. The Chronicler omits Joab's summons to David to come to Rabbah from 2 Samuel 12:27-29.

<sup>1</sup> In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army, ravaged the country of the Ammonites, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it. <sup>2</sup> David took the crown of Milcom from his head; he found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head. He also brought out the booty of the city, a very great amount. <sup>3</sup> He brought out the people who were in it, and set them to work with saws and iron picks and axes. Thus David did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

### 1 Chronicles 20:1-3

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army. In that part of the world, wars were not normally fought during the winter months because rains and cold weather made travel and campaigning difficult. Fighting resumed in the spring.

But David remained at Jerusalem. David should have been out at the battle but he remained behind. In 1 Chronicles Chapter 19 Joab and the army of the mighty men were preserved against the Aramæans and the Ammonites but they did not win a decisive victory. The decisive victory came when David led the battle at the end of 1 Chronicles Chapter 19. Both through custom and experience God told David, “You need to be at the battle.” The Chronicler omits any mention of David’s sin with Bathsheba; refer to the comment made on 1 Chronicles 18:1-20:8.

What happened when David remained at Jerusalem was so well known that the Chronicler did not need to record it. In his leisure David saw a woman bathing, acting upon his feelings of lust, he committed adultery with her making her pregnant, and conspired with Joab to murder her husband Uriah, one of David’s mighty men, to cover up his crime. A lot happened between David remained at Jerusalem and Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it.

Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it. In fact, the account in 2 Samuel 12:26-31 states that Joab himself did not win this battle over Rabbah. He fought the Ammonites to the point of victory and then called for David to come and complete the victory, after his sin and subsequent repentance. Then, according to 2 Samuel 12:29, David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah. This was the final phase of David’s restoration. He went back to doing what he should have done all along - leading Israel out to battle, instead of remaining in Jerusalem. This means that David was in victory once again. His sin did not condemn him to a life of failure and defeat. There was chastisement for David’s sin, but it did not mean that his life was ruined. Refer to the comment made on 2 Samuel 12:26-31.

David took the crown of Milcom. David’s sin did not take away his crown. Had David refused the voice of Nathan the prophet it might well have done. Because David responded with confession and repentance, there was still a crown for David’s head.

**Milcom was the primary god of the Ammonites and, along with other pagan gods, would play a significant part in the downfall of Solomon as a wise king and godly man: <<For Solomon followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites>> (1 Kings 11:5), and: <<This is because he has forsaken me, worshipped Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and has not**

*walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as his father David did>> (1 Kings 11:33).*

He found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone. A talent is about 75lbs or 34kgs which is a significant weight for David to wear on his head. It was also worth a significant amount. Such crowns were more for show and not to be worn except briefly on ceremonial occasions.

He also brought out the booty of the city, a very great amount. Rabbah was the royal city of the Ammonites and would have been the main store of their treasure. This would have been shared out proportionately among the fighting men. However, the crown with its magnificent jewel was reserved for the king. David again increases in might and in personal wealth, bringing his share of the riches back to Jerusalem. These would later be presented to the temple. This example of extending Israel's security with its neighbours fits in with the Chronicler's broader purpose of showing how David prepared the way for his son to build the temple.

Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem. Ammon became part of the greater Israelite nation. Although its land was outside of the Promised Land it became little more than a series of city states that paid tribute to Israel.

#### II.d.v 1 Chronicles 20:4-8 - Exploits Against the Philistines

Three incidents from David's war against the Philistines in Gezer and Gath bring this unit back to where it began.

<sup>4</sup> After this, war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, who was one of the descendants of the giants; and the Philistines were subdued. <sup>5</sup> Again there was war with the Philistines; and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. <sup>6</sup> Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he also was descended from the giants. <sup>7</sup> When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. <sup>8</sup> These were descended from the giants in Gath; they fell by the hand of David and his servants.

#### 1 Chronicles 20:4-8

After this. This description of victory over Philistine giants shows that Israel could slay giants without David.

Sibbechai, Elhanan and Jonathan. These men accomplished heroic deeds when David was finished fighting giants. God will continue to raise up leaders when the

leaders of the previous generation pass from the scene. David's legacy lay not only in what he accomplished, but in what he left behind - a people prepared for victory. David's triumphs were meaningful not only for himself but for others who learned victory through his teaching and example.

The descendants of the giants: literally the Rephaim: <<*In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim*>> (Genesis 14:5a), and: <<*The Emim – a large and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim – had formerly inhabited it. Like the Anakim, they are usually reckoned as Rephaim, though the Moabites call them Emim*>> (Deuteronomy 2:10-11).

The Philistines were subdued is the Chronicler's additional comment; refer to 1 Chronicles 17:10 for God's promise to subdue Israel's enemies.

Lahmi the brother of Goliath. Elsewhere it is written: <<*and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite*>> (2 Samuel 21:19b), which has apparently suffered textual corruption, since it is widely accepted that it was David who killed Goliath. Refer to the comment made on 2 Samuel 21:18-22 for possible explanations of this discrepancy.

There was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number. Commentators like Adam Clarke cannot resist reminding readers that this is a known phenomenon. "This is not a solitary instance: Tavernier informs us that the eldest son of the emperor of Java, who reigned in 1649, had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot. I once saw a young girl, in the county of Londonderry, in Ireland, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, but her stature had nothing gigantic in it."

The shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. This also has known parallels and is not the unhistorical creation which some have alleged. It was actually a javelin with a loop and cord round the shaft for greater distance and stability, and was known in the Aegean area from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BC. The OT reports one in the possession of another non-Israelite: <<*And he killed an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits tall. The Egyptian had in his hand a spear like a weaver's beam; but Benaiah went against him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear*>> (1 Chronicles 11:23).

Jonathan may be the Jonathan listed as one of David's thirty mighty men in 2 Samuel 23:32 and he was David's nephew, for Shimei was David's third eldest brother. His name is given in various forms in 1 Samuel 16:9 and 17:13, 2 Samuel 13:3 and 1 Chronicles 2:13.

These were descended from the giants in Gath. Since Goliath was from Gath according to 1 Samuel 17:4 these were probably Goliath's sons or brothers. The

Philistine warriors are also all called 'Rephaites' or descendants of Rapha, who were one of the pre-Israelite groups in Canaan, for example: <<*the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites*>> (Genesis 15:19-21), and were famous for their size.

They fell by the hand of David and his servants. Part of the idea is that David is conquering enemies now so it will be better for Solomon in the future. The present victory is not only good for those alive at the time but it passes something important on to the next generation. The defeat of these four giants is rightly credited to the hand of David and the hand of his servants. David had a role in this through his example, guidance, and influence.

The compiler of these books passes by also the incest of Amnon when he raped his sister Tamar, and the rebellion of Absalom, and the awful consequences of all these. These should have preceded the fourth verse. These facts could not be unknown to him, for they were notorious to all; but he saw that they were already amply detailed in books which were accredited among the people, and there repetition would serve no useful purpose. On these grounds the reader will give him credit for the omission.