

# 2 Samuel 10 - Ammonites and Syrians Defeated

- I. David's faith (2 Sam 1:1—10:19)
  - (3) Military victory (8:1—10:19)
    - (C) David defeats Ammon (10:1-19)

## 2 Samuel 10

(C) David defeats Ammon (10:1-19) (Cf. 1 Chr 19:1-19)

1 Now it happened afterward that the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun became king in his place.

1 Now it happened afterwards that the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son became king in his place.

1 Sometime later, the Ammonite king died and his son Hanun succeeded him as king,

1 And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.

2 Then David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me." So David sent some of his servants to console him about his father. But when David's servants came to the land of the Ammonites,

2 Then David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me." So David sent some of his servants to console him concerning his father. But when David's servants came to the land of the Ammonites,

2 so David told himself, "I will be loyal to Nahash's son Hanun, since in his loyalty his father showed gracious love to me." So David sent a delegation to Hanun to console him about his loss of his father.

But when David's delegation arrived in Ammonite territory,

2 Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

- At last Nahash died and was succeeded by his son Hanun

— Because Nahash had shown David some unspecified kindness, David sent an envoy to Ammon to express his sympathy to Hanun regarding his father

— This, David no doubt hoped, would enable him to have a friendly ally on his eastern flank

3 the commanders of the Ammonites said to their lord Hanun, "Do you think that David is *simply* honoring your father since he has sent you *servants* to console you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to explore the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?"

3 the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David is honoring your father because he has sent consolers to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?"

3 the Ammonite officials asked their lord Hanun, "Do you think that because David has sent a delegation of consolers to you that he is honoring your father? His delegation has arrived intending to search, scout the land, and then overthrow it, hasn't it?"

3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it? - Hanun's advisers, perhaps recalling Saul's victory over Ammon 50 years before (1 Sam 11:1-11), counseled Hanun not to accept David's overtures but rather to view the visiting Israelites as spies

4 So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their robes in the middle as far as their buttocks, and sent them away.

4 So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away.

4 So Hanun arrested David's delegation, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their clothes at the waist line, and sent them away in disgrace.

**4** Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

- David's messengers were not only turned back, but their beards were half shaved off and their garments cut away to an immodest length which, to those sensitive Semites, was an unbearable embarrassment (Cf. Is 15:2; 20:4)

- The disrespectful reaction to the visitors from Hanun must have taken place early in David's reign, not after he had subdued all his enemies (7:1)

- Hanun probably shaved their beards vertically to make them look foolish (Cf. Is 7:20); military victors sometimes humiliated their captives by exposing their buttocks (Cf. Is 20:4)

5 When *messengers* informed David, he sent *servants* to meet them, because the men were extremely humiliated. And the king said, "Stay in Jericho until your beards grow *back*, and *then* you shall return."

5 When they told *it* to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and *then* return."

5 When David had been informed about the incident, he sent word to them, since the men had been deeply humiliated. The king told them, "Stay at Jericho until your beards have grown back, and then return."

5 When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

6 Now when the sons of Ammon saw that they had become repulsive to David, the sons of Ammon sent *messengers* and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, twenty thousand foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah *with* a thousand men, and the men of Tob *with* twelve thousand men.

6 Now when the sons of Ammon saw that they had become odious to David, the sons of Ammon sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob with 12,000 men.

6 When the Ammonites realized that they had created quite a stink with David, they hired 20,000 Aramean mercenaries from Beth-rehob and Zobah, along with the king of Maacah and 1,000 men, and 12,000 men from Tob.

6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ishtob twelve thousand men.

- Recognizing that his insult to David was, in effect, a declaration of war, Hanun engaged 33,000 mercenary troops from the three Aramean kingdoms of Beth Rehob (in northern Galilee), Zobah (an area just north of Damascus), and Maacah (east of upper Galilee), and from Tob, a small kingdom on the western fringes of the Syro-Arabian desert

— The fact that the northeastern enemies of Israel would ally with Ammon also suggests this event took place before David brought them under his authority (v19; Cf. 8:3-8). 993-990 BC is a logical date for the Ammonite wars with Israel.

7 When David heard *about this*, he sent Joab and all the army, the warriors.

7 When David heard *of it*, he sent Joab and all the army, the mighty men.

7 In response, David sent out Joab and his entire army of elite soldiers.

7 And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

- David first had Joab lead his army against the enemy, but he later went himself into battle and led his soldiers

— Later, David would stay behind in Jerusalem and let Joab lead again (11:1)

— Saul also got into trouble when he stayed behind instead of leading his people against the enemy (1 Sam 14)

8 And the sons of Ammon came out and lined up for battle at the entrance of the city, while the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah *were stationed* by themselves in the field.

8 The sons of Ammon came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, while the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah *were* by themselves in the field.

8 The Ammonites went out in battle formation at the entrance to the city gate, while the Arameans from Zobah and Rehob, along with the army from Tob and Maacah, were out by themselves in the open fields.

8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ishtob, and Maacah, were by themselves in the field.

9 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him at the front and at the rear, he selected *warriors* from all the choice men in Israel, and lined *them* up against the Arameans.

9 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him in front and in the rear, he selected from all the choice men of Israel, and arrayed *them* against the Arameans.

9 When Joab observed that the battle lines were set up to oppose him both in front and behind, he appointed the best troops in Israel and arrayed them to oppose the Arameans,

9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians:

10 But the remainder of the people he placed under the command of his brother Abishai, and he lined *them* up against the sons of Ammon.

10 But the remainder of the people he placed in the hand of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed *them* against the sons of Ammon.

10 putting the rest of his forces under the command of his brother Abishai, who arrayed them to oppose the Ammonites.

10 And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon.

- David sent his forces, led by Joab and Abishai, to encounter Hanun's own army and his mercenaries at Medeba (1 Chr 19:7), 12 miles due east of the northern end of the Dead Sea

11 And he said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you.

11 He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you.

11 He said, "If the Arameans prove too strong for me, then you are to help me. If the Ammonites prove too strong for you, then I will come help you.

11 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

- Joab directed his attention to the Aramean divisions and Abishai's troops to the Ammonites, with the understanding that one would help the other as circumstances required. The result was a smashing victory for Israel.

12 Be strong, and let's show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight."

12 Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight."

12 Be strong, be courageous on behalf of our people and for the cities of our God, and may the LORD do what he thinks is best."

12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

- After doing his best to prepare for the battle, Joab took confidence in the sovereignty of God. He trusted in His goodness and will, placing the outcome in His hands.

13 So Joab and the people who were with him advanced to the battle against the Arameans, and they fled from him.

13 So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Arameans, and they fled before him.

13 So Joab and the soldiers who were with him attacked the Arameans in battle formation, and the Arameans retreated in front of him.

**13** And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.

14 When the sons of Ammon saw that the Arameans had fled, they *also* fled from Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from *fighting* against the sons of Ammon and came to Jerusalem.

14 When the sons of Ammon saw that the Arameans fled, they *also* fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from *fighting* against the sons of Ammon and came to Jerusalem.

14 When the Ammonites saw the Arameans retreating, they also retreated from Abishai back to the city. Then Joab broke off his attack against the Ammonites and went back to

Jerusalem.

14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

15 When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they assembled together.

15 When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together.

15 After the Arameans realized that they had been defeated by Israel, they regrouped.

15 And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together.

16 And Hadadezer sent *word* and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the *Euphrates* River, and they came to Helam; and **Shobach** the commander of the army of Hadadezer led them.

16 And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam; and Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer led them.

16 Hadadezer sent for the Arameans who lived beyond the Euphrates River, and they set out for Helam, with Shobach leading them as commander of Hadadezer's army.

16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them.

- "...Shobach" - "Shophach"

- Though the Ammonites apparently learned their lesson, the Arameans were determined to avenge the disaster of Medeba (1 Chr 19:7) by recalling their occupation forces from beyond the Euphrates River and employing them against Israel

— Under the command of Shobach, general of the army of Hadadezer of Zobah, they took up positions at Helam, a desert place 40 miles straight east of the Sea of Kinnereth

17 Now when it was reported to David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Arameans lined up against David and fought him.

17 Now when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Arameans arrayed themselves to meet David and fought against him.

17 When David learned this, he mustered all of Israel, crossed the Jordan River, and approached Helam. The Arameans assembled in battle array to attack David, and started their assault.

17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

18 But the Arameans fled from Israel, and David killed **seven hundred charioteers** of the Arameans and forty thousand **horsemen**, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, and he died there.

18 But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen and struck down Shobach the commander of their army, and he died there.

18 But the Arameans retreated from Israel, and David's forces killed 700 of their charioteers, 40,000 soldiers, and mortally wounded Shobach, the commander of their army. As a result, Shobach died there.

18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

- "...seven hundred charioteers" - numbered as 7,000 in 1 Chr 19:18; that passage is likely more accurate

- "...horsemen" - better described as "footmen" or "foot soldiers"

19 When all the kings, servants of Hadadezer, saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans were afraid to help the sons of Ammon anymore.

19 When all the kings, servants of Hadadezer, saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans feared to help the sons of Ammon anymore.

19 When all the kings who were allied with Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sought terms of peace with the Israelis and became subservient to them. Furthermore, the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.

19 And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

- This broke the back of Aramean resistance and brought the Aramean confederates under Israel's domination

— Never again did they side with Ammon against the people of Israel

- This is the second account of a subjugation of Hadadezer by David (Cf. 2 Sam 8:3-8)

— Apparently 2 Sam 8 records an initial reduction of the Arameans of Zobah to

Israelite vassals, while 2 Sam 10 assumes an Aramean rebellion against David's kingship, a

rebellion which was squashed and which resulted in continued Aramean submission

### **Application**

(1) Sometimes an unfounded suspicion, thoughtless word or sinful action can smolder then blaze into a destructive flame. The Ammonites' vicious treatment of David's envoys brought conflict involving multiple nations and thousands of armed troops.

(2) Are you sometimes quick to assume the worst about others? Do you assign the worst possible motives to their actions? Are there people you are prone to gossip about, ridicule or refuse to defend from humiliation because of their past, appearance, sexual orientation, age, religion, behavior or conditions? People who look for faults in others are quick to find them, whether real or imagined.

(3) Genuine gratitude to God involves seeing Him and ourselves rightly. We are humbled when we recognize the price He paid for us in the life and death of His Son, the privilege it is to live with the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the gift of unity among His people, the Church.