

David's Officials

Second Samuel 8:15-18 and First Chronicles 18:14-17

When we get to this point in the narrative, the writer of the books of **Samuel** signals that he is closing off a major section of his scroll. He uses summaries like this in **First Samuel 7:15-17** (closing off the **Samuel** section), **First Samuel 14:49-52** (closing off the **Sha'ul** section), and now **Second Samuel 8:15-18** (closing off the history of **David's** rise). Later, he will summarize **Second Samuel 9:1 to 20:26** (closing off the history of **David** as the ousted king) in anticipation of **David's** restoration to the throne and his final days.

David reigned over all Isra'el and beyond, doing what was just (Second Samuel 8:15a). The Ruach HaKodesh is saying that, on the whole, David exercised his royal office in the proper way. He asserts the general tone, not the near perfection of David's rule. David was doing what a godly king was supposed to do (Psalms 72 and 101).³¹⁰

David was not only king, but he also kept his own hands in the judiciary. He was the final court of appeal, so that he made sure that justice (Hebrew: *mishpat*) and equality (Hebrew: *tsdaqah*) were available for all his people without prejudice or discrimination (Second Samuel 8:15b). The pattern for the judge was the goodness and reliability of YHVH Himself (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 37:27-29), and presumed godliness in the one administering justice. The judiciary up to and including the time of Samuel had been in the hands of the judges (Hebrew: *ha'shofetim*, a word similar to *mishpat*), and therefore it was to be expected that David would take over the office of supreme judge, just as Samuel himself had held, with its overtones of deliverer and savior (Judges 2:16). It was to be the sphere in which his son Absalom was to question David's effectiveness (see Dn - [Absalom's Conspiracy](#)) and set up as a rival.³¹¹

Joab son of Zeruiah, David's nephew (First Chron 2:16), was over the army (Second Samuel 8:16a). He killed Abner (Second Samuel 3:27) who might have been in competition for the post. Although the Kerethites and the Pelethites, mercenary soldiers, were under the separate command of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada (see Ei - [David's Mighty Warriors](#)), Joab protected the king. The employment of foreign guards ensured David's safety because it would minimize the possibility of becoming the victim of tribal loyalties and because these mercenaries were from Crete they could give David their whole-hearted allegiance (Second Samuel 15:18, 20:7).

Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the recorder (Hebrew: *mazlir*), whose title comes from the Hebrew word *to remember*, had a most important role in the court with responsibility for keeping the king informed, advising him, and communicating his commands (**Second Samuel 8:16b**). It was the recorder who was ordered by King Ahasuerus to bring in the book of chronicles, the record of his reign, which was a turning point in the book of Esther (see the commentary on **Esther Be - That Night the King Could Not Sleep**). It is interesting that ADONAI is also depicted, like the human king, as having watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem (see the commentary on **Isaiah Ke - I Have Posted Watchman on Your Walls, They Will Never Be Silent Day or Night**) to keep reminding Him of His stated intentions until they are fulfilled.

This is an aspect of prayer that is easily overlooked, though is implicit in the Lord's prayer: **Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven** (**Matthew 6:10**). Jesus instructs His disciples to focus on the coming **messianic Kingdom**. We are to pray that this same Kingdom will be established on earth during our lifetime. In the Great Kaddish, the leader says, ". . . in the world that He will create anew, when He will raise the dead, and give them eternal life, will rebuild the city of Jerusalem, and establish His Temple in the middle of it; and will uproot all pagan worship from the earth, and restore the worship of the true God." The liturgy of the Torah service also elaborates on this and quotes **First Chronicles 29:11-12** when it says, "The Kingdom is Yours, ADONAI." All true believers desire for **God's messianic Kingdom** to come to this earth because that means that **Yeshua ha-Meshiach** will have returned. When He rules and reigns from Jerusalem (see the commentary on **Isaiah Jg - In Righteousness You Will Be Established, Terror Will Be Far Removed**), His desire will be done on earth as it currently is in heaven.

Two chief priests were appointed to work side-by-side (**Second Samuel 8:17a**). **Ahimelek son of Abiathar** had been at David's side since death at the hand of Sha'ul (**First Samuel 22:20**), so his appointment was no surprise, but **Zadok son of Ahitub**, who was responsible for the ark of the Covenant (**Second Samuel 15:24-29**), appears here for the first time. His genealogy in **First Chronicles 6:50-53** is traced back to Aaron through Eleazar. **Zadok's** genealogy is very important because after **Abiathar** supported Adonijah's rebellion (see **El - Adoniyah Sets Himself Up as King**), **Zadok** became the high priest of Solomon and was the first in a line of priests that controlled Temple worship to the exile (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**) and beyond.

The royal secretary, **Seraiah, who kept state records, corresponded with foreign kings and acted as the royal historian**, is named here (**Second Samuel 8:17b**). In **Second Chronicles 18:16**, David's secretary is called **Shavasha**. Although this may have been an

alternative name for **Seraiah** in **Samuel**, it is equally possible that **he** served as **royal secretary** in **Seraiah's** absence for whatever reason.³¹²

And finally **David's sons** were described as **priests** (Hebrew: *kohanim*) in **Second Samuel 8:18**, but designated as **chief officials** (Hebrew: *harishonim*) **at the king's side** in **First Chronicles 18:17**. Since **David** and his sons belonged to the tribe of **Y'hudah**, neither **he** nor **his sons** could enter the holy courts of the Tabernacle and minister as **priests**. The probable meaning was that **David's sons** assisted or were sworn in for those **priestly** functions for which **the king** was qualified to act (**Second Samuel 6:13**). In support of this view, one recalls that **Moses** had performed priestly functions (**Exodus 19:22-24**), as had **Samuel** (**First Samuel 10:8**). Both **David** and **Solomon** surely had a priestly dimension to **their** reign and were not rebuked by **YHVH** for exercising the lead in sacrifices and worship. At that time the division of roles between **the king** and **the priests** was still being worked out, even though the guidelines had already been laid down.³¹³