

# CHAPTER 10

## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND SAMUEL 10

This chapter gives an account of the ill treatment of David's messengers to the king of Ammon, who were sent to condole the death of his father, and were basely used by him, which David resented, (<sup><3000></sup>2 Samuel 10:1-5); which the Ammonites perceiving prepared for war, and got the Syrians to be confederates with them; of which David being informed, sent Joab and Abishai into their country, (<sup><3006></sup>2 Samuel 10:6-8); who divided the army between them, and attacked the Ammonites and Syrians with great courage, and routed them both, and returned to Jerusalem, (<sup><3009></sup>2 Samuel 10:9-14); after which the Syrians gathered together again to fight with David, who went out to meet them, and got an entire conquest over them, and made them servants to him, (<sup><3005></sup>2 Samuel 10:15-19).

**Ver. 1.** *And it came to pass after this,* etc.] After the wars with the Moabites, Syrians, and Edomites, being friendly with the children of Ammon, David sent an embassy to their king, after related; by which it appears what is said concerning the spoils of the children of Ammon, (<sup><3082></sup>2 Samuel 8:12), is by anticipation; for these spoils were not taken until the following war with them, the occasion of which is here told:

*that the king of the children of Ammon died;* whose name was Nahash, as is clear from (<sup><3002></sup>2 Samuel 10:2), and probably might be the same that came against Jabeshgilead, from whom Saul delivered the inhabitants of that place, (<sup><3900></sup>1 Samuel 11:1);

*and Hanun his son reigned in his stead;* who, being his son, was heir to his crown, and succeeded him in his kingdom.

**Ver. 2.** *Then said David, I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash,* etc.] Send him a friendly compliment of condolence on the death of his father:

*as his father showed kindness unto me;* when David was persecuted by Saul, he sent him aid, and invited him into his country for protection it may be, and some way or other showed respect unto him; though not out of

real love and friendship to David, but in enmity to Saul, who had defeated him at Jabeshgilead, and had often wars with him: the Jews say<sup>f159</sup> the particular kindness was, that when David left his father, mother, and brethren, with the king of Moab, he slew all but one, who fled to the king of the children of Ammon, and was by him saved alive:

*and David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father;* for the death of his father; to condole the loss of him, which was the custom of kings in friendship and alliance in former times, and still continues:

*and David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon;* even to Rabbah, the metropolis of the nation, and the royal city, where the king kept his court.

**Ver. 3.** *And the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun their lord,* etc.] His nobles and prime ministers, the courtiers that were about him:

*thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee?* could he imagine that David was sincere, and that he really meant to do honour to the memory of his father, and comfort him under the loss of him, by sending his ambassadors to him on such an errand? there was no reason, they thought, to believe this, since an Israelite was forbidden to seek their peace and prosperity, or ask of it, nor might Ammonite enter into their congregation unto the tenth generation, (<sup>423B</sup>Deuteronomy 23:3,6); and indeed some have thought that David did not do a right thing in sending this embassy, and was justly requited; but it is certain he acted according to the laws of friendship, and was cordial and sincere in what he did, though these courtiers of Hanun put an ill construction on his conduct, their minds being filled with enmity against the Israelites:

*hath not David [rather] sent his servants unto thee to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?* to reconnoitre the place, to observe, as they walked about in it, which were the weakest and most defenceless parts of it, and what avenues there were to it, and which were most accessible, that they might the better know how to attack it, and destroy it; these surmises and suspicions they endeavoured to fill the king's head with, to set him against them, and treat them ill.

**Ver. 4.** *Wherefore Hanun took David's servants,* etc.] His ambassadors:

*and shaved off one half of their beards*; that is, he ordered them to be shaved off; than which a greater indignity could not have been well done to them and to David, whom they represented, since the Israelites shaved not their beards, and were very careful of preserving them; for had it been the custom to shave, they might have shaved off the other half, and then they would not have appeared so ridiculous; and with other people it has been reckoned a very great punishment as well could be inflicted, and as great an affront as could well be offered, to mar a man's beard, or shave it off in whole or in part <sup>f160</sup>. The Lacedemonians, as Plutarch <sup>f161</sup> relates, when any fled from battle, used, by way of reproach, to shave off part of their beards, and let the other part grow long; and with the Indians, as Bishop Patrick observes from an ancient writer, the king used to order the greatest offenders to be shaven, as the heaviest punishment he could inflict upon them; but what comes nearest to the case here is what the same learned commentator quotes from Tavernier, who in his Indian Travels tells us, that the sophi of Persia caused an ambassador of Aurengzeb to have his beard shaved off, telling him he was not worthy to wear a beard, and thereupon commanded it should be shaved off; which affront offered him in the person of his ambassador was most highly resented by Aurengzeb, as this was by David:

*and cut off their garments in the middle, [even] to their buttocks*; and as they wore long garments in those countries, without any breeches or drawers under them, those parts by these means were exposed to view which modesty requires should be concealed <sup>f162</sup>; so that they must be put to the utmost shame and confusion:

*and sent them away*; in this ridiculous manner, scoffing and leering at them no doubt; that since they came with compliments of condolence, it was proper they should appear in the habit of mourners, with their beards shaved, and their garments rent; cutting of garments, and standing in them from morning tonight, was a punishment of soldiers with the Romans, when they offended <sup>f163</sup>.

**Ver. 5.** *When they told [it] unto David*, etc.] Not the ambassadors, for they were not yet arrived, but some of their servants, perhaps, they sent before them to acquaint David of the usage they had met with:

*he sent to meet them*: he sent men to meet them with proper garments to put on, and to assure them how much he resented the indignity done to

them and him, and would avenge it in due and proper time, and to direct them where to go for the present, as follows:

*because the men were greatly ashamed:* to proceed on their journey, and come to court in the condition they were:

*and the king said;* gave orders by the messengers he sent to them:

*tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown,* or “bud”<sup>f164</sup>,

*and [then] return;* that is, to Jerusalem; Jericho, though not yet built, might have some cottages at or near the spot on which it had stood, for the convenience of shepherds, and gatherers of fruit, in the plains of it; here the ambassadors were directed to go, it being the first place they came to when they had passed over Jordan, from the country of Ammon; and being a place where there were scarcely any inhabitants, or very few, was very proper for them in their present circumstances; and this confirms what is before observed, that it was now the custom of the Israelites not to shave their whole beards; or otherwise it was but shaving off the other half, and being now provided with other clothes, they would have had no need to have stayed at Jericho, but might have proceeded on in their journey.

**Ver. 6.** *And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David,* etc.] Or had made themselves odious to him, as it is rendered in (<sup><1396></sup>1 Chronicles 19:6); were abominable to him, that he was incensed against them, and enraged at them, and was determined to be avenged on them for the affront given, of which they had certain information: but instead of seeking to appease him, and give him satisfaction for the affront,

*the children of Ammon sent, and hired the Syrians of Bethrehab;* a place near Hamath, (<sup><4132></sup>Numbers 13:21); there was a city of this name in the tribe of Asher, out of which the Canaanites could not be driven, and perhaps now inhabited by Syrians, or by a people so called, (<sup><4928></sup>Joshua 19:28 <sup><4003></sup>Judges 1:31);

*and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen:* that is, out of both places; this place Hadadezer was king of, with whom David had fought before, and beat, and who owed him a grudge on that account, and was ready to assist the Ammonites against him, (<sup><4082></sup>2 Samuel 8:3-5),

*and of King Maacah a thousand men;* that is, of the king of Maacah, which was a place in the tribe off Manasseh, from whence the inhabitants

could not be expelled, (<sup><f131></sup>Joshua 13:11,13); and seems now to have been inhabited by Syrians, and therefore is called Syriamaachah, (<sup><f396></sup>1 Chronicles 19:6);

*and of Ishtob twelve thousand men*; which is thought to be the same with the land of Tob, whither Jephthah fled, and dwelt in it, when ill used by his brethren, (<sup><f108></sup>Judges 11:3,5); these mercenary soldiers were in all thirty three thousand men; (<sup><f396></sup>1 Chronicles 19:6,7), it is said, chariots and horsemen, even thirty two thousand; these were hired with a thousand talents of silver.

**Ver. 7.** *And when David heard of [it]*, etc.] Of the preparation made by the Ammonites to fight with him:

*he sent Joab and all the host of the mighty men*: he sent out Joab his general, and an army under his command, consisting of men of strength, valour, and courage; or all the host and the mighty men, as Kimchi and Ben Melech, the famous mighty men mentioned in (<sup><f128></sup>2 Samuel 23:8); he did not think it advisable to wait for the Ammonites, but carried the war into their own country, and, instead of suffering them to invade his dominions, he invaded theirs.

**Ver. 8.** *And the children of Ammon came out*, etc.] Either out of Rabbah their metropolis, as Josephus <sup>f165</sup>; or rather out of Medeba, as it seems from (<sup><f397></sup>1 Chronicles 19:7); a city that lay on the borders of their country, and was a frontier town, (see <sup><f123></sup>Numbers 21:30);

*and put the battle in array, at the entering in of the gate*; of the city of Medeba; they were first within the city, but, upon the approach of Joab and his army, they came out and drew up in a line of battle at the gate of it:

*and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ishtob, and Maacah, [were] by themselves in the field*; at some distance from the city, the Ammonites not choosing to trust mercenaries in it; and perhaps they placed these ambush in the field, to get Joab between two fires, as we now express it.

**Ver. 9.** *When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind*, etc.] Or “the face” of it <sup>f166</sup>; armies appeared both before and behind, about to attack him both in front and rear; the Targum is,

“and Joab saw that the warriors, or those that made war, were strong against him before and behind:”

*he chose of all the choice [men] of Israel*; the most eminent for strength, and valour, and military skill, who had been tried, and were famous for warlike exploits, the flower of the army:

*and put [them] in array against the Syrians*; who might be the strongest party, and the best soldiers; though being but mercenaries, if hard beset, would sooner give way, as he might suppose, upon which the Ammonites would do the same.

**Ver. 10.** *And the rest of the people he delivered into the hands of Abishai his brother*, etc.] Who was a commander under him, and a very valiant man; and thus, as his enemy had two armies, he divided his into two parts, that he might the better attack them:

*that he might put [them] in array against the children of Ammon*: draw them up in a line, place them rank and file to meet the children of Ammon, and give them battle.

**Ver. 11.** *And he said, if the Syrians be too strong for me*, etc.] Which he might perceive by Joab's forces giving way, or by some signal agreed on between them

*then thou shall help me*; detach a part of his army to his support and assistance:

*but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee*; in the same manner.

**Ver. 12.** *Be of good courage, and let us play the men*, etc.] This Joab said, not only to encourage Abishai and himself, but in the hearing of the rest of the officers of the army, and of many of the people, to hearten them to the battle; who might be somewhat intimidated with the number of their enemies, and the position they were in, being before and behind them; and therefore he thought proper to make such a speech to them to animate them to light:

*for our people, and for the cities of our God*; that the people of Israel might not be carried captive, and their cities spoiled and plundered; and instead of being cities where the people of God dwelt, and he was worshipped, would, if taken, become the habitations of idolatrous Heathens, and where temples would be erected to idols, and the worship of

them; these were the arguments he used to engage them to fight manfully for their country, the liberties and religion of it:

*and the Lord do that which seemeth him good:* tacitly suggesting that victory was of the Lord, and that it became them to do their part in fighting courageously, and leave the issue to the Lord, on whom alone success depended.

**Ver. 13.** *And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians,* etc.] Fell upon them; attacked them first, began the battle with them; rightly judging, that if they, being hired soldiers, were closely pressed, they would give way, which would discourage the Ammonites, who depended much upon them; and the fight, according to Josephus<sup>f167</sup>, lasted some little time, who says, that Joab killed many of them, and obliged the rest to turn their backs and flee, as follows:

*and they fled before him:* the Syriac and Arabic versions in this verse, and in all others in this chapter where the word “Syrians” is used, have “Edomites”, reading “Edom” instead of “Aram”, the letters ר “R” and ד “D” in the Hebrew tongue being very similar.

**Ver. 14.** *And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled,* etc.] In whom they put great confidence:

*then they fled also before Abishai;* without engaging at all with him, as it seems:

*and entered into the city;* out of which they came, either Rabbah or Medeba, for their safety:

*so Joab returned from the children of Ammon;* did not stay to lay siege to their city, the season of the year not being proper for it, winter drawing near; (see ~~2~~ 2 Samuel 11:1);

*and came to Jerusalem;* in triumph, to report to David the victory he had obtained.

**Ver. 15.** *And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel,* etc.] Considered it in their minds, and conversed with one another about it, and fearing what would be the consequence of it:

*they gathered themselves together;* not only the forces got together again, that fled before Joab, but all the kings of Syria united their forces together,

as appears from (<sup><1009></sup>2 Samuel 10:19); supposing that David would avenge himself on them for assisting the Ammonites against him; and therefore judged it advisable to raise a large army, that they might be in a condition to receive him.

**Ver. 16.** *And Hadarezer sent*, etc.] The same with Hadadezer, (<sup><1008></sup>2 Samuel 8:3), who was at the head of this confederacy, and to whom the rest of the kings of Syria were servants, (<sup><1009></sup>2 Samuel 10:19);

*and brought out the Syrians that [were] beyond the river*; the river Phrat or Euphrates, as the Targum; so the Arabic version and Josephus <sup>f168</sup>, who says, that he hired them:

*and they came to Helam*; which, according to the same writer, was king of the Syrians beyond Euphrates; but it seems to be the name of a place, where was the general rendezvous of the Syrian army. Junius conjectures that it is the same with the Alamatha of Ptolemy <sup>f169</sup>, which he places with the Trachonite Arabs near the Euphrates:

*and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer [went] before them*: before the whole combined army, which according to Josephus <sup>f170</sup>, consisted of eighty thousand foot, and ten thousand horse: this general is called Shophach, (<sup><13916></sup>1 Chronicles 19:16) the letters “B” and “P” being of the same pronunciation in the Hebrew tongue, as Kimchi observes, though it is there read “Shobach”, in the Syriac and Arabic versions; he was no doubt a very able, valiant, and skilful general, since he is particularly mentioned by name, and whose name was then famous; the Arabic version calls him a spear bearer of Hadarezer.

**Ver. 17.** *And when it was told David*, etc.] What preparations the Syrians were making to fight him, and where they were:

*he gathered all Israel together*; all the fighting men in the country:

*and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam*: which, according to Bunting <sup>f171</sup>, was twenty miles from Jerusalem. David seems to have gone himself in person to this war:

*and the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him*; they formed themselves in a line of battle, and attacked him first, being eager to fight, and perhaps confident of victory, because of their numbers.

**Ver. 18.** *And the Syrians fled before Israel*, etc.] After an obstinate and bloody fight between them:

*and David slew [the men of] seven hundred chariots of the Syrians*; the word “men” is rightly supplied, for chariots could not be said to be slain, but the men in them; in (<sup><1397></sup>1 Chronicles 19:17), they are said to be seven thousand, here seven hundred; which may be reconciled by observing, that here the chariots that held the men are numbered, there the number of the men that were in the chariots given, and reckoning ten men in a chariot, seven hundred chariots held just seven thousand men; though Kimchi takes another way of reconciling the two places, by observing that here only the choicest chariots are mentioned, there all of them, but the former way seems best:

*and forty thousand horsemen*; in (<sup><1397></sup>1 Chronicles 19:17); it is forty thousand “footmen”, and so Josephus<sup>f172</sup>; and the same may be called both horse and foot, be cause though they might come into the field of battle on horseback, yet might dismount and fight on foot; and so one historian calls them horsemen, and the other footmen; or the whole number of the slain, horse and foot mixed together, were forty thousand; Kimchi makes use of another way of removing this difficulty, and which perhaps is the best, that here only the horsemen are numbered that were slain, and there the footmen only, and both true; an equal number of each being slain, in all eighty thousand, besides the seven thousand in the chariots:

*and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there*; of his wounds upon the spot.

**Ver. 19.** *And when all the kings [that were] servants to Hadarezer*, etc.] That were subject to him, and at his beck and command, at least were hired by him into his service:

*saw that they were smitten before Israel*; could not stand their ground against them, being too powerful for them;

*they made peace with Israel, and served them*; became tributaries to them, whereby the promise of the land of Canaan made to Abraham and his seed, as reaching to the river Euphrates, had its accomplishment, (<sup><0158></sup>Genesis 15:18);

*so the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more*; who standing by themselves, they were soon and easily conquered by David's forces, as recorded in the following chapters.