

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 8

This chapter gives a relation of the wars of David with his enemies, and his victories over them, particularly the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, and Edomites, and of the spoils he took from them, and of the presents made to him by others, (^{<108E>}2 Samuel 8:1-14); and of his righteous administration of government, and of the principal officers in his court and camp, (^{<108S>}2 Samuel 8:15-18).

Ver. 1. *And after this it came to pass*, etc.] After David had rest from his enemies for a time, and after the conversation he had had with Nathan about building the house of God, and after the message sent to him from the Lord by that prophet, forbidding him to build, and David's prayer to the Lord upon it, the following events happened; and which are recorded to show that David's rest from his enemies did not last long, and that he had other work to do than to build the house of God:

that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them; these had been long and implacable enemies of Israel; Samson began to weaken them in his days; a war was waged between them and Israel in the times of Samuel and Saul, and the battle sometimes went on one side and sometimes on the other; but now David made an entire conquest of them: before they had used to come into the land of Israel, and there fight with Israel, but now David entered into their land, and took it from them:

and David took Methegammah out of the hands of the Philistines; the name of a province in Palestine, and from the parallel place in (^{<1380>}1 Chronicles 18:1), it appears to be Gath, and its adjacent towns; but why that was called the bridle of Ammah, or the bridle of a cubit, as it may be rendered, is not easy to say. The conjecture of Kimchi is, that there was a pool or river of water, so Ammah is thought to signify; and Aquila renders it a water course, which passed through the city, having been brought from without it into it, the communication of which from place to place it may be David cut off, by stopping or turning its stream; but interpreters more generally suppose that Gath was built upon an hill called Ammah, (see ^{<1024>}2

Samuel 2:24); thought to be the same with the Amgaris of Pliny^{f129} though that is sometimes read Angaris, a mountain he places in Palestine; and that it was called Metheg, a bridle, because being a frontier city, and being very strong and powerful, erected into a kingdom, it was a curb and bridle upon the Israelites; but now David taking it out of their hands, opened his way for the more easy subduing the rest of their country: or the word may be rendered Metheg and her mother, that is, Gath, the metropolis, since that and her daughters, or towns, are said to be taken, (~~4380~~1 Chronicles 18:1); and Metheg might be one of them.

Ver. 2. *And he smote Moab*, etc.] He next went against that, and invaded it, the people of it being always troublesome and distressing to the children of Israel; and though the king of it had shown some favour to David, yet it was when he considered him as an enemy to Saul, and Saul to him; but things having taken a different turn, his and his people's enmity against David and his people appeared; wherefore he went and fought them, and made them his subjects, whereby was fulfilled the prophecy of Balaam, (~~0247~~Numbers 24:17); as it referred to David:

and measured them with a line: either their country and fields, to distribute among his people, or rather the soldiers he took prisoners; which, as Procopius Gazaeus says, were so numerous that they could not be told, and therefore they were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground, and they were measured with a line, as it follows:

casting them down to the ground; or ordering them to lie down; though some understand this of casting down their cities, towers, and strong holds, and levelling them with the ground:

even with two lines measured he; with one, so it may be supplied, as the Vulgate Latin,

to put to death, and with one full line, to keep alive; that is, in measuring them with his lines, he divided them into two parts, one he put to death, and the other, the full line, which contained the most, he saved alive; though it seems according to our version, and so most understand it, that David slew two thirds, and saved one, and so Josephus^{f130}. This must be understood of the army of the Moabites that fell into his hands, so Josephus, who persisted and refused to submit, not of all the inhabitants of the land. The Jews say^{f131}, that the reason of this severe treatment of them was because they slew the father, and mother and brethren of David, whom

he left to the care and custody of the king of Moab, when he fled from Saul, (see ^{<027B>}1 Samuel 22:3); since after that they are heard no more of; though it should rather be imputed to their enmity against the people of Israel. The phrase of “meting out the valley of Succoth” seems to be an allusion to this fact, (^{<1016>}Psalm 60:6), the psalm being written on occasion of the victories here related:

and [so] the Moabites became David’s servants; the inhabitants of the land who were left in it, perhaps that part of the soldiers preserved alive were brought home captives:

[and] brought gifts; paid a yearly tribute to King David, as they afterwards did to Solomon and to Rehoboam, until the revolt of the ten tribes, and then they paid it unto the kings of Israel, to the times of Ahab, (see ^{<120E>}2 Kings 3:4,5), though these gifts may be distinct from, and besides the tribute paid, which is supposed in their being servants, (see ^{<471>}2 Chronicles 17:11). Thus the Arabians ^{f132} carried gifts to the king of Persia besides tribute.

Ver. 3. *And David also smote Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah,* etc.] Called sometimes Aramzobah, and was a part of Syria, as its name shows. Benjamin, of Tudela ^{f133} takes it to be the same with Haleb or Aleppo; Josephus ^{f134} calls it Sophene; but that is placed by Ptolemy ^{f135} beyond the Euphrates; whereas this country must be between that river and the land of Israel, and was contiguous to it, and near Damascus; and it was so near the land of Israel, and being conquered by David, that it became a controversy with the Jews, whether it was not to be reckoned part of it, and in several things they allow it to be equal to it ^{f136}. Rehob was the first king of this part of Syria, and then his son the second and last; he is called Hadarezer in (^{<138B>}1 Chronicles 18:3); the letters **d** “D” and **r** “R”, being frequently changed in the Hebrew tongue: him David fought with, and overcame,

as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates; which some understand of Hadadezer, so Jarchi and Kimchi, who attempted to recover part of his dominions that had been taken by some one or another from him, which lay upon the river Euphrates; or he endeavoured to enlarge his dominions, and carry them as far as the river, and establish the borders of them; and while he was doing this, or attempting it, David fell upon him, and routed him; or rather this refers to David, who considering that the

ancient border of the land of Israel, as given to Abraham, reached to the river Euphrates, (^{<0158>}Genesis 15:18); he set out on an expedition to recover this border, and whereas the country of this king lay in his way, he invaded that; upon which Hadadezer rose up against him, and was conquered by him, and by this means the border was recovered to the kingdom of Israel, and reached so far, as is plain it did in Solomon's time, (^{<1021>}1 Kings 4:21-24).

Ver. 4. *And David took from him a thousand [chariots], and seven hundred horsemen*, etc.] “Chariots” are not in the text here, it is only 1700 “horsemen”; but it is supplied from (^{<1304>}1 Chronicles 18:4); where the word is expressly mentioned, and there the horsemen are said to be seven thousand as in the Septuagint version here, and in Josephus^{f137}; which may be reconciled by observing, with Kimchi and Abarbinel, that here the chief officers are meant, there all the chariots and horsemen that were under their command are mentioned, which together made up that large number; or else here are meant the ranks and companies of horse David took, which were seven hundred; and these having ten in a company or rank, made seven thousand; and there the complement of soldiers in those companies and ranks are intended:

and twenty thousand footmen; the same as in (^{<1304>}1 Chronicles 18:4); and so in Josephus^{f138}:

and David houghed all the chariot [horses]; or hamstrung them, as Joshua was ordered to do with respect to the Canaanites, (^{<0610>}Joshua 11:6); he did not kill them, which might seem cruel and unmerciful to the brute creatures, but hamstrung them, that they might be useless for war; and the reason of it was, that horses might not be multiplied in Israel for that purpose, that so their trust and confidence might not be placed in them; (see ^{<0576>}Deuteronomy 17:16);

but reserved of them [for] an hundred chariots; for his own use, not for war, but for grandeur; which accounts in some measure for the number of chariots and horses Solomon had, (^{<1026>}1 Kings 4:26 ^{<4014>}2 Chronicles 1:14); the number of horses reserved is supposed to be four hundred, four horses being used in a chariot, which Jarchi gathers from (^{<4017>}2 Chronicles 1:17).

Ver. 5. *And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah*, etc.] These seem to have had no king at this time, or, if they had, Hadadezer was their king, which is not improbable; and Nicholas of

Damascus ^{f139}; an Heathen writer, is clear for it, whom he calls Adad, who, he says, reigned over Damascus, and the other Syria without Phoenicia, who made war with David king of Judea, and was routed by him at Euphrates: and he seems to be the first king of Damascus, which he joined to the kingdom of Zobah, and all the kings of Damascus afterwards were called by the same name; though Josephus ^{f140}, who also speaks of Adad being king of Damascus and of the Syrians, yet makes him different from this Hadadezer, to whose assistance he says he came:

David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men; that is, of the Syrians of Damascus.

Ver. 6. *Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus*, etc.] Which was Coele-Syria, and lay between Libanus and Antilibanus, the chief city of which was Damascus; which Curtius ^{f141} calls Damascus of Syria, being the head of it, (^{<2308>}Isaiah 7:8); in the principal places of which he put garrisons of soldiers to keep the country in subjection to him; or he put commanders or governors, as the Targum, in the, chief cities, and so Ben Gersom and R. Isaiah interpret it:

and the Syrians became servants to David, [and] brought gifts; or paid him tribute by way of homage, acknowledging themselves his subjects:

and the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went; he covered his head in the day of battle, and saved him from the hurtful sword.

Ver. 7. *And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer*, etc.] That were found with them, which they had in their hands; these must be supposed to be with the principal officers of his army; or golden chains, as Aquila, or golden bracelets on their arms, as the Septuagint; the Syriac version is “quivers of gold”, such as they put arrows into, and so Jarchi and R. Isaiah understand it of such, and refer to (^{<2511>}Jeremiah 51:11); and so Josephus ^{f142}:

and brought them to Jerusalem; where they were laid up, and converted to the use of the sanctuary Solomon built; (see ^{<2408>}Song of Solomon 4:4).

Ver. 8. *And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer*, etc.] Which, in (^{<1388>}1 Chronicles 18:8), are called Tibhath and Chun, they having different names; or their names might be changed upon this conquest of them, and the one might be the names they went by with the Syrians, and the other the Israelites called them by; the latter is the same with Berothah

in (^{257/6}Ezekiel 47:16); and the Barathena of Ptolemy ^{f143}, placed by him near Mesopotamia; in the Arabic version of (¹³⁸⁸1 Chronicles 18:8), they are called Emesa and Baalbec, the former was a city of Coele-Syria, the latter was at the foot of Mount Lebanon; (see Gill on “Amos 1:5”);

King David took exceeding much brass; whereby he was furnished and able to give the large quantity he did for the service of the temple, (¹³⁹⁷1 Chronicles 29:7). The Septuagint version adds here what is expressed in (¹³⁸⁸1 Chronicles 18:8),

“wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the layers, and all the vessels.”

Ver. 9. *When Toi king of Hamath*, etc.] Which was another small kingdom in Syria, perhaps lately erected to defend themselves against Hadadezer, and this the first king of it, at least the first we hear of; his name is Tou in (¹³⁸⁹1 Chronicles 18:9); where in the Targum he is called king of Antioch. Hamath lay to the north of the land of Canaan; (see Gill on “⁰⁸⁴⁸Numbers 34:8”): it is said ^{f144} to be three days’ journey from Tripoli, and that it stands in the midway to Aleppo, on a very goodly plain, replenished with corn and cotton wool, but very much in ruins, and falls more and more to decay: at this day (says my author, who travelled in those parts in the beginning of the seventeenth century) there is scarce one half of the wall standing, which hath been very fair and strong. The king of this place

heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer; the news of which soon reached him, he being in the neighbourhood.

Ver. 10. *Then Toi sent Joram his son unto King David*, etc.] Who is called Hadoram in (¹³⁸⁰1 Chronicles 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 ⁰³³¹Genesis 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.

Ver. 11. *Which also King David did dedicate unto the Lord*, etc.] He devoted it to sacred uses, particularly to the building of the house of the Lord, as he also had the gold and the brass he took from Hadadezer: together

with the silver and the gold he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued; who are after particularly mentioned; he did not convert the spoils he took to his own use, but observed the law God gave to the kings of Israel, that they should not greatly multiply to themselves silver and gold, (^{<1377>}Deuteronomy 17:17). He set it apart, and laid it up for the service of the sanctuary; and this accounts for the abundance of gold, silver, and brass, which David had amassed together, and left to his son Solomon to build the temple with; (see ^{<1380>}1 Chronicles 28:1-29:30).

Ver. 12. *Of Syria*, etc.] Of Syria of Damascus, as distinct from Syriazobah, Hadadezer was king of, after mentioned; this is omitted in (^{<1381>}1 Chronicles 18:11);

and of Moab: who brought him gifts and presents, and were tributaries to him, (^{<1382>}2 Samuel 8:2);

and of the children of Ammon; who very probably joined the Moabites, and were conquered and spoiled at the same time:

and of the Philistines; when Methegammah was taken from them, (^{<1383>}2 Samuel 8:1);

and of Amalek; for though we have no account of any war of his with that people, since he was king, yet he doubtless had, and had been victorious and spoiled them; (see ^{<980>}Psalm 83:7);

and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah; (see ^{<408>}2 Samuel 8:3-6). These conquests of David, are confirmed by the testimony of Eupolemus, an Heathen writer, who says that he overcame the Syrians by Euphrates, and the Assyrians in Galadene (or Gilead), and the Phoenicians; that he fought against the Idumeans (or Edomites), the Ammonites, Moabites, Ituraeans, Nabathaeans, and Nabdaeans; also against Syron king of Tyre and Phoenicia; all of whom he obliged to pay tribute to the Jews ^{f145}.

Ver. 13. *And David gat [him] a name*, etc.] Fame and reputation in the several nations of the world for valour and courage, for the many and signal victories that he obtained; the Jewish writers generally refer this to his humanity in burying the dead bodies of his enemies slain in war, which gained him great esteem among all, and even his very enemies; but nothing of that kind is pointed at here, but his conquests: or “he made himself a name”; erected a triumphal arch ^{f146} in memory of his victories:

when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, [being] eighteen thousand [men]; in the relation of this fact in different places some difficulties arise, both as to the people smitten, and their numbers, and by whom; in this place they are said to be Syrians, but in (^{<382>}1 Chronicles 18:12), and in the title of (^{<961>}Psalm 60:1), which was composed on account of these victories, they are called Edomites, and said to be of Edom; which may be reconciled by observing, that the Syrians and Edomites were confederates in this war; and that whereas the latter were auxiliaries to the former, the whole body of the army might be called Syrians, of which twenty two thousand were slain that were properly Syrians, and eighteen thousand Edomites, in all forty thousand; which was a very great slaughter: or the sense is, that when he had smitten the twenty two thousand Syrians, and was upon the return, he met with a body of Edomites, who came to the assistance of the Syrians, and he slew eighteen thousand of them; and the Jews say, as Jarchi observes, there were two battles; and if so, this would remove all the difficulties started; as for the numbers slain, here eighteen thousand, and (^{<961>}Psalm 60:1), twelve thousand, it is reconciled by observing, that Abishai first began the attack upon the Edomites, and slew six thousand of them; and then Joab fell upon

them, and slew twelve thousand more, in all eighteen thousand; in (~~1382~~ 1 Chronicles 18:12), this slaughter is ascribed to Abishai, because he began it, even the whole number; and in (~~3900~~ Psalm 60:1), to Joab, the twelve thousand slain by him, who seconded Abishai; and the whole is here attributed to David, because he was king, under whom Abishai and Joab served as generals: and no less difficult is it to ascertain the place where this slaughter was made, called “the valley of salt”: it seems by our text that it was in Syria, but in other places as if it was in Edom; (see ~~1240~~ 2 Kings 14:7) (~~4251~~ 2 Chronicles 25:11); but in Edom itself is no such valley to be found, though there is in Syria; one traveller ^{f147} tells us, that in the way from Aleppo to the banks of Euphrates are many villages, among which is one of note, called Tedith, famous for a synod held here by the Jews, in the year from the creation 3498, of which Ezra was the scribe; when were placed the books of the Old Testament in the order in which they now are; and near this town, he says, is the valley of salt, memorable for the victory here recorded: others say ^{f148} about three or four hours’ journey from Aleppo is the valley of salt, near which is a salt spring, whose waters running over the place leave, when dried by the sun, a great quantity of excellent salt; this salt is thrown together in the Gabboul, or salt house; but by others ^{f149} we are informed, that near about an hour’s distance from the city of Tadmor, (see ~~1098~~ 1 Kings 9:18) (~~4488~~ 2 Chronicles 8:3,4), is to be seen a large valley of salt, affording great quantities thereof; and it is thought that this is more probably the valley of salt mentioned here, than another which lies about four hours from Aleppo, and has sometimes passed for it; and which the above accounts show: but a modern writer ^{f150}, in his account of Palmyra, the same with Tadmor, speaks of a great plain, all covered with salt, from whence the whole country round is supplied. This plain is about a league from Palmyra, and extends itself towards the eastern part of Idumea (or Edom) the capital city of which was Bozra; and indeed this valley being both in Syria, and reaching to the borders of Edom, bids fair to be the valley here spoken of.

Ver. 14. *And he put garrisons in Edom,* etc.] 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; which is 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, (^{<1273>}Genesis 25:23 27:40);

and the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went; (see Gill on "^{<1085>}2 Samuel 8:6").

Ver. 15. *And David reigned over all Israel*, etc.] Not only over Judah, but over all the tribes of Israel, and over the whole land of Canaan, as promised to Abraham, (^{<1158>}Genesis 15:18); reaching to the river Euphrates, as Syria did, now conquered by David:

and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people; when he returned from his wars, he heard and tried all causes impartially, brought before him, and gave sentence according to the law of God, and administered righteous judgment without any respect to persons; all had justice done them that applied unto him, whether high or low, rich or poor; and indeed during his wars he was not negligent of the civil government of his subjects, and the distribution of justice to them by proper officers, in which he was a type of Christ; (see ^{<2115>}Isaiah 11:5) (^{<2435>}Jeremiah 23:5,6).

Ver. 16. *And Joab the son of Zeruiah [was] over the host*, etc.] Which was not only owing to his relation to David, being his sister's son, but to his promise that whoever smote the Jebusites first should be chief and captain; that is, should have the command of the army under him; this Joab did; and so was entitled to this office, and was put into it, and continued in it, (^{<3106>}1 Chronicles 11:6);

and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud [was] recorder; of memorable events, who kept a diary of whatsoever remarkable happened, which were digested into a chronicle, history, or annals; (see ^{<7061>}Esther 6:1); so the Targum, he

“was appointed over the memorials;”

or book of memorials, as Kimchi interprets it; that is, to take care of it, and see that everything worthy of notice was inserted in it; or was “remembrancer”^{f151}; one that put the king in mind what was to be done every day, or in certain cases, and so R. Isaiah explains it, the king's counsellor; some take him to be chancellor, as Luther and others^{f152}.

Ver. 17. *And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, [were] the priests,* etc.] Not high priests, as Josephus^{f153} suggests, for there was only one high priest at a time; indeed there was a “sagan”, or deputy priest, on occasion; and so Abarbinel says that Zadok was the high priest, and Ahimelech his second or deputy; but the truth of the case was this, Abiathar was high priest only, and continued so until the time of Solomon, when he was thrust out of his office, and Zadok put into it; and Ahimelech his son and Zadok were the principal priests under him, the one of the family of Ithamar, the other of Eleazar; so the Targum on (~~1386~~ 1 Chronicles 18:16) calls them “sagans”, or deputies of the high priesthood. Zadok is mentioned first, though Ahimelech was the son of the present high priest, because he was in great favour with David, as afterwards with Solomon, in whose days the high priesthood was translated to him; the family of Eli being now upon the decline, and near being removed from the high priesthood, as was foretold by Samuel it should:

and Seraiah [was] the scribe; or secretary of state; in (~~1386~~ 1 Chronicles 18:16) he is called Shavsha; he seems to have had two names.

Ver. 18. *And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada [was] over both the Cherethites and Pelethites,* etc.] These, according to Josephus^{f154}, were the king’s bodyguards, and this man is expressly said to be set over his guards, (~~1022~~ 2 Samuel 23:22,23); and which some think were of the nation of the Philistines, famous for archery, and slinging of stones; and so the Targum renders it,

“was appointed over the archers and slingers;”

so “choriti” in Virgil^{f155} are quivers for arrows; the great use of which in fighting David had observed, and therefore got a select company of these men, partly to teach Israel, and partly to guard himself: but others are of opinion that David would never suffer such as were Heathens to be so near his person, and therefore take them to be Israelites; and so some Jewish writers say they were two families in Israel; which is much better than to interpret them as others do of the sanhedrim, and even of the Urim and Thummim, as in the Targum on (~~1387~~ 1 Chronicles 18:17); (see Gill on “~~3005~~ Zephaniah 2:5”); and it is most probable that they were Israelites, who were David’s guards, and consisted of the chiefs that were with him in Philistia, and particularly at Ziklag, which lay on the south of the Cherethites, (~~0804~~ 1 Samuel 30:14); and so had their name from thence; and among the chief of those that came to him at Ziklag there was one named

Peleth, from whence might come the Pelethites, and they were all of them archers; (see ^{<312>}1 Chronicles 12:2,3);

and David's sons were chief rulers; princes, princes of the blood, or “chief about the king”, as in (^{<317>}1 Chronicles 18:17); they were constant attendants at court, waiting on the king, ready at hand to do what he pleased to order; they were the chief ministers, and had the management of the principal affairs at court. Abarbinel thinks that this respects not only David's sons, but Benaiah, and the family of the Cherethites and Pelethites, who had none of them particular posts assigned them, which were settled and known, as those before mentioned had, but were always near at hand, to do whatsoever the king commanded them; and which seems better to agree with the literal order and construction of the words; which are,

and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and Pelethites, and the sons of David, [were] princes, or chief rulers; or priests, who according to Gussetius ^{f156} brought the offerings or presents to the king, and did that to him the priests did to the Lord.