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Israel and Judah:
6. David's Foreign Wars

by David Sielaff, January 2015

Read the accompanying Newsletter for January 2015

King David's rule over the kingdom of Israel was secure and he was at rest from his enemies (2 Samuel 7:1). David's request to build a Temple to YHWH in Jerusalem was rejected, but God made a covenant with David. The next events tell of David's foreign wars of which we are given only sparse details. The wars told about in 2 Samuel chapters 8–9 and 1 Chronicles chapters 18–19 resulted in Israel gaining an empire under David and Solomon. Both rulers had vassal kings subservient to them. The empire ended with Solomon's death and the division of the united kingdom.

The first "foreign" wars of David were against the Philistines and the Moabites. As we read previously, the Philistines attacked Israel several times, killing King Saul in one battle, and attacking twice during David's rule, when they were defeated both times. David then took the offensive. We are not told why David attacked the lands of Philistia, but they later plotted with Israel's other foreign enemies.

TEXT: *David Smites the Philistines and Moabites*

2 Samuel 8:1–2	1 Chronicles 18:1–2
¹ It occurred afterward that David smote the Philistines and made them submissive. *David* also took *Metheg-ammah* from the hand of the Philistines.	*¹* It occurred afterward that David smote the Philistines and made them submissive; *he* also took *Gath and its outskirts* from the hand of the Philistines.
² Then he smote Moab *and measured them off with a line, making them lie down on the earth. He measured out two lines for putting to death and a full line for preserving alive.*	*²* Then he smote Moab.
Thus, the Moabite became David's servants carrying tributary presents.	Thus, the Moabite became David's servants carrying tributary presents. **[end text]**

God's covenant with David said that YHWH would give David rest from his enemies (2 Samuel 7:11). Israel's war against the Philistines made them **"submissive"** to David's rule. This does not mean that David ruled over the other cities of Philistia directly, but rather that the Philistine leaders ruled their own lands, but were required to pay regular tribute of money, goods, and foodstuffs to the kingdom of Israel, and particularly to King David. Sometimes these tribute requirements were a light burden upon the subservient people, but often they were onerous, threatening the survival of the society.

If the tribute was too burdensome, this often forced the vassal into rebellion against the suzerain and this led to more war.[a] If the tribute was light, the relationship could last for a long time, although often the suzerain incorporated the vassal lands into his own territory when the vassal ruler died. If the suzerain was weakened and could not enforce the tribute, then the vassal became independent or allied with other powers, perhaps even subordinate himself to another suzerain.

International Relations in Ancient Times

This situation describes the histories of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah when the united kingdom divided into two independent realms after King Solomon's death. The several kings of Israel and Judah depended upon their own strength or the strength of other nations to help against outside threats kingdoms.

This was a feature of ancient history for most all nations and kingdoms. Once societies transformed from tribal to kingly rule, this situation existed (with variations) through the Middle Ages in Europe, Asia, and Africa until modern times. When the system of kings declined in favor of nation states, the increasing power of the merchant class rivaling the nobility (who were always important throughout history) propelled the rise of democracy (rule of the people) since the mid-1700s.

YHWH demanded that Israel look to Him alone for their safety and protection. He was to be their ruler, their suzerain, their sovereign. He would protect them if they were faithful and worshipped Him only as their Elohim, their God. They were to be subordinate to their God, who was their ultimate king. When they did not do so, the covenant punishments from the Law of Moses were invoked with increasingly intense penalties for disobedience. These are summarized in Deuteronomy 32:22–26.

Subservience by one people under another people, kingdom, or nation in ancient times took many forms. Power relationships changed and new treaties or covenants were drawn up between parties. **(1)** The lightest form of subservience after military defeat was a one-time payment of tribute, also known as extortion. **(2)** A heavier burden was an annual tribute payment. **(3)** Military garrisons, usually accompanied by a governor from the victorious kingdom, were stricter still, although garrison troops were expensive, even when paid by the weaker kingdom. **(4)** Then came full military occupation, though this was rare. Troops for occupation were very expensive. To sum up, the costs to victors grew with demands of increasing control.

(5) One of the strongest forms of control was wholesale displacement of a population to new lands. This was done by the Assyrians against the northern kingdom of Israel/Samaria who were transported to Assyria. The Assyrians moved other troublesome peoples around as well. Babylon did the same with the people of Judah. They transported several groups over the years to the lands of Babylonia. These displacements of the people of Israel and Judah were part of God's prophesied punishments when the people increasingly disobeyed their covenant with YHWH.[b] **(6)** The last form of control was genocide.

"Metheg-ammah" (2 Samuel 8:1) likely is the regional name of **"Gath and its outskirts"** (1 Chronicles

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[a] In fact, the tribute system occurred in modern times. After World War I, Germany was required by the victorious allied nations to pay yearly "reparations" for their role in starting the war. These reparations were extremely heavy on the German economy, causing great disruption and hardship. In 1932 Germany ceased paying reparations (which the German people resented being forced to pay). The allied nations did nothing. The reparations requirement was a factor in German dissatisfaction leading to the rise of Hitler and World War II.

[b] See Dr. Martin's information about the five-fold punishment of God's people when they increasingly disobey in "Mosaic Prophecies for the End-Time," "Introduction to Isaiah," and "The Book of Lamentations,"

18:1), although there may be more meaning to Metheg-ammah than just a name. The word in Hebrew literally means "bridle of the metropolis." This may refer to the bridle placed upon the metropolis of the five Philistine cities with David's conquest of Gath. In other words, the Philistines submitted to the suzerainty of King David, YHWH's vassal, when Israel's army conquered Gath. This idea is reflected in the English translation from the Greek:

> **"And it came to pass after this, that David smote the Philistines, and put them to flight, and David took the tribute from out of the hand of the Philistines."**

> • *2 Samuel 8:1,*
> *LXX Brenton English translation*
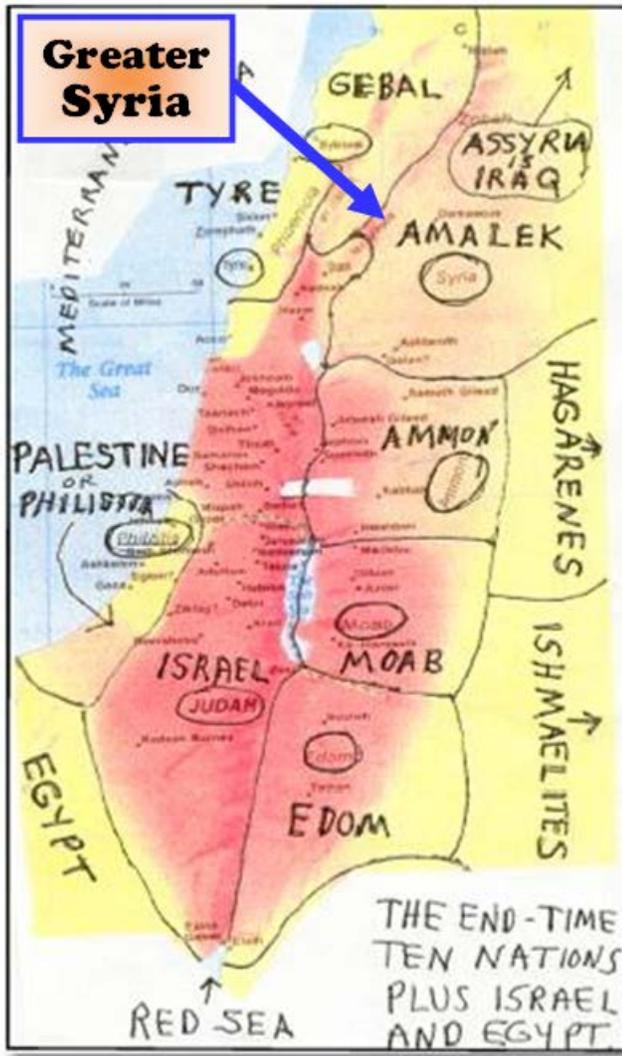
The name "Gath" itself means "winepress" and this Philistine city was the chief and royal city of the five Philistine cities (Joshua 13:3; 1 Samuel 6:17). Gath was likely the most fortified city and the combined forces of the five cities were unable to prevent Israel's attack and capture of Gath.

David was very familiar with the city of Gath. Gath was one of the last cities where the giant Anakim lived (Joshua 11:22). The giant Goliath that David killed was from Gath (1 Samuel 17:4), as were other large sized descendants of the Rapha (2 Samuel 21:20–22). The Philistines took the Ark to Gath when God caused a plague of hemorrhoid breakout (1 Samuel 5:8–9).[c] David took refuge at Gath twice when persecuted by Saul (1 Samuel 21:10; 27:2–4). When David captured the city, it may have been destroyed. Rehoboam (David's grandson, and Solomon's son and heir) restored Gath and made it into a fortress city (2 Chronicles 11:5–11).[d] David even hired Philistine mercenaries called "Cherethites" to fight for him (2 Samuel 8:18).[e] It was common for defeated enemies to fight for their new overlord. Between the time of David and Rehoboam there is no mention of the city being attacked or needing to be rebuilt.

Moabite Prisoners Killed

The next war David conducted was against the Moabites. Again, the armies of Israel under David were victorious. Moab was forced to submit after David killed two of every three prisoners taken in the combat. This incident of killing prisoners was not mentioned in 1 Chronicles 18:2. Tribute is mentioned in both passages of 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. The giving of tribute indicated that Moab became a vassal of King David. It

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[c] See my October 1, 2014 Commentary, "Golden Hemorrhoids" where this humorous incident is explained.

[d] Article "Gath" from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* 1914, 1st edition.

[e] The term "Cherethites" can be translated into English as "executioners." They apparently formed a bodyguard around David separate from his mighty men. Cherethites occurs in 1 Samuel 30:14; 2 Samuel 8:18, 15:18, 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; 1 Chronicles 18:17; Ezekiel 25:16 (termed "Chetherim"); and Zephaniah 2:5. The term is recognized as relating to Crete, whose people were close relations to the Philistines, who came from Caphtor (Jeremiah 47:4: **"… the Philistines, the remnant of the island of Caphtor"**). In fact, YHWH says He brought the Philistines to the coast of Palestine (Amos 9:7).

was likely during the same war that one of David's mighty men performed one of his great deeds, **"Benaiah son of Jehoiada from Kabzeel was a man of many valiant deeds. It was <u>he who smote the two sons of Ariel of Moab</u>"** (1 Chronicles 11:22). Benaiah commanded the Philistine **"Cherethites"** (2 Samuel 8:18). The name of the king was likely **"Ariel of Moab,"** but that information was not included in the Samuel and Chronicles texts.

David felt it necessary to attack and suppress two enemies on either side of the land promised to Israel. Moab and the Philistines could be made subservient to Israel but their land could not become part of Israel.

The people of Moab were related to the people of Israel through Abraham. His nephew Lot's incestuous relationship with his eldest daughter (Genesis 19:37) began this people. The Moabites were not friends with Israel, attacking them often. They were also idolatrous, worshipping other gods besides YHWH. The Moabite king Balak was placed on the throne of Moab by Sihon the Amorite (Numbers 21:26).

Israel under Moses destroyed the Amorite kingdom, but did not attack Moab. Balak, now an independent king of Moab, foolishly hired the pagan prophet Balaam to seduce the people of Israel (Numbers chapters 22–25). YHWH through Joshua said that Moab fought against Israel through seduction (Joshua 24:9), as much an attack as if they used weapons of bronze. Read also Deuteronomy 2:19 and Judges 10:6. Yet, when Israel passed through the land of Moab, <u>no tribe was allowed to seize or hold Moabite territory</u>. That land was given to the Moabites by God. Moses reminded Israel about this in Deuteronomy:

> **"Then Yahweh said to me** [Moses]**: 'Do not distress Moab, and do not stir yourself up against them in battle, for <u>I shall not give to you any of his land as a tenancy</u>, for I gave Ar to the sons of Lot as a tenancy.'"**
>
> - ***Deuteronomy 2:9 (also Judges 10:6)***

YHWH not only placed the Moabites in the east of their land promised to Abraham, but according to the prophet Amos, He also placed the Philistines on the Mediterranean coast. God wanted them there. YHWH placed the Philistines there <u>before</u> the time of Abraham. The word "Philistines" first occurred in Genesis 21:32.[f] YHWH moved the Philistines just like Israel, and some believe He even had a covenant with them.[g]

> **"Are you not like the sons of the Cushites** [Ethiopians] **to Me, sons of Israel? averring is Yahweh; Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt? And the Philistines from Caphtor? And Syria** [the Arameans] **from Kir?"**
>
> - ***Amos 9:7***

According to His sovereign will, God moved peoples around the earth in ancient times. He continues to do so whenever it pleases Him (Acts 17:26).

David was also very familiar with the Moabites. David's great-grandmother, Ruth, was a Moabitess (Ruth 4:17; Matthew 1:5) who renounced her pagan religious heritage, and accepted Israel's God, YHWH, as her Elohim, her God (Ruth 1:16–17). She was accepted by the people when she married Boaz of Judah (Ruth 2:11–12 and 4:9–14). Ruth's righteousness did not apply to the people of Moab. David took refuge from Saul in Moab, even bringing his parents there for safety (1 Samuel 22:3–4). Ithmah the Moabite was one of David's mighty men (1 Chronicles 11:46).

The land of Moab was east of the land of Israel, immediately east of the Dead Sea. You view the land of Moab when looking east from the western shore of the Dead Sea. The Philistines were west of Israel at the southern portion of the eastern Mediterranean coast.[h] These first two victorious campaigns of King David meant that Israel secured the western flank and the eastern flank of the Promised Land God gave to Israel.

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[f] See Dr. Martin's article, "The Prophesied State of Palestine." See the map developed by Dr. Martin above. See Henry Dye's map of the same graphic information with a clearer stylistic view in my April 15, 2012 Commentary, "The Future of Syria."

[g] Walter Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant: A Biblical Study,* 2nd edition (University of Ottawa Press, 1986), p.75.

[h] The Phoenician cities were north of the Philistines and they were friends of Israel, and rivals of the Philistines. We have no information regarding armed conflict between the Philistines and Phoenicians.

With all the above factors, why did David kill two thirds of the Moabite soldiers he took prisoner? We do not have textual evidence telling us why. One could read Moses' prophecy against Moab in Numbers 24:17 as being fulfilled by David, **"a scepter will arise from Israel, And he will transfix the profile** [the corners] **of Moab,"** but this is not a reason. David does not take such extreme action against any other people. The Jewish historian Josephus gives an interesting opinion, that David:

> **"… transferred the war to the Moabites; and when he had overcome two parts of their army in battle, he took the remaining part captive, and imposed tribute upon them, to be paid annually."**
>
> - *Josephus,* **Antiquities of the Jews** *7:98*

I hope Josephus' understanding was the correct one. Other than this, we cannot know why David deliberately killed prisoners at that battle. We are given no details or reason for his actions. It does confirm for us God's assessment of David as a man of war and blood (1 Chronicles 28:3).

Having secured his eastern and western flanks, David moves north.

TEXT: *David Victory over Hadadezer and His Allies*

2 Samuel 8:3–8	1 Chronicles 18:3–8
3 David also smote Hadadezer *son of Rehob*, king of Zobah, as he was going to *restore* his hand at the stream Euphrates.	**3** David also smote Hadadezer king of Zobah *at Hamath* as he was going to *set up* his hand at the stream Euphrates.
4 David seized from him 1,000 chariots and 7,000 horsemen and 20,000 men on foot. David hamstrung all chariot steeds, yet he reserved from them enough for 100 chariots.	**4** David seized from him 1,000 chariots and 7,000 horsemen and 20,000 men on foot. David hamstrung all chariot steeds, yet he reserved from them enough for 100 chariots.
5 When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David smote of the Syrians 22,000 men.	**5** When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David smote of the Syrians 22,000 men.
6 Then David placed garrisons in Syrian Damascus; thus the Syrians became David's servants carrying tributary presents. So Yahweh saved David everywhere he went.	**6** Then David placed garrisons in Syrian Damascus; thus the Syrians became David's servants carrying tributary presents. So Yahweh saved David everywhere he went.
7 David took the golden arrow-cases which were carried by Hadadezer's servants, and brought them to Jerusalem.	**7** David took the golden arrow-cases which were carried by Hadadezer's servants, and brought them to Jerusalem.
8 And from *Betah* and from *Berothai*, cities of Hadadezer, *king* David took a very great amount of copper.	**8** And from *Tibhath* and from *Cun*, cities of Hadadezer, David took a very great amount of copper. *With it Solomon made the copper sea and the columns and the copper furnishings.* **[end text]**

First notice that the Concordant Literal Version used figures instead of words to represent numbers. In ancient languages, numbers were written out. This was done by the CLV so the reader will have quick understanding of the numbers.

Note that in verse 3 a difficult expression is given, **"his hand at the stream Euphrates,"** referring to David's intention to perform some significant and symbolic action at the Euphrates River. Josephus' understood this to mean the battle took place at the Euphrates River (*Antiquities* 7.99). The King James Version

translates this phrase as **"to stablish his dominion by the river Euphrates."** What does this mean? The Net Bible gives an interesting and very possible explanation of this passage:

> **"*Heb* 'when he went to set up his hand at the Euphrates River.' The Hebrew word יָד (*yad*, 'hand') is usually understood to mean 'control' or 'dominion' here. However, since יָד does occasionally refer to a monument, perhaps one could translate, 'to set up his monument at the Euphrates River' (i.e., as a visible marker of the limits of his** [David's] **dominion)."**
>
> - ***Net Bible, 1 Chronicles 18:3, note 5***

If this understanding is correct, this may indicate that David went to the Euphrates River to "stake a claim" to all land south of the Euphrates. If true, this was a bold and public statement sure to be taken as a threat by many powerful rulers. Indeed, this is just what occurred. Opposition to David was fierce, and it would increase to a series of great climactic battles, as we shall learn in future articles.

There is another problem with the text. In 1 Samuel 8:3 it says David **"was going to restore his hand at the stream Euphrates."** First Chronicles 18:3 says David **"was going to set up his hand"** at the river. Why the discrepancy? The problem may derive from an unrecognized figure of speech in the Samuel text. "Restore" may be a faulty English translation. We cannot know from the two texts.

There is another way to look at verse 3 of both passages. The subject of the verse, the one who is seeking to "restore his hand" or "set up his hand" is Hadadezer, not King David. If was the case, then this would mean that Hadadezer was a ruler of a realm that was formerly larger, extending to the Euphrates River. Under King Hadadezer,

> **"Zobah apparently exercised power throughout southern Syria, and inevitably clashed with the expanding empire of Israel. Eventually David was victorious, though the chronology and the result of the battle of 2 Samuel 10 are open to debate. Most scholars hold that it was the first battle, given the scope of the victory of 2 Samuel 8, in which Hadadezer is reduced to vassalage."**
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> - ***Phelps, article "Hadadezer," in* Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 537*** [i]

In verses 4 of both texts, there are variants in some Hebrew manuscripts regarding the numbers of men, chariots and horsemen, but they do not concern us here. Suffice to say the numbers were substantial. This was not unusual in ancient battles. The casualties are often much greater on one side or the other. Once combatants break ranks and run away, the numbers of killed and wounded were often substantially greater on the losing side. Boyd Seevers describes this common outcome of pitched battle in ancient times:

> **"Once the momentum clearly swung in one direction, the winners typically won decisively. Fleeing troops usually discarded their shields, and perhaps their weapons and armor as well. This allowed them to flee more quickly, but also made them inviting targets to the victorious side. Pursuing infantry, mounted troops, and reengaging archers could now slaughter the largely unprotected enemy. Battles often ended in massacre. Three times in the summary of David's victories in 2 Samuel 8, the dead and captured enemies numbered in the thousands."**
>
> - ***Seevers,* Warfare in the Old Testament, *p. 71*** [j]

With God's influence on the battles (verses 6 in both passages, **"So Yahweh saved David everywhere he went"**), King David went from victory to victory. He did not lose any major battles. God's prophecy of David becoming a "great" name in the world was being fulfilled exactly as YHWH told David:

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[i] Mark Anthony Phelps, "Hadadezer," ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 537.

[j] Boyd Seevers, *Warfare in the Old Testament: the Organization, Weapons, and Tactics of Near Eastern Armies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Publications, 2013). If you have interest in ancient warfare this is an excellent book to own.

> **"I shall be with you wherever you go, and I shall cut off all your enemies from before you. I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are on the earth."**

> - *2 Samuel 7:9*

One must ask, who was King Hadadezer? We do not know other than his father was named Rehob. Zobah was where Hadadezer ruled? The exact location of the city called Zobah is also unknown, but it was an independent city-state ruling land north of where the tribes of Israel settled, northwest of present-day Damascus. It is doubtful Zobah's territory extended to the Mediterranean coast, which was ruled by city-state kings of Tyre, Sidon, and other coastal cities, dominated by a Phoenician population.

We do know that an unnamed king of Zobah (perhaps it was Rehob, Hadadezer's father) was attacked earlier by King Saul:

> **"After Saul had seized the kingship over Israel, he fought with all his enemies round about, with Moab and with the sons of Ammon** [in Jordan today]**, with Edom and with the king of Zobah, and with the Philistines; and wherever he turned toward them, he was victorious."**

> - *1 Samuel 14:47*

David **"smote Hadadezer"** (verse 1 in both passages), which means his army was decisively defeated.[k] David seized many weapons of war from the defeated Zobahite army, keeping some as trophies of victory. The implication is that Zobah was a wealthy kingdom. Both the unthroned Hadadezer and his defeated Zobah warriors later became hired mercenaries to fight Israel's army in later battles.

From these passages (and those following) we understand there were several kingdoms in the land north near the Euphrates River, the Syrian desert to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Most of these kingdoms were composed of Arameans, the basic lineage that Abraham came from (Deuteronomy 26:5). The kingdoms in that area at the time of David were relatively independent, and several were in conflict with each other. Two of Hadadezer's cities mined and stored copper. In verse 8 of both passages, different names are given for the two cities. The names of the cities apparently changed between the time of the writing of 2 Samuel and the composition of 1 Chronicles. In 1 Chronicles 18:8 we are told the source of the copper used by Solomon in construction of the Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem was provided by David's victory over Zobah.

Zobah was apparently an influential, wealthy, and powerful kingdom until David's forces defeated its army. In verses 5, Hadadezer was able to convince Syrian soldiers from Damascus to join Zobah's defeated army to fight against David. Again all the Syrian forces were badly defeated. In verses 6 of both texts, David's victory forced Damascus to accept a garrison of Israelite troops and to pay an annual tribute. This shows David's consolidation of power is north of Palestine in Syria. Hadadezer apparently survived and later fights Israel again as we will read in 2 Samuel chapter 10 and 1 Chronicles chapter 19 with an even larger army.

Input from Josephus

Josephus has additional information about the wars of David in Syria. He names the king of Damascus, which the Bible does not tell us, supported by a literary source:

> **"Now when Hadad, king of Damascus and of Syria, heard that David fought against Hadadezer, who was his friend, he came to his assistance with a powerful army, in hopes to rescue him; and when he had joined battle with David at the river Euphrates, he failed in his purpose, and lost in the battle a great number of his soldiers; for there were slain of the army of Hadad twenty thousand, and all the rest fled.**

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[k] During Saul's reign the song the women sang became reality during David's reign: **"Saul has smitten his thousands, Yet David his myriads!"** (1 Samuel 18:7). "Myriads" is translated "ten thousands" in most English translations.

Nicolaus [of Damascus[1]] **also makes mention of this king in the fourth book of his histories; where he speaks thus:**

> '**… after these things had happened, there was one of that country whose name was Hadad, who was become very powerful; he reigned over Damascus, and, the other parts of Syria, except for Phoenicia. He made war against David, the king of Judea, and tried his fortune in many battles, and particularly in the last battle at the Euphrates, wherein he was beaten. He seemed to have been the most excellent of all their kings** [kings of Syria] **in strength and manhood,'**

Nay, besides this, he says of his [Hadad's] **posterity, that 'they succeeded one another in his kingdom, and in his name;' where he thus speaks:**

> '**When Hadad was dead, his posterity reigned for ten generations, each of his successors receiving from his father that his dominion, and this his name; as did the Ptolemies in Egypt. But the third was the most powerful of them all, and was willing to avenge the defeat his forefather had received; so he made an expedition against the Jews, and laid waste the city which is now called Samaria.'**

Nor did he [Nicolaus of Damascus] **err from the truth; for this is that Hadad** [his descendant with the same name] **who made the expedition against Samaria in the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, concerning whom we shall speak in due place hereafter.**

Now when David had made an expedition against Damascus, and many other parts of Syria, and had brought it all into subjection, and had placed garrisons in the country, and appointed that they should pay tribute, he returned home. He also dedicated to God at Jerusalem, the golden quivers, the entire armor which the guards of Hadad used to wear."

- *Josephus,* **Antiquities of the Jews** *7:99–104*

According to Nicolaus' account, David did not attack Hadad, but the Syrian army attacked David's army, and **"many battles"** were fought. In ancient times, battles were often engaged in without a decisive outcome. This account by Nicolaus indicates a hard-fought campaign finally culminating in a climactic battle during which Hadad was killed and David was victorious. Josephus then wrote that David went against Damascus and the surrounding area and conquered it.

This additional information by Nicolaus through Josephus is helpful, but without the Scriptural accounts we would know little about the wars of David, and his opponents Hadadezer and Hadad. Josephus fills in some details, but he merely comments on historical gaps in biblical events. I hope Nicolaus' information from Syrian sources is accurate, but we cannot be certain. What is interesting is that Nicolaus' compliments what the Bible tells us about these events. Note what Josephus writes. David defeated Hadad, King of Damascus, who appears to have been a notable and powerful leader in ancient times. He brought troops to help Hadadezer and his army. Surely two great armies could defeat Israel's one army.

Great heroes need powerful enemies. To phrase it in a more literary way, great protagonists need powerful antagonists or there would be no challenge. God provided them to David and Israel. As we shall read, David is constantly in danger and fear for his life. He persevered by his faith in God to bring victory. These were not just mere words. They were heartfelt. We do not learn about David's fears and needs from the narratives of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. We only learn about them from the internal personal thoughts of David expressed in the Psalms. We will consider one of those psalms below.

This King of Zobah, Hadadezer was himself a most interesting historical character. I wish we knew more about him. He continually tried to resist David. Time after time he found financial and political support to raise armies to fight the armies of Israel, now considered a threat to all rulers in the region.

We must admire Hadadezer's fortitude, energy, and his leadership abilities. He simply did not know when to stop fighting God's anointed! As both the Bible and Josephus describe events of this period, there

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[1] A contemporary and friend of Herod the Great, read "Nicolas of Damascus" from the *Jewish Encyclopedia,* 1906 edition.

were several powerful and fascinating personalities alive at this time. Hadadezer must have had amazing powers of persuasion to gain allies to assist — at <u>their expense</u>! — his war against David, a proven "winner" in battle. This indicates Hadadezer was able to explain and convince other leaders that both David and the army of Israel were direct and existential threats to each of the kingdoms of Hadadezer's allies, great and small. Hadadezer shall return to our notice later in David's history.

Continuing on, we now see that not every king north of Israel was against David:

TEXT: *The Result of David's Victories*

2 Samuel 8:9–14	1 Chronicles 18:9–13
9 When <u>*Toi*</u> king of Hamath heard that David had smitten the entire army of Hadadezer,	*9* When <u>*Tou*</u> king of Hamath heard that David had smitten the entire army of Hadadezer <u>*king of Zobah,*</u>
10 <u>*Toi*</u> sent his son Hadoram to king David to ask him about his well-being and to congratulate him because he fought against Hadadezer and smote him; (for Hadadezer had been a man engaged in warfare against <u>*Toi*</u>). *In his hand were* articles of silver, *<u>articles of</u>* gold and *<u>articles of</u>* copper.	*10* <u>*he*</u> sent his son Hadoram to king David to ask him about his well-being and to congratulate him because he fought against Hadadezer and smote him (for Hadadezer had been a man engaged in warfare against <u>*Tou*</u>). *<u>He also sent all sorts of</u>* articles of gold and silver and copper.
11 King David sanctified them to Yahweh, along with the silver and the gold that he had *<u>sanctified</u>* from all the nations *<u>he had subdued</u>*: *12 <u>from Syria</u>* and from Moab, from the sons of Ammon and from the Philistines, from Amalek *<u>and from the loot of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah</u>*.	*11* King David sanctified them to Yahweh, along with the silver and the gold that he had *<u>carried off</u>* from all the nations, *<u>from Edom</u>* and from Moab, from the sons of Ammon and from the Philistines and from Amalek.
13 <u>David made a name for himself at his return after he had smitten</u> Edom in the Salt Ravine, 18,000 in all. *14* Then he placed garrisons in Edom.	*12 <u>As for Abishai son of Zeruiah, he smote</u>* Edom in the Salt Ravine, 18,000 in all. *13* Then he placed garrisons in Edom;
In all of Edom he placed garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. <mark>So Yahweh saved David everywhere he went.</mark>	and all the Edomites became servants to David. <mark>So Yahweh saved David everywhere he went.</mark>
	[end text]

King Toi ruled the city-state of Hamath, where David fought and defeated Hadadezer, **"David also smote Hadadezer king of Zobah <mark>at Hamath</mark>"** (1 Chronicles 18:3 above). Although we are not told, it is possible that Hadadezer was attacking or besieging the lands of Hamath when David's army confronted the army of Zobah.[m] After Israel's victory, King Toi approached David bearing expensive gifts, both as tribute and indicating subservience, but also in thanks for defeating an enemy who was a direct and immediate threat to Hamath. Note that verses 9 say that David had **"smitten the entire army of Hadadezer."** In every way, David's arrival on the scene was a godsend to Toi.

Josephus discusses these same biblical events, but he gives a different explanation to the motives of King Toi of Hamath. Whatever Toi's motives were, they made little difference to David. He gained an ally against his enemies in Syria, an ally who understood how to approach a king superior in power and prestige.

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[m] Hamath is first mentioned as part of the land promised to be under Israel's control in Numbers 13:21.

> **"But when the king of Hamath was informed of the ill success of Hadadezer, and had heard of the ruin of his army, he was afraid on his own account, and resolved to make a league of friendship and fidelity with David before he should come against him; so he sent to him his son Joram, and professed that he owed him thanks for fighting against Hadadezer, who was his enemy, and made a league with him of mutual assistance and friendship.**
>
> **He also sent him presents, vessels of ancient workmanship, both of gold, of silver, and of brass. So when <u>David had made this league of mutual assistance with Toi</u>, (for that was the name of the king of Hamath,) and had received the presents he sent to him, he** [David] **dismissed his son with that respect which was due on both sides; but then David brought those presents that were sent by him, as also the rest of the gold and silver which he had taken of the cities whom he had conquered, and dedicated them to God."**
>
> - *Josephus,* **Antiquities** *7:107–108*

Josephus indicates (1) Toi lied in fear of David's power; (2) David's alliance with Toi was mutual between kings of equal status, and not one of Toi being subservient to David as his superior. This equality is unlikely because Toi makes subservient actions toward David, such as inquiring about his health,[n] congratulating him on his military victories (which David was well aware of), and offering his son as a potential hostage.

In 2 Samuel 8:11–12 and 1 Chronicles 18:11 we are told of the wealth David seized in his victories over Israel's enemies, naming each of the defeated peoples.

Next comes two different accounts of the defeat of the Edomites (southeast of the Dead Sea, see the map above). We are told in 2 Samuel 8:13 that David smote the Edomites at the Salt Ravine, but in 1 Chronicles 18:12 we are told that Abishai commanded the troops. So, who defeated the Edomites, David or Joab's brother Abishai?

Abishai led the battle and God gave the victory, but Abishai was following David's orders, so it was also David's victory. Josephus understood this to be the case:

> **"Nor did God give victory and success to him only when he went to the battle himself, and led his own army, but he gave victory to Abishai, the brother of Joab, general of his forces, over the Edomites, and by him to David, when he sent him** [Abishai] **with an army into Edom: for Abishai killed eighteen thousand of them in the battle; whereupon the king** [of Israel] **placed garrisons through all Edom, and received the tribute of the country, and of every head among them."**
>
> - *Josephus,* **Antiquities** *7:109*

So, once again we see David putting military garrisons of Israeli soldiers in a foreign land to "encourage" them to remain good servants and continue giving tribute as a vassal power should honor his master. Likewise, David honored God.

David Lists His Officials

Read the next parallel verses (see below). The chief Levites performing ritual services of the tent housing the Ark of the Covenant were told written about in 1 Chronicles 15:1–24.[o] Now in 2 Samuel 8:15–18 and 1 Chronicles 18:14–17, after stating that David was a just and wise ruler, the leaders of the administration of David's kingdom are all presented at one time, as if put on display. These men operated the government and bureaucracy carrying out the king's orders.

In fact, most of David's chief administrators were mentioned elsewhere, all but Zadok, who was new, listed as one of the **"priests"** (*kohanim*) with Abiathar. These two men are understood to be chief Levitical

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[n] Did Toi enquire about David's health because David was recovering from wounds sustained in fighting? If not, then Toi's question would seem strange and at best unnecessary.

[o] See "Israel and Judah: 4. The Ark Arrives in Jerusalem."

priests, because Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar was the Levitical High Priest at the Tabernacle. After Ahimelech was killed by King Saul (1 Samuel 22:6–23), David said he would protect Abiathar and he did. Here Abiathar is identified as a priest, but Jesus said he was a High Priest (Mark 2:26). Abiathar remained faithful to David until he joined Adonijah's rebellion as rival to Solomon as successor in David's old age.

Abiathar named his first son Ahimelech, so there seems to be confusion in the standard Jewish Masoretic Text. The genealogy was: Ahimelech—Abiathar—Ahimelech. The CLV says Abiathar, son of Ahimelech. The KJV says Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, who himself had a son named Ahimelech for his grandfather.

TEXT: *David's Officials*

2 Samuel 8:15–18	1 Chronicles 18:14–17
[15] David reigned over all Israel; and it came to be that *David* was dealing out right judgment and justice to all his people.	[14] David reigned over all Israel; and it came to be that *he* was dealing out right judgment and justice to all his people.
[16] Joab son of Zeruiah was over the military host; and Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder.	[15] Joab son of Zeruiah was over the military host; and Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder.
[17] Zadok son of Ahitub and Abiathar son of Ahimelech were priests [*kohanim* in Hebrew]; and *Seraiah* was the scribe. [18] Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethite and the Pelethite; as for David's sons, they were *royal stewards* [*kohanim* in Hebrew, "priests"].	[16] Zadok son of Ahitub and Abiathar son of Ahimelech were priests; and *Shavsha* was the scribe. [17] Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Kerethite and the Pelethite; as for David's sons, they were *the first in rank at the king's side*. **[end text]**

Ahilud, as **"the recorder,"** kept and preserved the court records. Whenever King David wanted to make a decision, it was Ahilud's responsibility to bring forth any written records, at the king's request, of contacts, discussions, or notes, anything written, about the situation. Ahilud was a very important official.[p]

Seraiah (or Shavsha) **"the scribe"** was also an important official. It was his function to see to it that the laws, decisions, and decrees of the king are not only written and put in the safekeeping of Ahilud the recorder, but Seraiah was also to distribute copies of laws, edicts, decrees, etc., to the correct recipients. This was true whether the documents went to other kings, diplomats, were declarations of war or treaties of peace, trade agreements, all information that kings produce. Each document followed a legal form and formula.

King David's Priestly Sons

In 2 Samuel 8:18 David's sons are called "priests" (*kohanim*) in the Hebrew text. As I wrote in my February 2009 article "Christ as High Priest," King David himself was a priest, even though he was from the tribe of Judah. He was not a Levitical priest. He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. So were David's sons, including Solomon. The same common Hebrew term for "priests" is used one verse earlier, in verse 17. As I point out, non-Levitical priests were in the administrations of David and Solomon.

It appears that the function of the Melchizedek priesthood declined after the Levitical priesthood was prominent with the building of the Temple. The Levitical priesthood ended with the death of the last ruling king of Judah in the time of the prophet Jeremiah and King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

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[p] There may be documents with Ahilud's signet within King David's Tomb. See my article, "The Location and Future Discovery of King David's Tomb."

The basis of the Melchizedek priesthood is clear from Psalm 110, which is another part of the Covenant YHWH made with David. Remember that David was a prophet, priest, and king (as was Jesus Christ):

- He was a prophet through the prophetic psalms he wrote, as the apostle Peter told the Jews in Acts 2:29–30.
- He is a priest according to Psalm 110 and so are his sons (2 Samuel 8:18).
- Most everyone knows David was the model king of Israel.

King David and Psalm 60

I want to examine briefly Psalm 60, which relates to the events of wars mentioned above. I present Psalm 60 now even though the battles in Edom (1 Samuel chapter 10 and 1 Chronicles chapter 19) will be narrated later. This psalm tells us David's thoughts and feelings during this difficult time when Israel fought against great odds. King David expresses the anxiety, anguish, and dread that he felt during this time. It also describes the feelings of his military leaders and no doubt the soldiers in his army. Regardless of all this, David remained faithful to YHWH.

While the headings of the Psalms are not part of the biblical text, they have a very early and long tradition. Reading Psalm 60, there is no reason to relate this psalm to events of David's wars, except that we are told it is related. Three events are described: **[1]** the battles at Aram-nahariah, **[2]** against Hadadezer at Zobah (both told in 2 Samuel 8:3–8 and 1 Chronicles 18:3–8), and **[3]** against the Edomite and allied armies at the battle of the Salt Ravine (to be told later).

TEXT: *Psalm 60: David's Prayer, Plea, and Thanksgiving*

Psalm 60:1–12

A Davidic Inscribed Psalm, For Teaching,

When he ravaged Aram-naharaim and the Syrian Zobah, [q] and
Joab returned and smote Edom in the salt ravine, twelve thousand.

1 O Elohim,
    You have cast us off;
    You have breached forth upon us;
    You have been angry;
    May You turn back to us.
2 You have made the earth quake;
    You have riven [split] it;
      Heal its breaks, for it has slipped.
3 You have shown Your people hardship;
    You have made us drink wine that causes tremoring.
4 You have given a banner to those fearing You
    For flight from the face of the bow [Hebrew: verity, truth].

Interlude [*Selah*]

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[q] **Aram-naharaim** means "Aram of the two rivers," meaning the land between the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers north of Syria (but occupied by Syrian people). Aram is another term for Syria. **"Syrian Zobah"** refers to David's victory over Hadadezer, who was subordinate to Aram-nahariam.

⁵ That Your beloved ones may be liberated,
    Do save with Your right hand and so answer me.

⁶ Elohim, He has spoken ==in His holiness==:

> **" I shall indeed ascend** [Hebrew: be joyous]**;**
>   **I shall indeed apportion out Shechem, And**
>   **I shall measure off the valley of Succoth.**
>
> ⁷ **Mine is Gilead, and**
>   **Mine is Manasseh, And**
>   **Ephraim is the stronghold of My head;**
>   **Judah is My statute-maker;**
>
> ⁸ **Moab is My washbasin;**
>   **Unto Edom shall I fling My sandal;**
>   **Over Philistia shall I shout in triumph? "**

⁹ Who shall escort me to the fortified city?
    Who will guide me unto Edom.

¹⁰ O Elohim, have You Yourself not cast us off?
    And shall You not go forth, O Elohim, with our hosts?

¹¹ Do grant to us help from distress,
    For salvation from a human is futile.

¹² With Elohim shall we do valiantly,
    For He Himself shall trample our foes.

        Permanent, With Accompaniment Davidic

Analysis of Psalm 60

The first four verses are a prayer of David expressing the feelings of desertion by God, feelings which turn to trust. Almost complaining, in reality David is "letting God know" the urgent and substantial needs of the army of Israel in this time of difficulty. The first verse uses the term "breached" which refers to a breach in fighting with spear, shield, and sword. If the army is defeated, God's chosen people in Israel will suffer.

It seems the Israelite army had an unspecified setback (or several), and was being threatened with defeat, and perhaps destruction by overwhelming forces. This likely happened in each of the three battle campaigns mentioned in the heading of Psalm 60. In each instance, I believe David and the Israelite army came close to a disastrous defeat, but something unexpected and significant happened to give them victory. According to verse 2, in one instance the Israelite army survived serious earthquakes from God. Everyone was shaken and wondered if God was truly on their side, but the enemy was even more affected and their morale broke.

Some think Israel was defeated in each military campaign but came back to win the great victory:

> **"The opening words of David's psalm cast a far different light on David's victory over the Syrians. It was not an easy triumph at all. It evidently came only after an initial defeat at the hands of the Syrians. David did not attribute this defeat to 'bad luck' or poor military strategy. He and the people of Israel were in a covenant relationship with God. One aspect of this relationship was God's promises to give them victory over their enemies if they, the people of God, would walk in obedience to his commandments (Deut. 28:1, 7)."**

> • *Roger Ellsworth,* **Opening up Psalms,** *p. 75* ^r

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^r Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 75.

The mention of the earthquake is not poetic expression; it describes events that occurred during the wars of David.[s] Reference to the cup of wine in verse 3 has later expression in the cup of God's wrath in Isaiah 51:17, 22. We are not told God's grievance against Israel. Is God testing Israel? David as king does not represent Israel here; Israel represents herself through her army. God puts Israel through a period of instruction for them to learn, to grow, in trust of Him. I do not think the defeats occurred as Ellsworth states, but the prospect of defeat was close, seemingly inevitable, so potentially devastating as to cause, in verse 3 as Ellsworth says, **"it had left the people of God as disoriented as a man that was reeling under the influence of wine."**

Verse 4 says that the fear of God made men rally around God's banner of verity, meaning truth, a symbol to rally to, perhaps because all they have left to trust is God and not their own strength. We all have doubts at various times in our lives. By the way, *Selah* is an interjection, a Hebrew term indicating a pause in the thought and a change of subject.

After *Selah,* the pause, in verse 5 David asks that God deliver His **"beloved ones,"** referring to the army and by extension all people of Israel. Trust in God will rescue them from the product of the bow — the killing arrows. Then David speaks for God to Israel (verse 6).[t] When God speaks **"in His holiness"** it means that His message comes directly from His presence in the heavenly sanctuary.

The Psalm concludes (verses 11–12) as it begins, with a prayer. Do not trust man, do trust God.

Conclusions about Psalm 60

The heading of this psalm says it was composed by David **"For Teaching."** Teaching what? The teaching was to instruct the troops to gain confidence that no matter what happens (even earthquakes!), God is with them, even to controlling the elements. The three locations mentioned in the heading were situations when the Israelite combat forces faced imminent defeat, destruction of their army, and the conquest of their homeland after their deaths. The situation was dire — for each of the three occasions. This message does not come through 2 Samuel chapter 8 or 1 Chronicles chapter 18. There, the battles were very briefly described, sometimes opposing forces and leaders identified, but the results of victory are always given. How the battles were fought or the victories were won was of lessor importance.

The situation described in Psalm 60 is different, but the reader is still given few details. It is likely that the armies of Israel were outnumbered and perhaps were out of position on each battlefield. Yet through God's grace, God saw to it that Israel prevailed and three great victories were won.

When David wrote Psalm 60 the outstanding battlefield successes had already happened. They continued in future battles in Syria and elsewhere. In fact, David was one of the rare leaders in history who never lost a battle.[u] God protected him every step of the way, yet David did the leading and more than his share of the killing (1 Chronicles 28:3). The conclusion to be remembered from 2 Samuel chapter 8, 1 Chronicles chapter 18, and Psalm 60, is that YHWH acts on Israel's behalf even when it seems He is not acting at all.

David Sielaff, January 2015

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[s] Syria is earthquake country, as is Israel. See Dr. Martin's March 2001 Commentary, "Earthquake," which tells of historical research into past earthquakes in the Middle East. See Dr. Martin's 1981 article "The Lake of Fire: Where Is It Located?"

[t] Similar sentiments of rescue are expressed in Psalm 20:6–9, but there, unlike Psalm 60, no context is given:

> **"Now I know that Yahweh will save His anointed one;**
> **He shall answer him from His holy heavens**
> **By the saving masterful deeds of His right hand.**
>
> **These boast in chariots, and those in horses,**
> **But as for us, concerning the Name of Yahweh our Elohim, we are ever mindful.**
>
> **They, indeed they will bow down and fall,**
> **But as for us, we will rise and shall become attested.**
>
> **O Yahweh, do save the king, And answer us on the day we call."**

[u] I know of only two leaders who never lost a battle: Alexander the Great and John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough.