

# David's Victories

## Second Samuel 8:1-14 and First Chronicles 18:1-13

**DIG:** Why was obtaining this Land so historic for Isra'el? Who was responsible for David's victories? What does the LORD do with captured soldiers, horses, equipment and articles of silver, or gold and of bronze? Why the death and subjection of so many people? Why hamstringing good horses? Since David was king, was he entitled to keep the precious-metal gifts from the subdued kings? What is the meaning of dedicating them? How was Hebrew dedication done (Numbers 7:10)? What does this say about David? Why was David and Isra'el given so much favor by God?

**REFLECT:** Over what "enemies" has ADONAI given you victory? Where have you yet to experience the victory? What God-given possessions, abilities or resources would you like to dedicate anew to YHVH, as does David in this story? Have you discovered the joy of handing over your battle to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and allowing Him to take command on your behalf?

This is a summary of David's military victories during his years as king over Isra'el in Judah and Jerusalem. It is not all-inclusive because other wars and skirmishes are mentioned later in **Second Samuel 10:13-18, 21:15-22 and 23:8-23**. This is the highest point of David's life militarily; here was his finest hour. Tragedy and decline would soon come, but at this point David had captured the whole Land that ADONAI purposed that His people should inhabit. There was no doubt that David's armies were invincible and that no nation, however numerous or powerful, could hope to defeat the Israelite forces. At the same time, however, a striking summary statement appears twice as though to emphasize to the reader - and to David himself - we must never forget the identity of the real Conqueror: **The LORD gave David victories wherever he went (2 Samuel 8:6 and 14).**<sup>305</sup>

All these powerful enemies surrounding Isra'el were completely subdued. Significantly, it was the first and last time that the Israelites possessed the whole territory that God's covenant with Abram said they would possess. Back when Abram didn't possess an inch of land in Palestine, ADONAI said: **I have given this Land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18)**. Here David possessed, for the first time in history, the whole territory. Not content with the land that he held, David went out and methodically took possession of all that God had promised.<sup>306</sup>

**Philistia defeated in the west:** In the course of time. The phrase does not necessarily mean that the events in this chapter follow chronologically. This phrase is a common formula of transition and connection. The key word in these verses in the Hebrew word *nakah*, or *to strike down*; it occurs **seven** times. David **struck down** (Hebrew: *nakah*) the Philistines and subdued them, and he took Gath (the most important of the five Philistine cities) and its surrounding villages from the control of the Philistines and became their lord (Second Samuel 8:1; First Chronicles 18:1). These were the traditional enemies of the Jews and seized every opportunity to attack them.

**Mo'av defeated in the east:** The Mo'avites were descendants of Lot (see the commentary on Genesis Fb - **Let's Get Our Father to Drink Wine, and then Lie With Him to Preserve Our Family Line**). They began, and continued to be, a people who were utterly corrupt, and were responsible for the corruption of Isra'el on many occasions. But this time we don't know why David fought against the Moabites. They had been entrusted with David's parents, who resided in Mo'ab under the protection of the king during the period of danger from Sha'ul (First Samuel 22:3-4), and David was related to Mo'ab through Ruth the Moabitess (see the commentary on Ruth Bd - Coda: **The Genealogy of David**). However, David dealt ruthlessly with his enemy when he **struck them down** (Hebrew: *nakah*). Most conquerors would have slaughtered the entire army, but David made them lie down on the ground and measured them off with a length of cord. This probably included only the men or at least the military. Every two lengths of them were put to death (see Af - **The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**), and the third length was allowed to live. This severely reduced the power of the Moabite army. **The rabbis teach that when David had previously left Mo'av, the king of Mo'av had killed David's parents.** This is probably just a made up reason to justify David's brutal actions. So the Moabites became subject to David and brought him tribute, indicating ongoing subservience (Second Samuel 8:2). What caused David to treat Mo'ab with such severity is also not known.

While the books of Samuel and Kings give a political history of Isra'el and Judah, Chronicles present a religious history of the Davidic dynasty of Judah. The former are written from a prophetic and moral viewpoint, while the latter from a priestly and spiritual viewpoint. First Chronicles begins with the royal line of David and then traces the spiritual significance of David's righteous reign. The Chronicler omitted the slaughter of two-thirds of the Mo'avite army because David was a man of war (First Chronicles 28:3). This was precisely the reason that David was not permitted to build the Temple.

**Syria defeated in the north:** What is more, David **struck down** (Hebrew: *nakah*) Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, in the vicinity of Damascus, when he went to restore his monument at the Euphrates River. Apparently Hadadezer was trying to expand the borders of his kingdom, which David opposed. Instead, he lost everything he had. David captured a thousand of his chariot horses, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He hamstrung all but a hundred of the chariot horses **by cutting the sinews of their hind legs** so they could not be used for military action again (Deuteronomy 17:16). When the Syrians of Damascus, came to help Hadadezer, David could have been trapped between the two armies, but he was such a great commander that his army **struck down** (Hebrew: *nakah*) twenty-two thousand of them. **This was the most powerful branch of the Syrian army.** He put Jewish army garrisons in the Syrians kingdom of Damascus to serve as an occupation force, and the Syrians became subject to him and brought him tribute. **The LORD gave David victories wherever he went.** Expanding Isra'el's influence impressed David's contemporaries as nothing short of miraculous, even taking into account his great gifts as a leader and strategist (Second Samuel 8:3-6; First Chronicles 18:3-6).<sup>307</sup>

**The Spoils of War:** The spoil from these wars was also impressive. David took the gold shields that belonged to the officers of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. From Tebah and Berothai, towns that had belonged to Hadadezer, King David took a great quantity of bronze, which Solomon used to make the bronze basin (see the commentary on Exodus 25:18 - **The Bronze Basin in the Tabernacle: Christ, Our Cleanser**), the pillars and various bronze articles for the Temple (2 Sam 8:7-8; 1 Chron 18:7-8).

When Tou, king of Hamath, heard that David had **struck down** (Hebrew: *nakah*) the entire army of Hadadezer (who had been at war with Tou), he decided to capitulate without a struggle and become a vassal of Isra'el. He sent his son Hadoram to King David (traveling well over a hundred miles south from Damascus) to greet him and congratulate him because he had fought against Hadadezer and **struck him down** (Hebrew: *nakah*). Hadoram also brought David articles of silver, gold and of bronze. So more riches were added to the treasury. And while he was on the subject, the writer refers to the enemies nearer home whom David had forced to pay tribute. King David dedicated these articles to ADONAI for use in building the Temple as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued and the gifts he received from King Tou. For the moment they are merely listed: Edom and Mo'av, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. He also dedicated all the plunder taken from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah (Second Samuel 8:9-12; First Chronicles 18:9-12).

**Edom defeated in the south:** It appears that while Isra'el was attacking the **Syrians** in the north, the **Edomites** (the descendents of Esau) attacked them from the south, but **ADONAI** gave Isra'el a great victory. **And David became famous after returning** from the battle with Edom. **He and Abishai**, one of David's mighty warriors (see Ej - **David's Mighty Warriors**), returned from **striking down** (Hebrew: *nakah*) **eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt**, a marshy plain south of the Dead Sea. Crippled by heavy losses, the **Edomites** were forced to submit. **He put Jewish garrisons throughout Edom** as an occupying force, and **all the Edomites became subject to David**. This established his trade monopoly there and opening the way to communications with Arabia and Africa, which were developed significantly during the reign of his son **Solomon (First Kings 9:26-28)**. **The LORD gave David victory wherever he went (2 Samuel 8:13-14; 1 Chronicles 18:13)**. At that point **David** had an empire that controlled all three of the major trade routes.<sup>308</sup>

What strategies did **David** use in his victories? First of all, **David** was obedient to the commands of the **LORD**. He hamstrung the chariot horses in **Second Samuel 8:4**. Does that sound like obedience? Well, it was. In **Deuteronomy 17:15-16**, **God's Word** says: **The king over you must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself**. The purpose of the command was to keep **the people of God** from putting confidence in anything except the **LORD**. Any misplaced confidence in their own weapons of war had to be completely destroyed. Therefore, **David** wrote, for instance: **Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we praise the name of ADONAI our God (Psalm 20:7 CJB)**. So this was the first part of the strategy, eliminate anything that could lead misplaced confidence.

Secondly, **David** surrendered his desires to the wishes of **ADONAI**. From the **Syrians**, and from all the other enemies whom he had overcome, he had captured large quantities of **gold, brass and other articles** worth untold millions. Even though **God** had said, "No" to him building the **Temple**, **David** was still determined to serve the **LORD** and assemble the materials necessary for building it. He was not resentful, but dedicated the spoils of war for the glory of **YHVH**. First he burned the gods of the enemy, then he dedicated the enemies **gold**. As a result, much of **Solomon's** magnificent **Temple** was built with materials that had been captured from the enemies of **God's** people.

Thirdly, **David** gave the glory for his success to **YHVH**. We have learned that **David** became famous after returning from the battle with Edom (**2 Samuel 8:13a**). But **David** refused to touch the glory. In **Psalm 60:12**, he says: **With God we will gain the victory, and He will trample down our enemies**. **David** knew what to do with fame. When the people applauded his name and reputation, he brought the glory right back where it belonged, and said, "**ADONAI, You have done it all.**" We would do well to do the same.<sup>309</sup>