


Historical Military Events and Personnel in Israel

This is a collections of maps and short doctrines found through the books of Samuel and Chronicles. These doctrines relate directly to the specific history of Israel at various points in time.

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Today, just as then, Israel has enemies on every side. It might be helpful just to see what a large area Saul defended as king of Israel.

Saul's Wars

Scripture	Incident
<p>Prior to becoming king, Saul defeated the Ammonites in Jabesh-gilead (1Sam. 11). They will express their undying gratitude after his death (1Sam. 31:10–13).</p>	 <p>The map shows the geographical context of Saul's wars. Key locations include the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the Sea of Galilee to the north, and the Jordan River to the east. Major tribes and regions are labeled: Philistines to the west, Amalekites to the south, Ammon and Gad to the northeast, Moab and Edom to the east, and Judah and Negev to the south. Numerous cities and towns are marked, including Endor, Shunem, Jezreel, Mt. Gilboa, Beth-shan, Bezek, Aphek, Ebenezer, Shiloh, Ophrah, Beth-horon, Bethel, Mizpah, Ramah, Gaba, Michmash, Gilgal, Kiriath-jearim, Nob, Beth-shemesh, Valley of Elah, Ephes-damim, Shaaraim, Bethlehem, Adullam, Keilah, Ziklag, Carmel, Maon, En-Gedi, and Mizpah. The Dead Sea is also shown to the east of the Jordan River.</p>
<p>After becoming ruler over Israel, Saul defeated a garrison of Philistines in Gaba (which you will notice is in central Israel in Benjamin). This would be a logical place for Saul to begin as king, as he is a Benjamite. 1Sam. 13–14</p>	
<p>Saul also had successful campaigns against the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites (1Sam. 14:47). This appears to be a summary statement, sort of a footnote in 1Sam. 13–14.</p>	
<p>Although Saul defeated the Amalekites south of Judah (and perhaps they were in Judah), he will disobey God and not destroy them completely as God expected them to. 1Sam. 15</p>	
<p>Saul's final battle will be against the Philistines in north central Israel, at Mount Gilboa. It is apparent that the Philistines had made great inroads against Israel, given the areas where Saul fought them. 1Sam. 31</p>	

It should be obvious that Saul traveled all over Israel to fight against Israel's enemies. Saul's biggest problem was his lack of obedience to God and God's chosen spiritual authorities.

This doctrine was taken from **1Samuel 14** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#))
 Map taken from http://home.att.net/~natespics/1sam_map.jpg

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Let's review these victories of Saul and cross reference them when possible:

A Summary of Saul's Military Victories

Enemies	Scripture	Compass	Summary
Moab	1Sam. 14:47	East of Israel	Descendants of Lot who live directly below the tribe of Reuben on the other side of the Dead Sea from Judah and Simeon. The actual war(s) between Saul and Moab is not recorded.
Sons of Ammon	1Sam. 11:1–13	East of Israel	The initial war between Saul and the sons of Ammon was the victory which endeared Saul to the people of Israel. Nahash the Ammonite was a particular surly type who threatened to gouge out the right eye of all those under his subjection. Saul was organized, the victory was clean and decisive, and the victory caused Israel to recognize that Saul was their proper king.
Edom	1Sam. 14:47	South of Israel	These descendants of Esau live directly below the Dead Sea. We have no other record of the conflict between Israel and Edom during the reign of Saul.
Kings of Zobah	1Sam. 14:47	North of Israel	The various clues of Scripture indicate that Zobah is a relatively new coalition north-northeast of Israel. The conflict between Saul and the kings of Zobah is only mentioned here. However, we will see David war against them in 2Sam. 8:3–10.
The Philistines	1Sam. 13:3–14:46 1Sam. 17:1–57 1Sam. 31:1–10	West of Israel	<p>We have three recorded conflicts between Saul and the Philistines in Scripture. We have just studied the first where a decisive victory over the Philistines came about despite Saul.</p> <p>The second is the famous standoff between the armies of Israel and the army of the Philistines where Goliath challenges any Israelite to fight him. Here, a young David is victorious in killing Goliath.</p> <p>The final battle listed is the one wherein Saul and his sons lose their lives fighting against the Philistines. Saul would have been relatively old by that time (60–72), although strong enough to go to war.</p>

A Summary of Saul's Military Victories

Enemies	Scripture	Compass	Summary
Amalekites	1Sam. 15:1–7	South and southwest of Israel	We will study the war of Saul against the Amalekites in the next chapter. God will remark that He regrets making Saul king because of his leniency toward the leader of the Amalekites.
	1Sam. 30:1–20		The other recorded victory over the Amalekites during the reign of Saul is credited to David. The Amalekite attack against Israel affected David personally and he took care of the matter pretty much as a private citizen. Since 1Sam. 14:48 mentions Saul acting valiantly, we would assume that there was another battle against the armies of Saul.

We have seen Saul when he has shown great military savvy against the Ammonites as well as when he showed a great many missteps against the Philistines, which Israel defeated despite Saul. We may reasonably assume that the conflicts mentioned very likely were victories of Jonathan's as much as their were Saul's.

As a postscript, it is interesting to note that these are the same nations which David is said to have subdued and who pay Israel tribute in 2Sam. 8:11–12. Saul's victories were not complete; however, they did pave the way for David's dominance over those same nations.

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In this verse, we find the word *châram* (חָרַם) [pronounced *khaw-RAM*], which is a word with several meanings. However, usually it means *to devote to destruction, to completely give over to God via annihilation, to completely and utterly destroy*. Strong's #2763 BDB #355. The related masculine noun is *chêrem* (חֵרֶם) [pronounced *KHĀ-rem*], which means *something completed devoted [to God], the act of completely devoting something to God, something dedicated to destruction, the curse, the ban, something completely in God's possession, something placed under the ban*. Strong's #2764 BDB #356. In case there is any dispute as to the meaning, this context of this verse makes it quite clear—Saul is to strike down every single man, woman, and child along with all of their animals. There is no way to mitigate the meaning of this word or to tone down what God expects of Saul. On the other hand, God did not point to each and every group of antagonistic peoples and place them under the ban. In Joshua 12, we have a list of 31 kings that Joshua defeated. Very few of these were put under the ban; very few groups of people were every dedicated to complete annihilation. This was the exception, not the rule, as that meant that there were no spoils of victory for the Israelites, which is one motivating reason to fight in the first place. This may cause us to ask...

Who Has God Dedicated to Complete Annihilation?

Scripture	The People and the Circumstances
Num. 21:1–3	Interestingly enough, our first example of cherem was initiated by Israel. Arad, a Canaanite king in the Negev, took some Israelites prisoners. Arad was the aggressor in this war. Israel vowed to God to completely destroy him and his cities, if God would deliver him into their hands. God heard their voice, and gave them the victory.
Num. 21:21–26 Deut. 2:30–35	In retrospect, we find out that Israel dedicated Sihon and all of his people (Deut. 2:34). Israel destroyed all of the people, but retained their wealth (i.e., their animals—Deut. 2:35).
Num. 21:31–35 Deut. 3:1–7	Israel did the same to Og, king of Bashan (Num. 21:35 Deut. 3:4–6). Again, Israel kept their animals (Deut. 3:7).
Deut. 7:1–2 Psalm 106:34–39	Generally speaking, Israel was to destroy all the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan. Because Israel did not completely destroyed all of the peoples of the land, these people infiltrated Israel and corrupted her. In fact, Israel became so corrupted as to become involved in child sacrifice (Psalm 106:38).
Joshua 6:17–21	The first city that Israel attacked when in the Land of Promise was Jericho, and that city was placed under the ban (except for Rahab the prostitute and those of her household). Whereas the example in Num. 21 may not have been clear, there is no question about Jericho. And they completely annihilated everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword (Joshua 6:21).
Joshua 8:24–29	Joshua placed all the people of Ai, the second city to be destroyed by Israel, under the ban. However, their livestock and personal effects were retained by Israel.
Joshua 10:28	To fulfill an obligation to the Gibeonites, Joshua fought against a coalition of 5 Canaanite kings (Joshua 10:1–15). In their retreat, they hid out in a cave of Makkedah (Joshua 10:16). Joshua sealed up the cave, slaughtered their people (although there were some survivors) and then he hung these kings (Joshua 10:17–27). Finally, Joshua captured the city of Makkedah and devoted all of it to destruction, just as he had done to Jericho.
Joshua 11:11	Once Joshua had finished taking Southern Canaan, Jabin, the king of Hazor caught wind of this and formed an alliance with three other rulers in the north (Joshua 11:1–5). God gave Israel victory over these kings (Joshua 11:6–10) and Israel destroyed every living person in Hazor and then burned Hazor to the ground.
1Sam. 15:1–3	God orders Saul to completely annihilate the Amalekites, along with all of their livestock and belongings.

Given that Joshua defeated 31 kings and several groups of people prior to entering into the Land of Canaan; given all of the wars found in the book of Judges, and given all of the wars fought by Saul, this is a relatively small number of instances where a people were placed completely under the ban.

When a nation was put under the ban, the idea was, Israel was not to profit from their destruction. That is, this was not to be a situation where a king of Israel covets what another group of people have, and then tells his soldiers, “God told me that we need to wipe out this people; but don’t kill their animals or destroy their i-pods; those belong to me.” When a degenerate people were destroyed, all that they had was destroyed as well.

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This is an important recurring issue in Scripture. Therefore, we need to determine two things: why did God demand the destruction of the Amalekites in particular and why would God demand the complete destruction of any people?

Why Did God Demand the Complete Destruction of the Amalekites?

1. The first time that Israel encountered the Amalekites was in Ex. 17 where the Amalekites militarily opposed Israel from moving further north. This attack revealed their great hatred toward Israel and toward their God. The way they attacked the Jews revealed their character. *When the Israelites were struggling through the desert toward Canaan, the Amalekites picked off the weak, sick and elderly at the end of the line of marchers and brutally murdered these stragglers. Warned Moses, “Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God” (Deut. 25:17–18).*¹ Those who were in the rear of the Israelites would have been the weakest most helpless people; those were the ones that Amalek attacked. It is not unlike the suicide attacks of certain radical Arab groups today. They intentionally target civilians and non-military targets.
2. The Amalekites consistently displayed a long-standing animosity against Israel. We have their first vicious attack of Ex. 17 against the most helpless of Israel’s number. Their attack was cowardly and unprovoked. It revealed a tremendous amount of prejudice and hatred for the Jews.
3. The Amalekites also allied themselves with several different nations in order to fight against Israel:
 - a. The Canaanites in Num. 14:43–45
 - b. The Moabites in Judges 3:12–13
 - c. The Midianites in Judges 6:3–5, 33 7:12
4. We may speculate that this nation of Amalek was diseased and that their children and animals were carriers.
5. We may reasonably speculate that there was great involvement here with such practices as the phallic cults.
6. We can reasonably suppose from 1Sam. 15:33 that not only was there at that time open hostility between Israel and the Amalekites, but that these Amalekites were behaving with extreme and wanton cruelty.²
7. This attack of Saul’s is the only time that Israel may have been the aggressor against the Amalekites (although 1Sam. 15:33 suggests that this was in response to recent aggressions by the Amalekites).
8. We know for certain that Israel’s hesitation to wholly destroy some groups of people resulted in Israel becoming corrupted to the point of offering their children in sacrificial offerings (Psalm 106:34–39).
9. Let me see if I can explain this next point properly, as it is subtle: God did not allow Israel to plunder the Amalekites so that there would be no confusion in history as to the reason for Israel’s attack on the Amalekites. We are to look back at this attack as having a moral basis; if the Israelites seize all that they can from the Amalekites, then that blurs the morality of it all. It appears to us many hundreds of years later that, God’s command to destroy the Amalekites was just a pretext. However, the real reason was to take what they had built up. The point of this narrative is, God ordered Amalek completely destroyed for moral reasons. God would not allow history to suggest any other motivation.
10. Because Israel did not destroy all of these Amalekites (I would assume that many of them escaped because the Israelite soldiers were busy picking through their livestock), they posed a serious threat to Israel a very short time later and David had to defeat them (1Sam. 30).
11. Because these Amalekites were not wiped out, many years later, Haman, an Amalekite, will attempt to

Why Did God Demand the Complete Destruction of the Amalekites?

- destroy the Jewish race (Esther 3–7).³
12. These last two points indicate that there was no half-way measure with regards to the Amalekites. Israel could not simply defeat them soundly and that would be the end of it. Israel had to completely destroy the Amalekites in order for all aggressions to cease.
 13. We are in the devil's world. It would be nice if everything could be popsicles and candy, but that just isn't the way life is. President Truman made one of the most difficult decisions a president could make—dropping Atomic bombs on Japan. Japan, however, was allied with absolute evil. What Truman did was end World War II almost immediately, and saved hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides (we have no idea what could have happened had he faltered at this point). However, we do know what happened because Saul faltered. Saul and the people did not obey God, and as a result, the Amalekites would remain as a people who hated the Jews and would go to any lengths to destroy them.
 14. To sum up, it is very likely that the continuance of the Amalekites would affect both Israel's spiritual health and physical health. Furthermore, the Amalekites would bear hatred for Israel as long as they were alive. The incidents which occurred after many of them were destroyed here bear this fact out.

¹ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 207.

² Paraphrased from Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 458.

³ According to J. Vernon McGee; *I & II Samuel*; Thru the Bible Books; ©El Camino Press, 1976, La Verne, CA; p. 81. Haman was an Agagite (Esther 3:1, 10 8:3, 5 9:24), meaning that he may have been descended from the Agag of this chapter. This would mean, of course, that some of Agag's sons would have escaped in Israel's attack (which could have occurred because many Israelite soldiers were busy keeping the best of their cattle and sheep from being destroyed). This would also account for his bitter hatred of the Jews. Also, Josephus calls Haman an Amalekite in *Antiquities* xi. 6. 6.

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Why Would God Demand the Destruction of an Entire People?

1. The quotation above from Stephen Davis represents the thinking and feelings of many people.
2. However, what we have here are people's opinions and feelings without having all of the facts.
3. That analogy which I have offered (which in no way justifies God's mandates in and of itself) is that these people had become like a cancer and, just like cancerous tissue, must be completely removed. Another medical analogy is gangrene. Sometimes an entire limb must be removed in order for the remainder of the body to survive. This describes what must be done to some groups of people.
4. God is the giver of life; therefore, it is His pejorative as to when it must be removed. Job 1:21: "[Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return there. Y^{ehowah} gave and Y^{ehowah} taken away; blessed by the name of Y^{ehowah}."](#) Deut. 32:39: "[See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me. It is I Who puts to death and gives life. I have wounded, and it is I Who heals; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.](#)"
5. God knows all of the facts; we do not. Therefore, when God demands that a people be completely destroyed, we can accept that He knows what He is doing and what He is requesting.
6. We may look at what appears to be an innocent baby and determine that it is immoral to destroy such a beautiful creature; however, God looks at that innocent baby and sees what they will become. He is not playing the percentages; He is God and He knows!
7. In the Middle East today, we find extreme hatred toward the Jews; we find groups of people who exhibit a hatred that seems to never be placated.
8. The most important issue for any unbeliever is will they choose, at some point in their lives, Jesus Christ as their hope and Savior. Since [God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a change of mental attitude](#) (II Peter 3:9), we can rest assured that God is not going to allow the killing

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of any unbeliever who would later become a believer in time. Therefore, we may assume one of two things:

- a. Either there were no Amalekites alive at that time that would ever believe in Jesus Christ or...
 - b. ...God would allow those who would believe an escape.
9. Therefore, even though it is wrong for man to kill whole groups of people, it is not wrong for God to do so. Therefore, it is reasonable for God to demand the complete destruction of certain peoples (Deut. 20:13–18).
 10. There was a long-standing mandate for Israel to deal with these Amalekites (Deut. 25:17–19). It had come time for Israel to act.
 11. Those who have a problem with God's order to destroy a whole group of people often assume that innocent people will be killed in the process. They thereby lay claim to omniscience, which attribute only God possesses. If there are innocents, God will either single them out (as He did with Rahab the prostitute and her family) or He will see that they escape (enough Amalekites escaped in this attack to be a problem in the next generation with King David).
 12. It is presumptuous of us to think that our moral standards are superior to God's. We can depend upon His perfect nature to be the ultimate standard.
 13. Geisler and Howe offer the following argument:
 - a. No child is innocent; all children are born with old sin natures (Psalm 51:5).
 - b. All who sin and all who possess an old sin nature are deserving of death (Rom. 5:12).
 - c. Every person will die eventually; it is only a matter of time when they do die (Heb. 9:27).
 - d. Since God is sovereign over all, it is His perfect timing when a person is to die, whether young, old or anywhere in between (Deut. 32:39 Job 1:21).
 - e. Those children who die prior to the age of accountability are automatically saved (2Sam. 12:23).
 - f. Therefore, God taking the lives of these children is not a merciless act.¹
 14. When a believer or unbeliever suggests that the *prophets got it wrong*, they call into question the entire **Doctrine of Inspiration** (covered in Judges 18 introduction). That is, if one can say that the prophets got it wrong here, then one could make that call at any time throughout Scripture.
 15. We are not given any reason for this annihilation apart from Amalek's treatment of Israel in the past. From that statement, we can reasonably assume that, at this time, there is no one in the nation of Amalek who would behave any differently than did their ancestors.
 16. We may assume that no one that God allows to be killed will ever believe in the God of Israel had they been allowed to live.
 17. We may speculate that several of the nations devoted to destruction were diseased and that their children and animals were carriers.
 18. We do have both archeological evidence as well as Biblical testimony that there were peoples in that era who sacrificed their own children and practiced both sodomy and bestiality (see Lev. 18:21, 25, 27–30).
 19. There were groups of peoples in that day, as in this, who demonstrated complete and absolute contempt for the Israelite, and would do anything to destroy them.
 20. We know for certain that Israel's hesitation to wholly destroy some groups of people resulted in Israel becoming corrupted to the point of offering their children in sacrificial offerings (Psalm 106:34–39).
 21. We also know that this was not some sudden decision of God's. God provides any people with ample opportunity to change their ways. Israel was in slavery to Egypt for nearly 400 years because *the sin of the Amorites was not yet complete* (Gen. 15:16b). Israel cooled their heels while the Canaanites became more and more depraved. *Thus, God waited for centuries while the Amalekites and those other Canaanite groups slowly filled up their own cups of condemnation by their sinful behavior. God never acted precipitously against them; his grace and mercy waited to see if they would repent and turn from their headlong plummet into self-destruction.*² This tells us that God these groups of peoples centuries during which they could have reformed, but instead, they chose greater and greater debauchery with each generation.
 22. It is clear today that there is a great deal of hatred directed toward Israel. There are groups of people who would be happy only if all Israelis were destroyed. It is almost an everyday occurrence for a man to strap explosives to himself and walk into a public place, just to kill a handful of Israelite civilians along

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with himself. This kind of vicious hatred is motivated by Satan, but not apart from their free will. Given this clear predilection for violence that we see today, it is no wonder that God had Israel destroy several groups of people, as Israel would never receive any peace from these people.

23. God can and has used other means of annihilation: pestilence, famine, disease, natural disasters.

24. Again (and this cannot be overemphasized), God gave life and God therefore can choose to remove it.

The general idea for this doctrine and several of these points came from *When Skeptics Ask*; Geisler and Brooks, ©1990, Victor Books, pp. 168–170. Several points were also harvested from *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 206–207.

¹ From *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 206.

² Paraphrased from *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 161.

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Given the actions of certain radical Arab groups over the past several decades, it is reasonable to ask...

Does God Work Through Any Specific Nation Today as He did Through Israel Previously?

1. Here is where dispensations come into play: God worked through Israel as a nation prior to the Incarnation.
2. God communicated directly with Israel through her prophets and certain leaders.
3. Israel acted as an agent of God.
4. God no longer works through the nation Israel.
5. There is nothing in Scripture in the New Testament which indicates that God will be working through any particular nation in the future (at least, not until the Great Tribulation).
6. Therefore, in today's world there is no call for any nation to destroy any other nation, as there is no nation that God acts through as He did with Israel.
7. Today, we have what Thieme termed *client nations to God*. God works through these specific nations; in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, God has worked through the United States. In the 18th and 19th centuries, God worked through England. However, the primary functions of these nations was to teach and disseminate the Word of God, and to send out missionaries. God even uses these nations in war; however, there is no Biblical or extra-Biblical authorization to destroy any people completely as we find in the Old Testament in passages such as this.
8. In other words, there is no authorization in this dispensation for any nation anywhere, no matter how godly, to participate in ethnic cleansing.
9. Paul describes the sort of struggle in which we are involved: **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies** (Eph. 6:12).
10. Now, let me give you a scenario: you are sitting and contemplating and you unequivocally believe that God comes to you and tells you to destroy this people or that. What do you do? Here is where doctrine comes in: God does not work through nations or through individuals as He did in the Old Testament; therefore, even if something like that occurred, you may rest assured that you were tempted by a lying spirit (see Mark 13:22 II Cor. 11:13 II Thess. 2:9 II Peter 2:1 I John 1:4 Rev. 16:13 19:20). The key is this: God's Word is correct and your experience, no matter how vivid and marvelous, is not.

A very reasonable question which I will reserve for later is, *Why, in the Dispensation of Israel, did God promote ethnic cleansing, as it were, but in our time, the Dispensation of the Church, there is no valid call for ethnic cleansing. After all, people and groups still sin; sin still builds up; why is there not a similar approach today?*

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Philistia's attacks against Israel appear to be almost an ongoing process without but a few breathing places in the Old Testament. It is very similar to the situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians today. In fact, the word *Palestine* is derived from the ancient name *Philistia*.

Now might be a good time to summarize the wars between Israel and Philistia. Bear in mind, these are wars and skirmishes which are recorded in Scripture; there is no reason to assume this is a comprehensive historical list.

The Wars Between Israel and Philistia up to the Death of Saul

Scripture	Time Period	Incident	Outcome
Ex. 13:17	1440 B.C.	This is actually a non-aggression. God specifically led Israel so that they would not come in contact with the Philistines.	God did not want Israel to go to war against the Philistines and become discouraged. The implication is, they were the toughest and meanest peoples in the land.
Judges 3:31	1250 B.C.	We know very little about the first battle between the Jews and the Philistines, except that it seems to be a relatively small skirmish.	Shamgar ben Anath strikes down 600 Philistines with an ox-goad, delivering Israel.
Judges 10:6–7, 13:1 14:1–20	1108–1076 B.C.	There appears to be some intermingling between Israel and the Philistines; the Israelites began to worship the gods of the Philistines. God allows Israel to fall into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years.	God raised up Samson, who was an irritant to the Philistines. Woman easily swayed him (he becomes involved with the Philistine woman early on—Judges 14). These skirmishes escalated until Samson killed 1000 Philistine with the jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:15–16). As a result, Samson functions as a judge in Israel during the time of Philistine rule.
Judges 16	1076–1074 B.C.	What occurred at this time tended to be more of a war between Samson and the Philistines. Delilah coaxed the secret of Sampson's strength from him, cut his hair, bound him, and took him to Gaza.	At Gaza, Samson's hair grew back, God the Holy Spirit again empowered him, and he killed thousands of Philistines. This apparently ended Philistine rule (although that is not made clear to us—1Sam. 4:9).
1Sam. 4	1050 B.C.	The Philistines appear to be the aggressors, as their troops are parked in Ephraim near the Manasseh border.	The Israelites go and fetch the Ark as a last ditch effort—sort of as a good luck charm, and the Philistines take this from them.

The Wars Between Israel and Philistia up to the Death of Saul

Scripture	Time Period	Incident	Outcome
1Sam. 5–6	1050 B.C.	God makes war against the Philistines.	The Philistines return the Ark to Israel. God also kills some Israelites who treat the Ark in a trivial manner.
1Sam. 7	1048 B.C.	The Israelites gather in Mizpah against the Philistines.	God routes the Philistines and Israel takes back all of the cities which the Philistines had previously captured.
1Sam. 13:3–7	1045 B.C.	Jonathan strikes a Philistine outpost in Geba.	This act of aggression sets up a war between Israel and the Philistines. Many of the Jews hid themselves because of this.
1Sam. 13:11–14	1045 B.C.	Saul acts foolishly in response to the Philistine troops.	Saul loses his kingdom positionally.
1Sam. 13:15–23	1045–1040 B.C.	The Philistines set up outposts in Israel and strike Israel at will with raiding parties.	Like Jonathan's strike, these seem to be minor skirmishes, as opposed to an all-out war. They are living on Israel's land, and taking what they need to live. Israel's army does not possess weapons with which they can really fight with the Philistines.
1Sam. 14:1–23	1040 B.C.	Jonathan and a young man strike the Philistine camp in Michmash on their own.	Jonathan and this young man miraculously defeat an entire Philistine outpost. God also brought a great earthquake to this area, sending them on the run. Israel's army then pursued them to the border.
1Sam. 14:47–52	1050–1010 B.C.	During Saul's era, there apparently were many skirmishes with the Philistines.	It is not clear who was victorious overall. I suspect that this was a give and take situation throughout Saul's reign.
1Sam. 17	1030 B.C.	The Philistines gather in Socoh of Judah; Goliath, a huge man, challenges any Israelite to fight him—winner take all.	While Saul and all of his men are in a panic, David offers to fight this “uncircumcised Philistine who defies the armies of the living God.” David kills him and the army of Israel is pumped, and they chase the Philistines back to Gath and Ekron.

The Wars Between Israel and Philistia up to the Death of Saul

Scripture	Time Period	Incident	Outcome
1Sam. 23:1–13	1025 B.C.	The Philistines besiege the city of Keilah. David takes his refugees down there in response to God's urging.	David and his men, in their first military endeavor, defeat the Philistines, and deliver Keilah. However, Saul brings his army down, not to assist, but to get David and David flees (finding out that the people of Keilah will turn him in to Saul).
1Sam. 23:15–29	1020 B.C.	Saul is pursuing David in the wilderness of Maon. When he is just about to catch up to him, he hears that the Philistines have made a raid against Israel.	Saul takes his army to deal with this raid. We are not told the outcome of Saul versus the Philistines here; however, it is obvious that it was resolved and Saul was still alive.
1Sam. 28, 31	1005 B.C.	The Philistines gathered in Shunem to fight Israel. Saul is in a panic and he goes to a medium and Saul asks to talk to Samuel. Samuel tells Saul that he will join him the next day.	We pick this battle up in 1Sam. 31 and the Philistines have the army of Israel on the run. They killed Saul and his sons. Israel fled the cities in that area and the Philistines moved into them. The Philistines also hung the bodies of Saul and his sons and the walls of Beth shan (some valiant Jews did take the bodies and burned them).

These dates are given only by way of approximation. Just to get a rough idea when these battles took place. There are many opinions as to the actual time periods here.

Although this may seem like a lot of wars, remember that we are dealing with God's people and those who are absolutely negative towards the gospel. Therefore, we would expect as many fights between the Philistines and the Jews as we have between the Palestinians and the Jews today. I suspect there were several wars left out of this history.

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As far as we know, Jonathan was innocent; he was a just man and a good friend to David. Even he recognized that David would be king over Israel. This leads us to ask....

Why Does God Allow Jonathan to be Killed in Battle?

1. No believer is assured of continuous life on this earth; even if he lives an exemplary existence.
2. Even though Moses died at an old age, God did not allow him to cross over the Jordan into the Land of Promise with the men he had led for 40 years. We know in retrospect the gravity of his sin, even though, at that time, it was really just a matter of being upset with the 2,000,000 Jews who seemed

Why Does God Allow Jonathan to be Killed in Battle?

- unable to trust God after seeing many miracles at His hand.
3. Even though Jonathan clearly acknowledged that David would become king, and had even gotten assurances from David that he would not be persecuted for his father's name, he would always be a viable candidate for king—there would always be the possibility that the people of Israel would push him to follow Saul as king.
 4. When Saul became king, it was a result of the demand of the people, as well as the guidance of Samuel, who was far and wide recognized as the spiritual leader of Israel. We do not have the same situation paving the way for David. The only recognized leadership, Saul and his sons, are clearly antagonistic toward David. Even though the people desire a king, this does not mean that they would naturally gravitate toward David—especially in the event of a great man like Jonathan being available.
 5. Bear in mind that Saul began humbly; when chosen by God to be king, he hid, because he was so shy and taken aback by this turn of events. However, once he assumed power, there was a point at which his behavior got more and more out of control. He began by trying to kill David in the palace with his own sword. We do not know what the end of Jonathan would have been. We have seen him as a great man throughout the latter half of the book of 1 Samuel. We don't know that he would have continued that way for the remainder of his life.
 6. My father died at an early age. As a father and a husband, he was a great man in my eyes—I feel as though I come up short time and time again in comparison to him. I don't know what would have happened to him in the latter half of his life; I can't say that he would have continued with the same integrity as he had. People do change, as Saul did. Therefore, we have to trust God when he takes someone from us at such and such a time, even if we view God's timing as being far too premature. God knows what He is doing.
 7. God has perfect timing. We have to trust this. God knows all there is to know and He knows all of the possibilities. We have to trust this as well. Therefore, when God takes anyone out of this life, then it is clearly his time to go. For anyone to remain even a minute after God's timing would be wrong and would not serve the purposes of God.
 8. For a believer, death is a blessing; for a mature believer, death is a promotion.

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You may recall that Psalm 2 begins with [Why do the heathen rage?](#) Kimchi suggests that these attacks of the Philistines motivated David to write this psalm (whether he wrote the psalm or not is the subject of a great deal of discussion in my exegesis of that psalm). Why don't they just let things be? Why don't the Philistines just recognize, David is now king; and it is time to back off. This does bring us to the question:

Why Do the Philistines Continually War Against Israel?

1. 2Sam. 5:17 reads: [When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed as king over Israel, they went up](#) [lit., *that they anointed David for a king over Israel, all the Philistines went up*] [to seek David. When David heard \[this\], he went down into the stronghold.](#) The grammar is important here: when a wâw consecutive is followed by a kîy conjunction, the result is often a conditional or a causal sentence, and can be reasonably rendered *if...then; when...then; when...*
2. The Philistines and Israel have been traditional enemies. Their anti-Semitism is a clear indication of their negative volition against the God of the Jews.
3. The Philistines had soundly defeated Israel when Saul was their king. They killed Saul, almost all of his sons, established garrisons in Israel, and were very likely taking in regular tribute from the Israelis in the northern kingdom.

Why Do the Philistines Continually War Against Israel?

4. Most nations do not back off from a position which they have gained through war. The Philistines have come into central Israel in a war against Saul; they are not going to back off from that position. They have a firm hold in specific areas, and it would make little sense for them to simply pack their bags and leave.
5. There do not appear to be any conflicts between the Philistines and eastern Israel (Trans Jordania) or between the Philistines and southern Israel (Judah). It is likely that eastern Israel was too far away to control, and their king was viewed as weak and ineffectual (Ishbosheth); and the boundaries between Judah and Philistia, at least at that time, were probably well-established. Furthermore, there was some sort of an alliance between David and Achish, king of Gath, which may have kept war from breaking out between Judah and Philistia for those 7½ years that David was king of the southern kingdom.
6. A United Israel under David means (1) probably no more tribute and (2) possibly aggressive action of the Jews against the Philistines.
7. Achish, king of Gath, was probably overruled by the other 4 kings in this matter, when David became king over a United Israel.
8. It is possible that the good relationship between David and Hiram, king of Tyre, may have influenced the decision of the Philistines to go to war. This is an alliance which could have threatened their own security.

Always bear in mind that, negative volition toward the Jews means negative volition toward the God of the Jews, Jesus Christ. Those rulers and countries which have a good relationship with the Jews were likely those who believed in their God; those rulers and countries who are antagonistic toward the Jews are also likely antagonistic toward their God.

A good question to pose at this time is, *what about Achish, king of Gath?* Satan is in a constant struggle against God's plan. During the previous dispensation, Satan attacked Israel in any way possible. Achish may have had little problem with David, but it is obvious that the other 4 kings did. You may recall that we fought against Germany in both world wars. There are a great many theologians from Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

From **2Samuel 5** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

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David fought with a host of anti-Semites during his time, but he apparently fought against the Philistines more times than any other group.

The Philistines War Against David

Passage	Commentary
<p>When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" And the LORD said to David, "Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand." And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, "The LORD has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood." Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away (2Sam. 5:17–21).</p>	<p>It appears as though this is the first war against David by the Philistines.</p>
<p>And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, "You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the LORD has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." And David did as the LORD commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer (2Sam. 5:22–25).</p>	<p>It appears as though the Philistines regathered themselves and struck David a second time.</p>
<p>After this David defeated the Philistines and subdued them, and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines (2Sam. 8:1).</p>	<p>This chapter recalls many of David's victories up to that point in time, so I don't believe that this is a new or separate battle, but either a summation of several battles or parallel to a particular battle.</p>
<p>These also King David dedicated to the LORD, together with the silver and gold that he dedicated from all the nations he subdued, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah (2Sam. 8:11–12).</p>	<p>This is clearly a summary passage and does not deal with a new battle.</p>
<p>And all the people were arguing throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled out of the land from Absalom (2Sam. 19:9).</p>	<p>This seems to indicate that there was a period of time when it appeared as though the Philistines had been defeated permanently by David. The previous two passages give the same sense.</p>
<p>There was war again between the Philistines and Israel, and David went down together with his servants, and they fought against the Philistines. And David grew weary. And Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giants, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze, and who was armed with a new sword, thought to kill David. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, "You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel." (2Sam. 21:15–17).</p>	<p>This is apparently David's last battle that he participated in. Given my own physical condition, and thinking about the condition David must have been in, David was possibly in his late 40's or early 50's. He may have had the strength, but not the necessary endurance for a prolonged battle.</p>

The Philistines War Against David

Passage	Commentary
<p>After this there was again war with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giants (2Sam. 21:18).</p>	<p>There appear to be 3 more wars (or, battles?) between Israel and the Philistines.</p>
<p>And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam (2Sam. 21:19).</p>	<p>These final battles deal with the death of those who are related to Goliath, whom David killed.</p>
<p>And there was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number, and he also was descended from the giants. And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimeij, David's brother, struck him down. These four were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants (2Sam. 21:20–22).</p>	<p>Once all of Goliath's huge relatives were killed, this took the wind out of Philistia's sails; they will not be mentioned again for another hundred years in 1Kings 15:27 (with the exception of 1Kings 4:21 below). As far as I can tell, there will not be any wars between Israel and Philistine until circa 700 B.C. (2Kings 18:8).</p>
<p>These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: among the three mighty men was Eleazar the son of Dodo, son of Ahohi. He was with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel withdrew. He rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword. And the LORD brought about a great victory that day, and the men returned after him only to strip the slain. And next to him was Shammah, the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines gathered together at Lehi, where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the men fled from the Philistines. But he took his stand in the midst of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines, and the LORD worked a great victory. And three of the thirty chief men went down and came about harvest time to David at the cave of Adullam, when a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem. And David said longingly, "Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!" Then the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink of it. He poured it out to the LORD and said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?" (portions of 2Sam. 23:9–17).</p>	<p>Because there were so many battles between Israel and Philistia, many of David's bravest men are remembered in the context of warring against the Philistines. Because this is such a long passage, I have only included the names of those who are honored for what they did in their fighting against the Philistines.</p> <p>In that chapter, as you have read, there is one instance where we have Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim, which is where we will find them in 2Sam. 5:18. Although this is not proof positive that we are speaking of the same incident, it makes that likely.</p>
<p>Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life (1Kings 4:21).</p>	<p>There was peace in Solomon's time because David had thoroughly beaten all of Israel's enemies, including the Philistines.</p>
<p>If you will recall, Israel's problem with the Philistines goes back to the book of the Judges. However, they almost end permanently with David.</p>	

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Like many of these passages, you read through, you occasionally stop and wonder, *well, so what; how does this help me? What does this say to me?*

Personal Application of David's War with the Philistines

1. I want you to note some important facts here: David did not sit on his hands and watch God destroy the Philistines with the Word of His mouth (with a hail storm, rainstorm, earthquake, etc.). David had to act; he had to do as God had guided him. God told David to engage, and David moved his army against the Philistine army.
2. There is a careful balance in the Christian life between guidance and doing.
3. You don't run out ahead of God; nor do you hang back when God has sent you into battle (or wherever). This balance is achieved with doctrine in your soul; this guidance is achieved with doctrine in your soul.
4. And one more point of application: again, we find war in the Bible—God guides David into battle; God does not guide David into achieving peace through diplomacy.

Although portions of the Bible are not directly applicable to your life, there is more application here than you might think.

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Let's review the history of Israel and the Philistines.

Israel and the Philistines

1. Israel and Philistia have been traditional enemies for many centuries.
 2. During the time of the Judges, the Philistines oppressed Israel for 40 years and Samson delivered them (Judges 13–16).
 3. Under the final judge, Eli, Israel fought with the Philistines and the Philistines took the Ark of God from them (which the Israelites brought into battle as a good luck charm—1Sam. 4).
 4. The Ark caused the Philistines so many problems that they eventually returned it to Israel. All of these problems substantially weakened the Philistines for some time. 1Sam. 5–6
 5. Israel was then able to decisively defeat the Philistines in battle under Samuel's guidance. 1Sam. 7
 6. The hatred for Israel among many Philistines was strong, and they continued to attack Israel, attempting to divide Israel by attacking central Israel while Saul was king (Saul governed Israel from central Israel). 1Sam. 13
 7. Jonathan enjoyed a tremendous victory over the Philistines in 1Sam. 14:1–23.
 8. However, despite their many setbacks, the Philistines continued to war with King Saul. 1Sam. 14:52
 9. The Philistines arrayed themselves against Israel with Goliath as their front man. David defeats Goliath and the Philistines flee. 1Sam. 17
 10. David becomes one of Saul's main generals, defeating many enemies (which possibly includes
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Israel and the Philistines

- additional skirmishes with the Philistines). However, Saul became jealous of David and began to focus his anger and jealousy against David, causing David to flee. 1Sam. 18–24
11. Because of this rift, David goes to the Philistines to find a place to live, and he and his small army are placed in southeastern Palestine, becoming somewhat of a buffer between Israel and the Philistines. 1Sam. 27
 12. The Philistines decide to war against Saul, and David, because he is living on their land, is expected to join with them. However, Philistines who know David and know of him decide that going to war with David and his men among them was a potential threat to them, so David was let off the hook and sent back to his campsite. 1Sam. 29
 13. The Philistines wage war against Saul and his sons and are victorious, killing them, routing the Israeli soldiers, and taking over their cities in central Israel (primarily in Benjamin). 1Sam. 31:1–7
 14. After this time, Saul's son, Ishbosheth is ruling over northern and eastern Israel and David has control of southern Israel. Central Israel is probably still under the control of the Philistines. 2Sam. 2
 15. When David solidifies his control over all Israel, the Philistines attack. This is somewhat confusing. Approximately 7 years before, the Philistines took the cities of central Israel. Whether they are still in these cities or not is unclear. However, in any case, David defeats them twice, sending them back to their traditional land in southeastern Palestine. 1Sam. 7
 16. Time passes: David moves the Ark to Jerusalem, he thinks about building a permanent structure to God, and God gives David the Davidic Covenant (2Sam. 6–7). David is again at war with the Philistines, although we are given few details here, apart from him taking Gath, which is one of the primary cities of the Philistines, being almost due east of Jerusalem. This suggests that we are speaking of new conflicts with the Philistines, rather than rehashing David's battles with them from 2Sam. 5.
 17. Because of this recent and continuous history that Israel has with the Philistines, it is no wonder that they are mentioned first.
-
18. Israel has another war with Gath, one of the chief cities of the Philistines, in 1Chron. 20:6–8 which involves some of the giants. This appears to have taken place during the Bathsheba incident.
 19. Somehow, in all of this, David appears to have acquired a large number of Gittites (men of Gath) in his own army (there are 600 Cherethites, Pelethites and Gittites). 2Sam. 15:18
 20. Much later in David's life, after the Absalom revolt, the Philistines will come back to war against the Israelites. It appears as though there were several battles and perhaps several wars. David and his armies would be victorious on every occasion. 2Sam. 21:15–22
 21. The references in 2Sam. 23 to the Philistines are simply recounting the heroic exploits of some of David's soldiers.
 22. From 2Sam. 21 until the end of Solomon's life, the Philistines brought tribute to the Israelites. 1Kings 4:21 reads: [Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.](#)
 23. The next time that we hear about the Philistines, it is almost incidental. The Kingdom of Israel was divided after Solomon. The northern kingdom, under its 2nd king (Nadab) was warring against the Philistines, and Baasha killed Nadab when he was laying siege against the Philistines. Baasha became the 3rd king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel. This is 909 B.C. 1Kings 15:27
 24. 24 years later, we hear about the Philistines again in an incidental way, when Omri was apparently at war against the Philistines. However, the battle with the Philistines is presented

Israel and the Philistines

as incidental to Omri being made king over the Northern Kingdom (Omri is the 6th king of Israel). This is 885 B.C. 1Kings 16:15

25. The Philistines are mentioned again incidentally in 2Kings 8 (circa 840 B.C.); in a passage which indicates that a woman was able to go from Israel into Philistia and live for 7 years.
26. Hezekiah, circa 720 B.C., king of Judah, hands a crushing defeat to the Philistines in 2Kings 18:8.
27. We do not find the Philistines mentioned in any subsequent history (Kings or Chronicles), but they are mentioned by later prophets: Jer. 25:20 47:1, 4 Ezek. 16:27, 57 25:15–16 Obad. 1:19

Quite obviously, there is a long and bloody history between Israel and the Philistines.

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Apart from Bible doctrine, Israel and Israel's relationships with her enemies is hard to comprehend.

Israel and her Enemies; the Divine Perspective

1. If one was to ponder the Jew as a race and Israel as a nation, there ought to be a great deal of confusion.
2. How do people from a nation which lost its sovereignty in 586 B.C. still survive?
3. How have these people maintained a separate identify, although they have been scattered throughout the world?
4. How is it possible for a such a nation as Israel to reconstitute itself thousands of years later?
5. Why do the Arabs so passionately hate the Jews?
6. Why haven't the Arabs crushed the Jews? The Arabs dwarf the Jews in size and population.
7. These questions ought to confuse and mystify the unbeliever. So let's take these questions one at a time:
8. How do people from a nation which lost its sovereignty in 586 B.C. still survive? God still has a purpose for the Jew; the Dispensation of Israel has not yet been completed (there are 7 years to go), and when the Church Age is completed, the remainder of the Age of Israel will begin. There must be Jews scattered throughout the world and a nation Israel in existence for all of this to come to pass. Therefore, the Jews will exist to the end of human history.
9. How have these people maintained a separate identify, although they have been scattered throughout the world? The Jews are God's people and God will maintain their separate identity throughout human history. We must always be able to point to the Jews and recognize that God has made these people His. It is by divine design that the Jews will be scattered throughout all of the nations in the end times.
10. How is it possible for a such a nation as Israel to reconstitute itself thousands of years later? In the end times, there will be a nation Israel. Now, we do not know when the end times will come. Despite the world appearing to be in desperate shape at this time, we do not know the day nor the hour of Jesus' coming; so we do not know when He will return for His church (the rapture) or return to destroy the armies fighting in Israel (the 2nd Advent). This particular nation Israel may continue and it may be wiped out at some point in time. However, before the end times, there will be a nation Israel in the land.
11. Why do the Arabs so passionately hate the Jews? Apart from the Bible, anti-Semitism is difficult to comprehend. Even the conservative movement in the United States up until the time of Ronald Reagan had a very healthy anti-Semitic branch (which was the primary reason the conservative movement would not catch on—God is not going to bless an anti-Semitic movement). The Jews are God's people, and will remain set apart until the end of time. Those who are against God will naturally be against the Jews. This is why in the neo-liberal movement (the progressives), becoming more secular and seeing the

Israel and her Enemies; the Divine Perspective

- Arabs on an equal footing with the Jews goes hand-in-hand.
12. Why haven't the Arabs crushed the Jews? This is one of the most amazing questions. In the Six-Day War, Egypt, Jordan and Syria went to war against Israel. Additional troops were offered up by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria (to right against Israel). Egypt has a population of around 65 million; Jordan has a population of 5 million, Syria has a population of 18 million and Israel has a population of 7 million. These 3 nations alone have populations 12x that of Israel. Furthermore, their hatred for Israel is dramatic and palpable. Therefore, ginning up the population in favor of such a war is not a difficult thing for these countries to do. And 6 other Arab nations wanted to get into the act. Furthermore, the Soviets backed the Arabs with weapons. President Nasser of Egypt had declared, "Our basic objective will be the destruction of Israel. The Arab people want to fight." Nasser also proclaimed: "The armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are poised on the borders of Israel ... to face the challenge, while standing behind us are the armies of Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait, Sudan and the whole Arab nation. This act will astound the world. Today they will know that the Arabs are arranged for battle, the critical hour has arrived. We have reached the stage of serious action and not of mere declarations." After 6 days of fighting, Israel tripled its size by the land which it captured. 6 years later, there was another Arab-Israeli war which lasted nearly a month. Again, Egypt and Syria allied themselves against the Jews. Although Israel was dramatically taken aback by a surprise attack on two fronts, Israel within days was showing military superiority over her attackers. What happened? Quite obviously, military preparedness and military might are a factor. Israel had become somewhat complacent by the 1973 Arab Israeli Conflict, but quickly bounced back. However, certainly the overwhelming factor in these (and previous) wars is God. Even though we are in the dispensation of the church, the Jews are still God's people and still will play a dramatic role in the end of time. One of the reasons the United States has been so greatly blessed is its attitude toward the Jewish people and its support of Israel.
13. It is because of God's unique relationship to the Jews that all of this is as it is.

Although it is not impossible for the Arabs to administer a crushing defeat to modern-day Israel, God is still preserving His people. It would be a mistake of any American president to treat Israel and any of her Arab enemies equally.

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David will have to make several important decisions here, decisions which will involve the lives of his soldiers; therefore, he must have accurate information upon which to base his decisions.

Accurate Information is Required in Order to Make Good Decisions

1. Good leaders need honest and forthright underlings. A leader surrounded by "yes men" will never hear the truth.
2. We observe this very thing today (2011) in the United States where almost everything is politicized and almost every act has a political end.
3. President Obama's men, apart from many of his military advisors, are *yes-men* who calculate everything in terms of reelecting President Obama in the coming election.
 - 1) This is why our president, on occasion, makes some good military decisions, but, at the same time, makes the absolute worst domestic policy.
 - 2) The President has a few military advisors who tell him the truth, who operate in an area where the President has absolutely no expertise.
 - 3) Therefore, no matter what goofy philosophy the President has when it comes to Islam or United States power, strong military types are obviously able to reason with the

Accurate Information is Required in Order to Make Good Decisions

President. I would not be shocked if these military advisors sometimes explained conditions on the ground in terms of the President's reelection. For instance, "If you pull out of Iraq, and this nation is invaded and taken over by Iran within a few months, you will no survive as president, and Democrats, who are historically weak, will be voted out of office in such numbers, that it would make your head swim."

- 4) Arrogant leaders often underestimate the intelligence and capabilities of the military. The Democrats for years have portrayed military men as the dregs of society, of those who cannot get a real job, and the military is their only hope.
 - 5) Therefore, it is reasonable for the President's military advisors to think circles around the President.
4. A great leader needs to have accurate facts as his disposal in order to make good decisions. The President needs honest men to explain to him why his economic policies are no good. Hanun needs his state department to tell him, "Look, we all hate King David, but, he can kick our butts militarily. However, right now, David is giving us a great deal of freedom at a very low cost. So let's hold our tongues, accept his sympathy, so that we may live and prosper."
 5. However, a leader cannot be guided by arrogant advisors and a leader cannot be guided by *yes men*.
 6. Bad policy is a result of arrogance, of believing that which is false, and/or having bad advisors.
 7. Hanun has an arrogant state department who lust after power.
 8. The President has a state department all of whom believe that which is false (they believe that government is the solution to every problem).
 9. David, despite his sin, will be able to make good decisions with regards to Ammon, because he will be given good information. What happened will not be sugar-coated or interpreted in some goofy way.
 - 1) A great example of this is the Stimulus Bill, which was the first great act of President Obama when coming into office. He needs an honest economist to tell him, "Look, this did not work; in every recession which has ever occurred prior to now, our country came out of that recession much faster and with greater vigor. Your Stimulus Bill, if anything, prolonged the agony of our economy."
 - 2) Instead, all the effort has been made on spinning the economic numbers, to the point of actually proclaiming a recovery summer, when here was none.
 - 3) Either the President has a warped view of things from the bubble of the White House, or, his arrogance is so great that, despite the facts, he moves ahead with his big government politicizes.
 10. David's state department tells David exactly what happened. The information is not spun in any way. There I a problem in Ammon, and David must deal with this problem.
 11. Many times a delusional leader builds up a false view of what is going on all around him and, too often, his subordinates either spin the news which comes in or avoid giving him bad news. In the United States, this is known as the White House bubble. A president can become so detached—particularly with sycophantic underlings—that he has no clue as to what is going on in the outside world.
 12. All leaders require facts in order to make good decisions. All leaders need reliable and honest subordinates who will tell them the truth.
 - 1) In the past few days, Osama bin Laden was killed on the orders of President Obama. The actual killing of Osama was brilliantly done because decisions were made based upon good intelligence.
 - 2) However, when it came to making decisions after the fact—what to say about the operation, how to portray it, what information to share, and what decisions to make—this

Accurate Information is Required in Order to Make Good Decisions

- was bungled.
- 3) Post-operation decisions were made which political considerations by a very indecisive leader.
 - 4) So, good intelligence led to a tremendously competent military operation; and bad advice led to an incompetent follow up.
13. No leader can act and appear competent if he is relying upon lousy information.
- 1) Bad information can lead to the bombing of an aspirin factory.
 - 2) Bad information can lead to the greatest waste of taxpayer money in the history of the United States, also known as the Stimulus Bill.
 - 3) Prior to the Stimulus Bill, some underling should have sat President Obama down and explained to him the following information:
 - (1) FDR's big government approach did not work. The United States was the only nation to suffer a *Great Depression* at that time. The stock market did not fully recover until Eisenhower. All of FDR's big government solutions prolonged the depression.
 - (2) Several recessions quickly were solved by government doing nothing or by government reducing taxes.
 - (3) Japan recently tried to spend its way out of a recession, and that is not working.
 - 4) Good and accurate information can lead to good decisions by leadership.
14. Hanun had a state department who were arrogant and who desired to usurp his power through their bad advice. It was more important to them to influence Hanun's decision than it was to do that which was right for Ammon.
15. We see a great contrast between David and Hanun. David has good and accurate information; it may not be what he wants to hear, but it is accurate, nonetheless. Therefore, what David will decide will be the best route for Israel.

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2Sam. 10:6: [When the sons of Ammon recognized that they had made themselves odious before David, they sent and hired 20,000 infantry from Aram of Beth-Rehob and Aram of Zobah, 1000 men from the king of Maacah and 12,000 men from Ishtob.](#) Arrogant people act arrogantly and impulsively. Because they act out of arrogance, they do not think their actions through. As a result, they are unable to undo the stupid things that they do because they are still arrogant after doing the stupid things which result in their new predicament. Most of the time, they are unable to admit they have made a mistake because of their great arrogance.

The Results of Arrogant and Impulsive Actions

1. At best, arrogance can recognize that, after an impulsive act, they are in worse shape than they were originally. However, even with hindsight, arrogant people are still arrogant.
2. Therefore, many of the things which they do subsequently reflect this arrogance.
 - 1) The modern-day example of President Obama and his Stimulus Bill has been given. This was a great act of arrogance.
 - 2) The results of the Stimulus Act were not stimulative to the economy.
 - 3) In order to "solve" this problem, the administration began a propaganda campaign that the Stimulus Bill was now working.

The Results of Arrogant and Impulsive Actions

3. Hanun and his state department realized that, David would not let this go. David would not simply say, La de dah; obviously I should not send ambassadors to Ammon.”
4. If Ammon was paying tribute to David, and if that was part of the problem, now they are going to take a much higher percentage of the GNP and spend it on Aramean mercenaries.
5. Their arrogance caused them to do a stupid thing. They are still arrogant; therefore, they cannot easily turn around and fix what they messed up.
 - 1) President Obama, out of great arrogance, has made many economic decisions, all of which have turned out badly.
 - 2) As long as the President remains arrogant, he will not be able to solve the financial mess that we are in, which mess is exacerbated by his arrogance and incompetence.
 - 3) Similarly, because Hanun’s state department is still arrogant, they unable to come up with a plan which will solve their dilemma.
6. There is an actual solution here. The state department, when they came to their senses, should have realized, “We will all be killed, and so will our families and all of our friends and everyone in Ammon will be killed or enslaved.” Then, the correct solution would be to, resign as Hanun’s state department, and then to present themselves to David as his loyal slaves. In this way, they would have taken responsibility for their stupid decision to humiliate David’s ambassadors, and David would not have attacked Ammon. Such a solution would have been inexpensive, honorable and it would have saved their families and friends. However, when arrogance makes a bad decision, arrogance is unable to fix the results of that bad decision.
7. The arrogance of Hanun’s state department led to the impulsive act of abusing these ambassadors from Israel. This action is not related to reality. As a songwriter once wrote, “You don’t spit into the wind and you don’t step on Superman’s cape.”
8. Arrogance distorts reality. If Hanun and his state department refuse to view the world theater in a realistic way, then they cannot make good decisions.
9. It is much better to start out by making good decisions. The time to act out of humility and with good information is now, not after making a lot of stupid decisions.
 - 1) This is very true of the believer.
 - 2) God gives us the filling of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine so that we can make intelligent, informed decisions.
 - 3) Humility and teachability area a result of the inculcation of Bible doctrine. We cannot make good decisions apart from Bible doctrine.
 - 4) Most believers do stupid things today—not unlike what Hanun did—out of ignorance of doctrine or because they reject the authority of doctrine.
10. There is plenty of arrogance to go around in Ammon. The Ammonite population are also stimulated by their own arrogance. The sight of David’s ambassadors being paraded through the streets humiliated was probably a great source of amusement to them. It I likely that they talked about this for days.
11. At some point in time, the power and ferocity of Israel’s army would have come into their sphere of reality. At some point, they would think, “Hmmm, maybe we ought to think about David’s army invading Ammon.”
12. In his great arrogance, Hanun, or members of the state department, probably figured, “We will just employ some Aramean mercs; they will help us defeat David’s army.” Arrogance continues to blind them to the cold, hard reality of David’s army being led by the Living God.
13. At some point, possibly in the midst of war with Israel, the king of Ammon will realize that he has bitten off more than he can chew; that his arrogant act will result in being a war that they cannot win.
14. These men should have recognized, “Even though David is collecting tribute [an assumption

The Results of Arrogant and Impulsive Actions

I have made], we are still quite prosperous. Why rock the boat?”

- 1) The poor in the United States have a great life. The biggest problem of the poor in America is obesity. They have no idea what the life of the poor outside of the United States is like.
- 2) The poor in American, if they act in arrogance, will vote more and more in opposition to big and small business, with the eventual result that, they will destroy the economy of the United States.
- 3) The poor who vote arrogantly, see the successful as their enemies.
- 4) Poor people who understand some modicum of truth, recognize that, when business does well, they do well.
- 5) Only a stupid person could think that, [here is a very contemporary issue} it is a good idea to raise taxes on oil companies because they make too much money. Such a person is not voting to reduce profits to oil companies, but to increase their own cost at the pump. It is like saying, “I am upset because gas costs nearly \$5/gallon; I want to tax the oil companies so severely that they will have to charge me \$7/gallon.”
15. The Ammonites were enjoying an extremely prosperous time in their history. Given Israel’s power but willingness to be at peace, it would make sense for Ammon to maintain a good relationship with Israel. Why screw up a good thing?
16. If you plan to commit violence, then you need to consider what you are doing first. You must be motivated by thought and not by emotion; you must know the facts and you need imagination to understand what could happen as a result. You need to think with divine viewpoint if you are a believer; and you need to function within the laws of divine establishment if you are an unbeliever. King Hanun needed one advisor to tell him, “Look, David is powerful; he is decisive. The decision of humiliating his ambassadors could result in the destruction of our capitol city, Rabbah. Do we want to take that chance?”
17. It is nearly impossible to back away from an impulsive act motivated by arrogance. When you want to push or push back, think about where this can lead and be willing to accept the consequences of your actions.

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Our passage reads: [When David heard, he dispatched Joab and the whole army—the elite force \[lit., the mighty ones\]](#). Now, you may think that this is overreacting. You may think that Israel needs to have a more humble response, or, at the very least, an equivalent response.

Why Not a More Measured Response to Ammon?

1. In this time of political correctness and diplomacy, we look at David’s response here, and ask ourselves, *why not a more measured response to Hanun? Why an all-out war against Ammon?*
2. Previously, David was allied with Ammon, as he was with Moab.
3. It is possible that Israel received some tribute from either or both of these nations.
4. When Hanun ben Nahash humiliates David’s messengers, that is equivalent to declaring war upon Israel.
5. The state department Ammon was fully aware of this and, therefore, they contracted mercenaries from Aram to assist them.

Why Not a More Measured Response to Ammon?

6. David is not burning bridges here or overreacting.
7. We know this by 2Sam. 17:27–29. David has been forced out of Jerusalem by Absalom so he and those who are loyal to him are now east of the Jordan in a forced march. Now, keeping in mind that this is not but a few years later, 2Sam. 17:27–29 reads: **When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim, brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."**
8. At least this son of Nahash understood David's relationship to his father and, despite David's full-on attack in this chapter and the next against Rabbah, Shobi ben Nahash comes to provide David's people with food, water and necessities.
9. Most enemies respect strength and power; they do not respect diplomacy.
10. We have had a recent example of this: Israel, on September 6, 2007, made a surprise attack on Syria's al-Kibar nuclear facility. It was believed that this was a nuclear facility which was related to North Korea. As a result, Syria and North Korea are not making deals and exchanging information on the building of nuclear plants. We have been in negotiations with Iran for the past half decade or so, without any good results. Iran continues to build several nuclear sites. My point being, David's response to Hanun is reasonable, and not just for his time. David took the measure of this man and acted appropriately.
11. David and his people and his army are nearly helpless here in the Transjordanian desert. Ammon could have mounted up a revenge attack. However, David, both because of his relationship to Nahash and his tough-as-nails response to Hanun's disrespect, has the respect of Shobi, another of Nahash's sons.

As we ought to expect, the Word of God has application which continues even into our time.

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Now that we know a little about the principles of warfare (see the **Doctrine of the Military** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)), let's anticipate Joab's strategy.

Joab Applies the Principles of Warfare

1. In front of Joab is the Ammonite army, which is taking a defensive position outside of the gates of Rabbah.
2. Behind him, probably hidden in thick forested areas (remember, this is in a valley, where there is a river running through it) is the Aramæan army, with their horses and chariots.
3. Around the city of Rabbah, the land has probably been cleared, so that enemies cannot hide right outside of the gates. Joab and his army find themselves in this clearing, squeezed between the Ammonite army at the gates of Rabbah and the Syrian mercenaries positioned out in the thick forested wilderness.
4. The idea is, the Aramæan army will close in on Joab from behind.
5. Joab, amazingly, will go on the offensive. Offensive action is the only means by which a victory can be achieved.
6. Joab will employ the principle of mass perfectly. He is outnumbered and find himself and his

Joab Applies the Principles of Warfare

- army in a bad position, strategically speaking.
7. Joab's immediate response will involve economy of force, which is the means by which mass is employed in the main effort. Joab will turn around and attack the Assyrian army at their weakest point.
 8. Joab instantly determines the time and place of his attack, and, when this is done correctly, men and weaponry are conserved. Joab, by concentrating his army at a point of weakness of the enemy, will reduce casualties and attain a great victory.
 9. Joab utilized the principle of movement, which is the maneuvering of combat elements. He moved his forces where there were no Syrians—where there were holes in the Syrian line—thus causing confusion in the Syrian ranks.
 10. In Joab's offensive, he brings mass into contact with the Syrians to assure victory, even though he is outnumbered. Movement is to determine the best place to attack the Syrian mercenaries. Joab deploys his elite force—his shock troops—at the weakest point in the Assyrian line. All of this involved excellent training, excellent discipline, and great respect for authority. Without these things, Joab's army would have fallen apart,

To understand all of this, it is best to visualize the battlefield and the position of the Ammonites, the Jews and the Aramaeans. There is the walled city of Rabbah which is built over or next to a river. The Ammonite army is in the city, on the walls, and in front. They are the bait. Around the city, most of the area would be cleared so that no army could sneak up on the city or have easy cover close to the city. Joab's army would be in this mostly open area. Further out, in the thick forested wilderness would be the Aramaean mercenaries with their horses and chariots. They have to be in an area which gives them cover.

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There are times when you stand back and watch the deliverance of the Lord; and there are times when you act. Doctrine in the soul tells you when you do which one of these.

Joab's Thinking and Strategy

1. Joab immediately makes a quick and accurate appraisal of the situation in which he finds himself.
2. For a general to make good decisions, he needs accurate information. In front of him is the city of Rabbah defended by Ammonite soldiers. Joab recognizes that this was the bait to move him into position.
3. Behind him, and hidden, are Aramaean mercenaries. Although Joab did not see this at first, it is now apparent to him that this is an army with horses and chariots. He may or may not know that these are Syrian soldiers (although this may be obvious to him simply because of the horses and chariots).
4. Joab recognizes that he has stepped into a trap.
5. When you make a mistake, you still have to move forward. You cannot dwell on this mistake. Joab does not have the time to think about, *what if I did this?* He has to act immediately.
6. Joab recognizes that the Ammonites are bait and are not going to advance (for the most part). He notes that he and his army are standing out in an open area, which, if attacked by an army on horseback and in chariots, places them at a distinct disadvantage.
7. Joab has to act quickly. Once the Aramaean army steps out into the open area with their horses and chariots, it is all over for Joab. At best, he can retreat, under that scenario.
8. It is clear that Joab and his army are outnumbered; the Aramaeans have superior means, and, once the battle begins, the enemy will have Joab's army in a precarious tactical situation.

Joab's Thinking and Strategy

9. Joab will use the principle of surprise. He will attack the Syrians to his rear.
10. The Syrians expect Joab to freeze in fear, or, perhaps attack the Ammonite forces, as they are the weakest link in this chain. However, this would do nothing but trap Joab's army between the walls of Rabbah and the Syrians.
11. As long as Joab's army is more or less in the open, an attack by an opposing army on horseback and in chariots will destroy them.
12. Therefore, Joab will do that which is gutsy and unexpected: Joab will attack the strongest army behind him with his elite troops; and he uses his new troops as his screening force, to keep the weak army at bay.
13. Joab has the advantage of great discipline in his army as well as fighting on interior lines.
14. Joab will instantly formulate a battle plan by which he can concentrate his forces quickly so that he uses offensive action, mass and surprise.

The Bible has enough information in it, by direct statements and inference, of exactly what is happening, and why Joab is able to be successful against the Aramæan troops.

From **2Samuel 10** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

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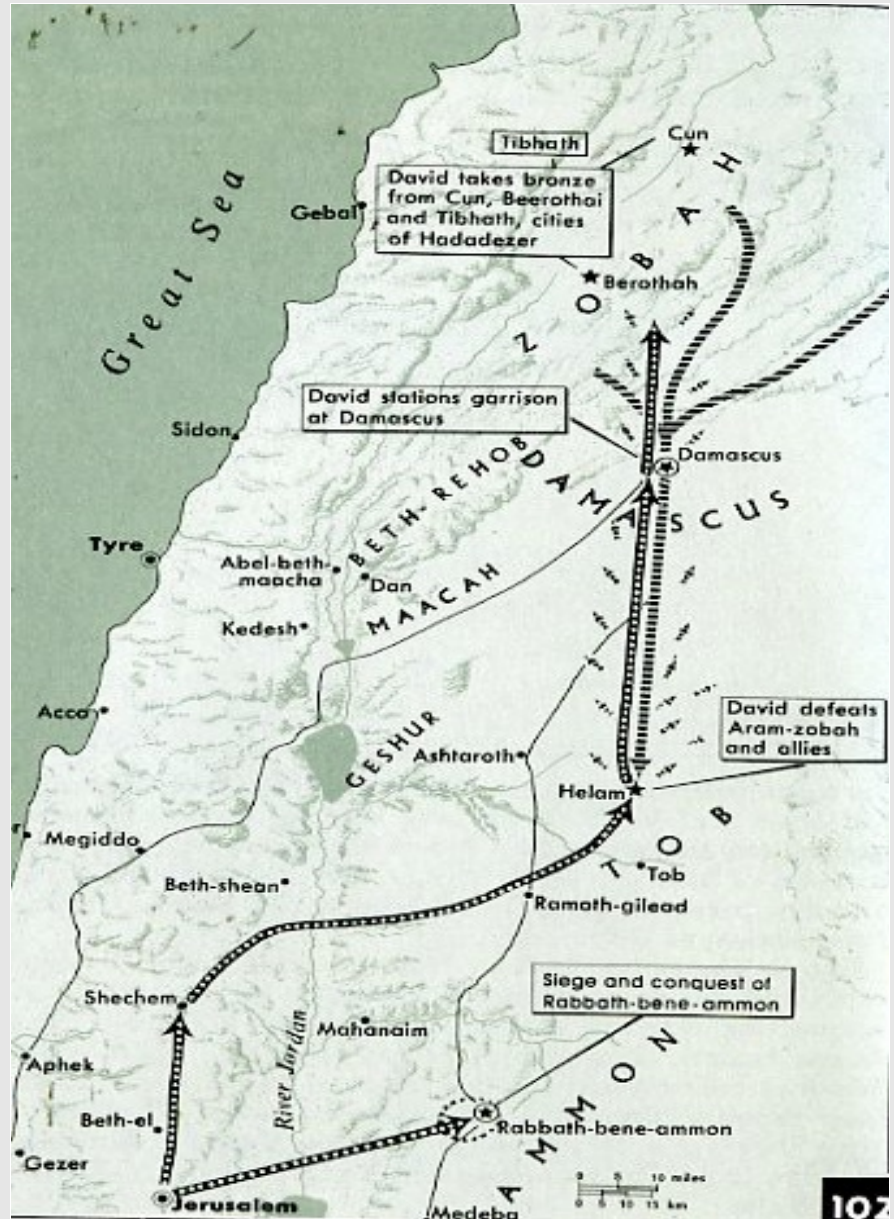
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A Map of Israel's Battles with Ammon and Syria

This map will give you a much better idea as to the movement of these various armies.

At the bottom of the page, you see the locations of Jerusalem and Rabbath. Joab was squeezed between the armies of Ammon and Aram at the entrance to the city of Rabbath-bene-Ammon (Rabbah). He returns to Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, the Aramæan army, after retreating and getting out of Ammon, go back to Aram, and a larger army is gathered, and they come to Helam (found roughly in the middle of this map).



Taken from *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*; 3rd Edition; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai; MacMillan; ©1993 by Carta; p. 78. Although this particular Atlas is short on color, it covers almost every incident in the Bible which involves going from point A to point B.

From [2Samuel 10 \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)).

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First thing is, I would like to go back to Josephus and see his account of these conflicts, in part because he is going to have both tradition, the ancient Scriptures, and probably other historical documents upon which he bases this record:

Josephus on Israel's Wars with Aram

From Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VII, chapter 5 (which parallels 2Sam. 8):

1. A LITTLE while after this, he [David] considered that he ought to make war against the Philistines, and not to see any idleness or laziness permitted in his management, that so it might prove, as God had foretold to him, that when he had overthrown his enemies, he should leave his posterity to reign in peace afterward: so he called together his army again, and when he had charged them to be ready and prepared for war, and when he thought that all things in his army were in a good state, he removed from Jerusalem, and came against the Philistines; and when he had overcome them in battle, and had cut off a great part of their country, and adjoined it to the country of the Hebrews, he transferred the war to the Moabites; and when he had overcome two parts of their army in battle, he took the remaining part captive, and imposed tribute upon them, to be paid annually. He then made war against Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Sophene [*Whether Syria Zobah, 2Samuel 3:8; 1Chronicles 18:3-8, be Sophene, as Josephus here supposes; which yet Ptolemy places beyond Euphrates, as Dr. Hudson observes here, whereas Zobah was on this side; or whether Josephus was not here guilty of a mistake in his geography; I cannot certainly determine.*]; and when he had joined battle with him at 'the river Euphrates, he destroyed twenty thousand of his footmen, and about seven thousand of his horsemen. He also took a thousand of his chariots, and destroyed the greatest part of them, and ordered that no more than one hundred should be kept [*David's reserving only one hundred chariots for himself out of one thousand he had taken from Hadadezer, was most probably in compliance with the law of Moses, which forbade a king of Israel "to multiply horses to himself," Deuteronomy 17:16; one of the principal uses of horses in Judea at that time being for drawing their chariots. See Joshua 12:6; and Antiq. B. V. ch. 1. sect. 18. It deserves here to be remarked, that this Hadad, being a very great king, was conquered by David, whose posterity yet for several generations were called Benhadad, or the son of Hadad, till the days of Hazael, whose son Adar or Ader is also in our Hebrew copy (2 Kings 13:24) written Benhadad, but in Josephus Adad or Adar. And strange it is, that the son of Hazael, said to be such in the same text, and in Josephus, Antiq. B. IX. ch. 8. sect. 7, should still be called the son of Hadad. I would, therefore, here correct our Hebrew copy from Josephus's, which seems to have the true reading. nor does the testimony of Nicolaus of Damascus, produced in this place by Josephus, seem to be faultless, when it says that he was the third of the Hadads, or second of the Benhadads, who besieged Samaria in the days of Ahab. He must rather have been the seventh or eighth, if there were ten in all of that name, as we are assured there were. For this testimony makes all the Hadads or Benhadads of the same line, and to have immediately succeeded one another; whereas Hazael was not of that line, nor is he called Hadad or Benhadad in any copy. And note, that from this Hadad, in the days of David, to the beginning of Hazael, were near two hundred years, according to the most exact chronology of Josephus.*].

2. Now when Hadad, king of Damascus and of Syria, heard that David fought against Hadadezer, who was his friend, he came to his assistance with a powerful army, in hopes to rescue him; and when he had joined battle with David at the river Euphrates, he failed of his purpose, and lost in the battle a great number of his soldiers; for there were slain of the army of Hadad twenty thousand, and all the rest fled. Nicelens also [of Damascus] makes mention of this king in the fourth book of his histories; where he speaks thus: "A great while after these things had happened, there was one of that country whose name was Hadad, who was become very potent; he reigned over Damascus, and, the other parts of Syria, excepting Phoenicia. He made war against David, the king of Judea, and tried his fortune in many battles, and particularly in the last battle at Euphrates, wherein he was beaten. He seemed to have been the most excellent of all their kings in strength and manhood," Nay, besides this, he says of his posterity, that "they succeeded one another in his kingdom, and in his name;" where he thus speaks: "When Hadad was dead, his posterity reigned for ten generations, each of his successors receiving from his father that his dominion, and this his name; as did the Ptolemies in Egypt. But the third was the most powerful of them all, and was willing to avenge the defeat his forefather had received; so he made an expedition against the Jews, and laid waste the city which is now called Samaria." Nor did he err from the truth; for this is that Hadad who made the expedition against Samaria, in the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, concerning whom we shall speak in due place hereafter.

3. Now when David had made an expedition against Damascus, and the other parts of Syria, and had brought it all into subjection, and had placed garrisons in the country, and appointed that they should pay tribute, he returned home. He also dedicated to God at Jerusalem the golden quivers, the entire armor which the guards

Josephus on Israel's Wars with Aram

of Hadad used to wear; which Shishak, the king of Egypt, took away when he fought with David's grandson, Rehoboam, with a great deal of other wealth which he carried out of Jerusalem. However, these things will come to be explained in their proper places hereafter. Now as for the king of the Hebrews, he was assisted by God, who gave him great success in his wars, and he made all expedition against the best cities of Hadadezer, Betah and Machen; so he took them by force, and laid them waste. Therein was found a very great quantity of gold and silver, besides that sort of brass which is said to be more valuable than gold; of which brass Solomon made that large vessel which was called The [Brazen] Sea, and those most curious lavers, when he built the temple for God.

I include this next paragraph to show that Josephus does not have the same takeaway from these historical events as I do. I see the King of Hamath not as a frightened opportunist but as one who was able to see what the right side of history is, and chose to be on that side. The Bible does not delve into his personal motivation.

4. But when the king of Hamath was informed of the ill success of Hadadezer, and had heard of the ruin of his army, he was afraid on his own account, and resolved to make a league of friendship and fidelity with David before he should come against him; so he sent to him his son Joram, and professed that he owed him thanks for fighting against Hadadezer, who was his enemy, and made a league with him of mutual assistance and friendship. He also sent him presents, vessels of ancient workmanship, both of gold, of silver, and of brass. So when David had made this league of mutual assistance with Toi, (for that was the name of the king of Hamath,) and had received the presents he sent him, he dismissed his son with that respect which was due on both sides; but then David brought those presents that were sent by him, as also the rest of the gold and silver which he had taken of the cities whom he had conquered, and dedicated them to God. Nor did God give victory and success to him only when he went to the battle himself, and led his own army, but he gave victory to Abishai, the brother of Joab, general of his forces, over the Idumeans [*By this great victory over the Idumeans or Edomites, the posterity of Esau, and by the consequent tribute paid by that nation to the Jews, were the prophecies delivered to Rebecca before Jacob and Esau were born, and by old Isaac before his death, that the elder, Esau, (or the Edomites,) should serve and the younger, Jacob, (or the Israelites,) and Jacob (or the Israelites) should be Esau's (or the Edomites') lord, remarkably fulfilled. See Antiq. B. VIII. ch 7. sect. 6; Genesis 25;9,3; and the notes on Antiq. B. I. ch. 18. sect. 5, 6.*], and by him to David, when he sent him with an army into Idumea: for Abishai destroyed eighteen thousand of them in the battle; whereupon the king [of Israel] placed garrisons through all Idumea, and received the tribute of the country, and of every head among them. Now David was in his nature just, and made his determination with regard to truth. He had for the general of his whole army Joab; and he made Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, recorder. He also appointed Zadok, of the family of Phinehas, to be high priest, together with Abiathar, for he was his friend. He also made Seisan the scribe, and committed the command over the guards of his body to Benaiah; the son of Jehoiada. His elder sons were near his body, and had the care of it also.

From Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VII, chapter 6 (which parallels 2Sam. 10):

1. This were the honors that such as were left of Saul's and Jonathan's lineage received from David. About this time died Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, who was a friend of David's; and when his son had succeeded his father in the kingdom, David sent ambassadors to him to comfort him; and exhorted him to take his father's death patiently, and to expect that he would continue the same kindness to himself which he had shown to his father. But the princes of the Ammonites took this message in evil part, and not as David's kind dispositions gave reason to take it; and they excited the king to resent it; and said that David had sent men to spy out the country, and what strength it had, under the pretense of humanity and kindness. They further advised him to have a care, and not to give heed to David's words, lest he should be deluded by him, and so fall into an inconsolable calamity. Accordingly Nahash's [son], the king of the Ammonites, thought these princes spake what was more probable than the truth would admit, and so abused the ambassadors after a very harsh manner; for he shaved the one half of their beards, and cut off one half of their garments, and sent his answer, not in words, but in deeds. When the king of Israel saw this, he had indignation at it, and showed openly that he would not overlook this injurious and contumelious treatment, but would make war with the Ammonites, and would avenge this wicked treatment of his ambassadors on their king. So that king's intimate friends and commanders, understanding that they had violated their league, and were liable to be punished for the same,

Josephus on Israel's Wars with Aram

made preparations for war; they also sent a thousand talents to the Syrian king of Mesopotamia, and endeavored to prevail with him to assist them for that pay, and Shobach. Now these kings had twenty thousand footmen. They also hired the king of the country called Maacah, and a fourth king, by name Ishtob; which last had twelve thousand armed men.

2. But David was under no consternation at this confederacy, nor at the forces of the Ammonites; and putting his trust in God, because he was going to war in a just cause, on account of the injurious treatment he had met with, he immediately sent Joab, the captain of his host, against them, and gave him the flower of his army, who pitched his camp by Rabbah, the metropolis of the Ammonites; whereupon the enemy came out, and set themselves in array, not all of them together, but in two bodies; for the auxiliaries were set in array in the plain by themselves, but the army of the Ammonites at the gates over against the Hebrews. When Joab saw this, he opposed one stratagem against another, and chose out the most hardy part of his men, and set them in opposition to the king of Syria, and the kings that were with him, and gave the other part to his brother Abishai, and bid him set them in opposition to the Ammonites; and said to him, that in case he should see that the Syrians distressed him, and were too hard for him, he should order his troops to turn about and assist him; and he said that he himself would do the same to him, if he saw him in the like distress from the Ammonites. So he sent his brother before, and encouraged him to do every thing courageously and with alacrity, which would teach them to be afraid of disgrace, and to fight manfully; and so he dismissed him to fight with the Ammonites, while he fell upon the Syrians. And though they made a strong opposition for a while, Joab slew many of them, but compelled the rest to betake themselves to flight; which, when the Ammonites saw, and were withal afraid of Abishai and his army, they staid no longer, but imitated their auxiliaries, and fled to the city. So Joab, when he had thus overcome the enemy, returned with great joy to Jerusalem to the king.

3. This defeat did not still induce the Ammonites to be quiet, nor to own those that were superior to them to be so, and be still, but they sent to Chalaman, the king of the Syrians, beyond Euphrates, and hired him for an auxiliary. He had Shobach for the captain of his host, with eighty thousand footmen, and ten thousand horsemen. Now when the king of the Hebrews understood that the Ammonites had again gathered so great an army together, he determined to make war with them no longer by his generals, but he passed over the river Jordan himself with all his army; and when he met them he joined battle with them, and overcame them, and slew forty thousand of their footmen, and seven thousand of their horsemen. He also wounded Shobach, the general of Chalaman's forces, who died of that stroke; but the people of Mesopotamia, upon such a conclusion of the battle, delivered themselves up to David, and sent him presents, who at winter time returned to Jerusalem. But at the beginning of the spring he sent Joab, the captain of his host, to fight against the Ammonites, who overran all their country, and laid it waste, and shut them up in their metropolis Rabbah, and besieged them therein.

Obviously, Josephus treats these as different battles occurring at different times.

These quotations are from <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/index.htm> translated by William Whist on 1737. I am assuming that the footnotes, inserted here in italicized brackets, are from Whist's hand. I have also inserted a few notes in brackets, just to clear up the text when I thought necessary. I have also updated the text slightly, taking words like *exactest* and replacing them with *most exact*; etc.

From **2Samuel 10** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

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Some have tried to combine these 2 accounts into one war, but there is no way that they are. The motivation leading up to the wars are different, the details of the wars are different—including the number killed, and the final results are somewhat different.

A Summary of David's Wars with Aram

Summary Points

Sources

The First War Between David and the Aramaeans

1. David first goes to war against Hadadezer the King of Zobah (and further out to Hamath) when Hadadezer went to expand his kingdom eastward all the way to the Euphrates.
2. David captures or kills 7000 horsemen and 20,000 infantrymen. He also takes 1000 of his chariots, from which he only saves 100.
3. Hadad of Damascus sends troops to help Hadadezer and David kills 22,000 of them.
4. David establishes garrisons in Damascus and the Syrians (Aramaean) bring him tribute.
5. David also carries away shields of gold which were carried by Aramaean soldiers back to Jerusalem. These would be later used by Solomon for the building of the Temple.
6. Toi, king of Hamath, an enemy of Hadadezer, sends his son along with a great deal of tribute to David in appreciation and to form an alliance with David.

2Sam. 8:3–12
 1Chron. 18:3–11
 Josephus
Antiquities of the Jews, Book VII,
 chapter 5
 paragraphs 1–4

The Second War Between David and the Aramaeans

1. David's second recorded war against Aram begins as a war against Ammon. David has a friendship with the king of Ammon (Nahash), the details of which we know nothing. When Nahash dies, David sends a delegation to Nahash's son, who is prodded into humiliating this delegation, under the premise that these men are spies (however, they are not treated as spies would be treated).
2. When the new king of Ammon (Hanun) realizes that he has just insulted David and that he may end up in a war over this, he purchases some mercenaries from Aram.
3. Joab and Abishai are sent to Ammon to exact some justice. The Ammonites station themselves outside of the Ammonite capital of Rabbah as bait. As Joab and Abishai lead their men in close, the Aramaean mercenaries advance in a pincher movement against Joab's army. Joab quickly sets Abishai over a holding force against Ammon while he leads a mobile force against Aram.
4. Aram retreats and Abishai enters into Rabbah. Then Joab returns to Jerusalem.
5. Hadadezer becomes concerned over this defeat, so he gathers an Aramaean army to go to war against David. They go to meet David in Helam; Shobach is the commander of this army.
6. David's army again defeats the Syrians, killing 7000 charioteers and 40,000 horsemen, as well as Shobach himself. The Syrians retreat. Hadadezer makes peace with David and the Aramaeans serve Israel (this would mean that the Aramaeans pay tribute to Israel). The Syrians decide no to help Ammon anymore.
7. It should be obvious that these conflicts are quite different.

2Sam. 10:1–19
 1Chron. 19:1–19

Quite obviously, these are the recorded wars between David and Aram. There certainly may have been more.

From **2Samuel 10** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

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What follows are the recorded wars that King David engaged in.

The Wars of King David

Enemy	Scripture/Commentary
Ish-bosheth	Ish-bosheth was a son of Saul who began to rule in [northern] Israel while David was king in Judah (southern Israel). 2Sam. 2–4
Jebusites	David took Jerusalem, a city held for many years by the Jebusites. 2Sam. 5:6–9
Philistines	There were two wars with the Philistines which took place in the valley of Rephaim. 2Sam. 5:17–25
Philistines	It is unclear whether the additional mention of the Philistines in 2Sam. 8:1 is a third war with them. That appears to be the case, and he takes from them their capitol city.
Moabites	David, who once clearly had a good relationship with the Moabites, killed two-thirds of their soldiers. The Moabites bring David tribute. 2Sam. 8:2
Aramaeans (Hadadezer)	There appears to be missing information at this point. Hadadezer goes to restore his power at the Euphrates River, but why David chose to get involved at this time is unknown. David soundly defeats several groups of Syrians and they pay him tribute. 2Sam. 8:3–8
Ammon, Amalek	No war is specifically mentioned in 2Sam. 1–8, but both of these countries send David tribute. It is normal and reasonable in the ancient world for these countries to pay tribute without being defeated in battle. 2Sam. 8:12
Edomites	David defeats the Edomites and they bring him tribute. 2Sam. 8:13–14 (there is an error in the Hebrew of Samuel text in v. 13; <i>Aram</i> ought to read <i>Edom</i> instead)
Ammonites	When there is a power change in Ammon, the Ammonites turn against David. Although they are beaten in battle, General Joab does not complete his victory until later. 2Sam. 10:1–14 11:1
Aramaeans	General Joab leads David's army first against a coalition of Ammon and Aram, and then David gathers up a citizen army and goes to war against Aram in eastern Israel. 2Sam. 10:6–19

This war between David, Ammon and Aram is probably the most detailed war that God the Holy Spirit recorded that David has been involved in.

From **2Samuel 10** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)).

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Just in case you forgot the details of the conflict that Israel had with Ammon and Aram, let me fill you in:

A Recap of Israel's War Against the Ammonites and the Aramæan Mercenaries

In the previous year, at the beginning of 2Sam. 10, the Ammonite king died, and he was a king with whom David had a good relationship. They were allies. David dispatched an emissary of men to convey his sympathy to Hanun, this man's son (and new king). Hanun treated these sympathizers with contempt, leaving David no choice but to attack Ammon.

A Recap of Israel's War Against the Ammonites and the Aramæan Mercenaries

Ammon, therefore, went to Syria (Aram) for help and paid for their mercenary army. So they joined forces and developed a fool-proof plan in order to defeat Israel's army. Now, this was not all the Syrian army, but a mercenary force. Here was the plan (and bear in mind, there are two independent armies): when Joab came through the valley to Rabbah, the capital city of Ammon, the Ammonite army would be poised right outside of the city wall, and they would put up a moderate fight, which would draw Joab's troops in toward the wall of Rabbah. Meanwhile, off hidden in the trees and the bushes, was the mercenary force of Ammon, hidden there with their horses and their chariots. As soon as Israel was drawn into the wall, the very mobile army of Aram would close in behind them, as a trap.

This was an excellent plan except for Joab's quick thinking. He did exactly what the Syrian forces did not expect or plan for: he attacked them! He turned his forces around, keeping a holding force on the Ammonites, and charged the Aramaic army. Now, they expect Joab's army to dig in, and they would come at them from all directions in their chariots and on their horses, and they would easily kill most of Joab's army. But, before they could get their army out from where they were hidden, Joab attacks. Now, in an open field, with an stationary opposing force, horses and chariots are marvelous. They have speed and great mobility, and can come at a stationary force in seemingly from all directions and easily overpower them. However, when caught up in the brush, and foliage and trees, which hid them, they could not maneuver. Joab struck them before they could get out into the open, and Joab soundly defeated the Aramæans, sending a few soldiers retreating, and killing most of them. Joab was brilliant and flexible. The Aramæan army was inflexible. They had a plan, that plan involved attacking Israel's troops when out in an open field, and when Israel attacked them before they could mount up and move out, they were too inflexible and too surprised to response effectively. So Joab's assaulting force destroyed the Aramæan mercenaries, eventually sending them running (they were able to use their horses and chariots to escape, and some, of course, just ran on foot). Meanwhile, the holding force under Abishai, just held the Ammonites at bay at the wall.

Now, there are Ammonites soldiers and Aramæan mercenaries. They had no close ties, apart from their mutual hatred for the Jews. So, when Ammon saw what was going on, they did not suddenly charge out from the wall, to save their comrades. They were somewhat frozen there, amazed the Joab turned the tables on Aram, and was beating them now. Had Ammon aggressively moved out from the city walls, they may have turned this war around, but they did not. Therefore, after Aram retreated, the men of Ammon did the same, going back behind the walls of their great city, expecting Israel to attack mercilessly. Except, Israel did not.

Joab was a brilliant soldier, and he understood what he had just done. He defeated an Aramæan mercenary force, and that was the bread and butter of the Aramæan empire. Their mercenary army was their great export to the world. This filled the nation's coffers with gold and silver. Aram cannot let that stand. Who is going to hire them if this little upstart nation Israel defeated them and another army both? Aram is a great empire at this time; one of the greatest in ancient history. They cannot let this stand, and Joab knows that. He cannot spend the next few months besieging the city of Rabbah; he has to deal with Aram, and they have to go big. So David and Joab meet, they gather all of Israel, all of their reserve forces, and go out and defeat Aram, which is one of the greatest battles in ancient history, as well as one of the most important. We see a few verses describing this battle in 2Sam. 10, but this changed the course of history, and virtually stopped the advance of the great empire of Aram in its tracks.

That was then; that was last year. This is the new year and Ammon is still there—the people huddled behind the walls of Rabbah and dying a thousand deaths, expecting the siege by Israeli forces to begin at any time. So, now it is perhaps 6 or 8 months later, since the Ammonites retreated behind the walls of Rabbah, and Joab takes a fairly large force against them, to take them out, to destroy them.

This is a recap of the events of [2Sam. 10 \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)).

From [2Samuel 11 \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)).

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War does not mean that anything goes. At war, men need to exercise the greatest caution to be moral.

Military Ethics, David and Joab

1. David's abject callousness and disregard for his own soldiers is clear.
2. David has placed his own sexual desires above the very men who protect his country. In this regard, David has no integrity and no sense of honor.
3. These leads us to the problem of integrity versus loyalty. Joab is abusing his own authority by being loyal to David. There is a conflict here, for Joab, between loyalty and integrity. He fails that test.
4. David's sexual arrogance has now led him to criminal arrogance. He first fell into manipulative arrogance, which did not get him what he wanted, so how he falls into criminal arrogance. This is the interlocking quality of these gates. David, under almost all conditions, would never think to commit a crime; this is murder that he will commit. However, being in interlocking systems of arrogance has led him to this point.
5. Having great authority opens a person up to all kinds of sins which are not available to others.
 - 1) Charlie Brown could not have ordered Bathsheba to be delivered to his palace; nor could Charlie Brown have been able to take her sexually.
 - 2) As commander-in-chief, David is able to order Joab to have Uriah killed in battle, another temptation not open to many of us. How many of us, if we could simply order someone killed, might fall into criminal arrogance? Hell, I can think of a few people right now. ☺
6. When R. B. Thieme, Jr. was teaching the David series, he spoke of the lack of a true military ethic in the United States army today. Many men advance today based upon the concept of zero defects; based upon the idea of making safe decisions. Military leadership should not based upon good statistics. As a result, some have exaggerated the good statistics (enemies killed) and downplayed the bad ones (civilian deaths). Sometimes leadership involves making difficult decisions, whether they are good ones or not. Such decisions may or may not have good results.
7. Military virtue ought to consist of trust, honor, impartiality, humility, commitment to the mission, ethical absolutism, and freedom from pride and arrogance. Such things require true leadership. Some people are trained to develop these traits, but parents and schools alike are no longer doing this. Now, we have many young people who are filled with self-esteem, which is simple a form of arrogance.
8. Military ethics is different from leadership qualities. Good leadership can instill some of the qualities in recruits.
9. Joab is faced with a complex question here: does he obey David and have Uriah killed or does he disobey his king? Essentially, David was trying to get Uriah to disobey the military honor code for situation ethics.
10. Joab made the wrong decision in obeying David. and the court of heaven will judge him for it. He became accessory to the fact of murder.
11. In doing so, Joab violated his own personal integrity.
12. Even though Joab's loyalty to David is legitimate, he had no excuse here to obey David. Joab called the shots on the battlefield. When there is a difference between your honor and an order, you must follow your honor (which is why a military person must know what is and is not honorable).
 - 1) A good illustration of making such a choice came up in the war crimes trials. The thrust of most of these trials was to pursue generals who intentionally attacked civilian targets. There is the choice: are those below them to follow the order or to disobey them?
 - 2) MacArthur provides a another good example of making the right choice to obey President Truman. MacArthur was at the Yalu river with trucks and tanks; and MacArthur could have crossed the river into China and he would have solved a number of problems and saved a great many soldiers from dying in the future. Unlike Joab, there was no special bond between Truman and MacArthur. MacArthur was right and Truman was wrong. We had the threat of the greatest military weapon in mankind, the atomic bomb, and this great military advantage should have been exploited. Truman chose not to, possibly because he did not recognize how great of a problem communism was.

The book of Chronicles has but one chapter on the reign of Saul, and we next find ourselves here. Let's fill in some of the blanks:

The History of Israel, Samuel, Saul and David

1. Samuel was the prophet-priest-judge who guided Israel. The true King of Israel is Jesus Christ.
2. The idea was for Israel to go from Jesus Christ being their king to Jesus Christ being their king when He came to them.
3. However, Israel was concerned over this matter, and they wanted a king to lead them—primarily a man who would be a military leader to deliver them from their enemies. 1Sam. 8:4–6
4. During the time of the judges, Israel continually was attacked and plundered by nearby nations.
5. Therefore, Israel wanted a king and a standing army. 1Sam. 8:20
6. However, the real problem was, Israel's spiritual life. They would pursue false gods, and God would discipline them with the military might of another nation.
7. There was also the problem that Samuel tried to train up his own sons to take his place, and they were corrupt. 1Sam. 8:1–3
8. So, the problem was not that they lacked a king but that they strayed from their God.
9. God granted Israel a king, telling Samuel, **"They have not rejected you; they have rejected Me."** (1Sam. 8:7b).
10. God sent Saul to Samuel, and Samuel anointed Saul king over all Israel. Superficially, Saul seemed like a good choice and the people of Israel were quite enthusiastic about this. 1Sam. 9:1–22 10:17–24 12:1
11. Although Saul seemed to start out well (see 1Sam. 11–13), he assumed the priestly duties of Samuel, which took him outside of the plan of God, which was the first indication that Saul might not be the best man for the job. 1Sam. 13:7–14
12. Later, Saul disobeyed a direct order from God and God rejected him from being king over Israel. 1Sam. 15:1–27
13. While Saul was still king, Samuel anointed David to be king over Israel. David was such an unlikely choice, at the first, that even his own family did not recognize his potential. 1Sam. 16:1–23 17:26–30
14. David made his first public appearance when there was a standoff between the braying Philistine giant Goliath and Saul's army. Every day, Goliath would come out and taunt Israel, daring any man of Israel to fight him. If none of his men volunteered, then Saul should have fought this man, but he did not. David, a young boy at this time (maybe age 16?), met Goliath face to face and killed him. This won David a place in Saul's palace. 1Sam. 17
15. David eventually became a general in Saul's army, and, after while, King Saul became extremely jealous of David because of his success in battle. As a result, Saul began to behave psychotically when dealing with David. He attempted to kill David himself and plotted at various times for the Philistines to kill David in war. 1Sam. 18
16. During this time, David developed a close friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan. Jonathan recognized how crazy his father was getting, and he warned David to flee, so he did. 1Sam. 19–20
17. Saul became absolutely obsessed with David, spending as much time chasing David all over the country with his army as he did defending Israel from its true enemies. David also succumbed to spiritual weakness, and, at some point, found himself marching with the Philistines against Israel. God intervened, removed David from this situation; but the Philistines defeated Saul and his sons in battle. Saul and his sons were killed in this battle. 1Sam. 21–31 1Chron. 10:1–10
18. Saul's first act of greatness was to deliver the people of Jabesh-Gilead from the vicious Ammonites. Men from Jabesh-Gilead, out of respect for who Saul was, rescued his body from the Philistines and gave him a proper burial. 1Sam. 11:1–13 1Chron. 10:11–13
19. Saul's defeat in battle was simultaneous to David's defeat of the Amalekites. A man claiming to have killed Saul—at Saul's request—came to David with that story, and is executed by David's order. In this way, David found out, more or less, that Israel had been defeated by the Philistines. 2Sam. 1:1–16
20. There was also the problem of a division between Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern

The History of Israel, Samuel, Saul and David

- kingdom).
21. The Philistines tended to attack the nation of Israel right in the middle, perhaps, in part, to split this country in two.
 22. When Saul was going to rescue the people of Jabesh-Gilead, he gathered up troops from the north and the south: 300,000 from Israel and only 30,000 from Judah (1Sam. 11:8). The fact that these are listed separately and Judah is offering such a small number of troops, comparatively speaking, suggests that there was a fissure between these two sections early on.
 23. Much of the first few chapters of 2Samuel deal with David first ruling over only Judah and later ruling over Israel as well.
 24. Anytime there is a change of dynasty (and often when there is simply a change of kings within the same dynasty), there is a certain amount of political turmoil and intrigue. This describes the first few chapters of 2Samuel. David becomes king over Judah and Ishbosheth, one of Saul's sons, becomes king over Israel, supported by Abner, Saul's general. 2Sam. 2:1–11
 25. Rather than let things be, Abner met Joab (David's general) in Gibeon, and they fight. Joab's army begins to defeat Abner, so Abner and his army retreat. Asahel, Joab's brother, runs in hot pursuit of Abner, and Abner kills him, forever increasing the tensions between Joab and Abner. 2Sam. 2
 26. Ishbosheth and Abner have a falling out, and Abner defects to David. 2Sam. 3:6–21
 27. Joab (and his other brother, Abishai) seized this opportunity to kill Abner, to avenge his brother. 2Sam. 3:22–30
 28. 2 trusted generals in Ishbosheth's army plot to kill him, and bring his head to David, hoping to be rewarded. David has them executed. 2Sam. 4
 29. This takes us to the events of 1Chron. 11 (and 2Sam. 5).

Keil and Delitzsch give us a similar summation of events: *After Saul's death, in obedience to a divine intimation, David left Ziklag, whither he had withdrawn himself before the decisive battle between the Philistines and the Israelites, and betook himself with his wives and his warriors to Hebron, and was there anointed by the men of Judah to be king over their tribe (2Sam. 2:1–4). But Abner, the captain of Saul's host, led Ishbosheth, Saul's son, with the remainder of the defeated army of the Israelites, to Mahanaim in Gilead, and there made him king over Gilead, and gradually also, as he reconquered it from the Philistines, over the land of Israel, over Jezreel, Ephraim, Benjamin, and all (the remainder of) Israel, with the exception of the tribal domain of Judah. Ishbosheth's kingship did not last longer than two years, while David reigned over Judah in Hebron for seven years and a half (2Sam. 2:10–11). When Abner advanced with Ishbosheth's army from Mahanaim against Gibeon, he was defeated by Joab, David's captain, so that he was obliged again to withdraw beyond Jordan (2 Sam 2:12–32); and although the struggle between the house of Saul and the house of David still continued, yet the house of Saul waxed ever weaker, while David's power increased. At length, when Ishbosheth reproached the powerful Abner because of a concubine of his father's, he threatened that he would transfer the crown of Israel to David, and carried his threat into execution without delay. He imparted his design to the elders of Israel and Benjamin; and when they had given their consent, he made his way to Hebron, and announced to David the submission of all Israel to his sway (2 Sam 3:1–21). Abner, indeed, did not fully carry out the undertaking; for on his return journey he was assassinated by Joab, without David's knowledge, and against his will. Immediately afterwards, Ishbosheth, who had become powerless and spiritless through terror at Abner's death, was murdered in his own house by two of the leaders of his army. There now remained of Saul's family only Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (2Sam. 4:1–12), then not more than twelve years old, and lame in both his feet, and all the tribes of Israel determined to anoint David to be their king. The carrying out of this resolution is narrated in 1Chron. 11:1–3, in complete agreement as to the facts with 2Sam. 5:1–3, where the matter has been already commented upon.*¹

Because Chronicles is so short on details, this helps to integrate us into the historical context of 1Chron. 11.

¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Chron. 11:1–3.

The text is somewhat different in the parallel passages, giving rise to questions as to just exactly *what did Israel do?* Let's compare the two passages:

David's Tactics in the Second Philistine War		
	2Sam. 5:23	1Chron. 14:14
Literal text:	And so asks David in Y ^e howah. And so He says, "You will not go up; circle around unto their behind and you have come to them from opposite balsam trees.	And so asks again David in Elohim. And so says to him the Elohim, "You will not go up after them; circle around from upon them and you have come to them from opposite the balsam trees.
Nearly literal text:	David therefore inquired of Y ^e howah. And He said, "You will not go up [against them]; circle around behind them and come up [lit., <i>you have come up</i>] from the front of [or, possibly, <i>opposite</i>] the weeping willow trees.	David again inquired of Elohim and Elohim said to him, "You will not go up behind them; circle around from beside them and come up [lit., <i>you have come up</i>] to them from the front of [or, possibly, <i>opposite</i>] the weeping willow trees.
Before the attack	The Israelites are to circle around behind the Philistines.	The Israelites are to circle around from beside the Philistines (possibly, next to the Philistines).
P o s s i b l e explanation	Obviously, one option is always, faulty text, and there are reasons throughout which indicate that the text of Samuel is problematic. However, it is possible that David and his men <i>begin</i> behind the Philistines and circle around them, along side of them, surreptitiously.	
The actual attack:	In any case, the texts agree exactly when it comes to David's attack. Neither text says that David attacks the Philistines from behind; both texts indicate that David attacked the Philistines opposite the weeping willow trees.	

There are two problems: (1) Some of the prepositions are somewhat confusing and their meaning or use here is not altogether clear. (2) Although Samuel seems to have the Israeli army circling behind the Philistines and the Chronicles text has them circling around to their side, it is possible that both texts are correct; it is possible that David was poised to strike them from behind, God said no, and then David takes his men from behind the Philistines and circles around to their side.