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## David's Victories

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

**David's victories 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 (Second 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, to see link click 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** presents 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 Fh - 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 (Second Samuel 8:13-14; First 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>