

# Israel's Victory Over The Ammonites

2 Samuel 10

## Lesson Outline

### I. David's Kindness Thwarted: 2 Samuel 10:1-5

A. David's Servants Sent: 2 Samuel 10:1-2

B. David's Servant Mistreated: 2 Samuel 10:3-5

### II. David's Kingdom Threatened: 2 Samuel 10:6-19

A. Defeat of the Ammonites: 2 Samuel 10:6-14

B. Defeat of the Syrians: 2 Samuel 10:15-19

## David's Kindness Thwarted

2 Samuel 10:1-5

### David's Servants Sent: 2 Samuel 10:1-2

#### David Received Tidings Concerning Nahash

Nahash, the King of Ammon, died and his son Hanun assumed the throne, which was protocol amongst ancient eastern kingdoms. Apparently it was a natural death since nothing is said concerning warfare or a tragedy.

Death is a serious matter and something each must deal with (Hebrews 9:27). The death of a friend or loved one often produces several reactions.

1. *People are saddened* – due to the loss of someone loved and cared for.
2. *People are humbled* – due to reflecting upon their own mortality.
3. *People are considerate* – due to the fact that all can relate in some way.

#### David Remembered Nahash

Upon hearing of Nahash's death, David determined to encourage Hanun because of the kindness of his father. Nahash was likely the same Ammonite king that previously threatened the men of Jabeshgilead with physical harm and oppression (1 Samuel 11:1-11). Apparently the Ammonite king was kind to David. Perhaps their relationship came about when David fled Saul's relentless pursuit.

David kindly sent servants to Hanun in order to comfort him. Ambassadors, such as the ones David dispatched, were trustworthy men qualified to represent their nation. Israel's ambassadors embarked on a peaceful mission with no intention of bringing harm to Hanun or his people. This

appears to be a genuine act of kindness on David's behalf. Unfortunately, Hanun and the Ammonites had no interest in receiving his generosity. Sadly, this reminds us of those that reject God's gift of salvation (John 3:16). God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ into a world of sin so that sinners might be saved; however, many refuse His generosity (Matthew 7:12-14).

### **David's Servants Mistreated: 2 Samuel 10:3-5**

#### **Hanun's Crafty Princes**

Upon arriving in Ammon to comfort the king, David's servants were immediately accused of being spies. Hanun's princes distrusted the ambassadors and quickly ridiculed them before the new king. The Ammonite princes believed David's servants were sent for something other than encouragement. Because of this, they accused David of being a dishonest and deceptive man seeking to take advantage of their situation. Instead of viewing David's conduct as kindness the Ammonite leaders saw it as evil treachery. These dubious men leveled three charges against the king of Israel.

1. *David wanted to search the city* – in order to find information that could be useful to him.
2. *David wanted to spy out the city* – in order to look for hidden secrets or areas where defense was weak.
3. *David wanted to overthrow the city* – in order to destroy the city and the inhabitants.

David was slandered. There was no evidence concerning any of their charges. We are reminded that there will always be evil-minded people that will assail others for no reason. It happened to David, to our Saviour Jesus Christ, and to many of His followers (Matthew 10:24-25). If it happens to you, don't be discouraged but continue in the LORD'S strength (Philippians 4:13).

#### **Hanun's Careless Decision**

Hanun thoroughly listened to his princes believing their accusations. Be careful of whom you receive advice because not all counsel is good counsel (Proverbs 12:6, 14:3). His trusted princes provided terrible instruction. Power, popularity, and position are not indications of morally correct individuals. Many that enjoy good careers and reside in large homes possess evil minds and filthy hearts. Choose to follow the advice of those that love the LORD and seek His ways (2 Timothy 2:22).

Hanun could have sent David's servants away without a making an issue, but he chose to disrespect them first. It was a foolish decision that would eventually hurt his nation.

1. *He shaved off one half of their beards* – it was a great insult to shave their beards, since the beard represented a free man's dignity and was his finest adornment.<sup>1</sup> Many would rather die than have their beards shorn.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Lange, "Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Samuel," (Michigan: Zondervan, 1951) p. 459

<sup>2</sup> John Butler, "David: The King of Israel," (Iowa: LBC Publications, 1998) p. 672

2. *He cut off their garments* – the custom was for men to wear long garments and only the priests wore breeches under their garments.<sup>3</sup> This act exposed these modest men, shaming them.

Hanun publicly humiliated David's servants. In doing so, he made them vulnerable to mocking and jesting. These good men, on a mission of encouragement, were greatly mistreated before being allowed to return to Israel. Upon hearing of the events, David directed the ambassadors to remain in Jericho until their beards grew back. It was a border city, so the men would not have to travel through the land. In Jericho they could remain in private until their humiliation was finished. David did not punish his servants, but set them aside in order to be used at a later date. It was a generous act from a kind king, not wanting his men to endure more shame. It is important to consider others and encourage them in the LORD (Hebrews 10:24-25).

## David's Kingdom Threatened

2 Samuel 10:6-19

### Defeat of the Ammonites: 2 Samuel 10:6-14

#### Ammonites Prepared For War

The Ammonites understood they stank before David because of their sinful actions (1 Chronicles 19:6). After thinking things over, they realized the offended king would not ignore the mistreatment of his ambassadors. It would have been wise to take this into account beforehand, but like many they acted without considering the consequences. Their rash behavior would lead to war. Let this be a lesson for the believer, it is best to be directed by the LORD instead of personal desires because He will never lead incorrectly (Psalm 25:4, 128:1, 145:17).

The Ammonite leaders were ready to humiliate David's servants but unprepared to fight against him, so they quickly allied with mercenaries. The proud Hanun refused to repent and chose to enlist others in his fight. Of course, the mercenaries cared not for right or wrong, they were happy to help for the money. Like hiring shepherds, mercenaries go wherever earthly treasures can be found and do whatever is required to gain those riches (John 10:12-13). Modern Christianity is plagued with hirelings who live for the world at the expense of God's people and churches. Beware, because the love of money has influenced many to make foolish decisions (1 Timothy 6:10). The Ammonites also received help from the Syrians of both Bethrehab and Zoba, along with soldiers of Maacah and Ishtob. David responded by sending Joab, his commanding general, with the army to meet the enemy. He did not sit idly by while his enemies gathered but quickly addressed the problem.

#### Ammonites Retreated

The Ammonites left the safe confines of Medeba, took their positions outside the city in front of the gate, and prepared to fight (1 Chronicles 19:7). The mercenaries took to the field and the Israelites

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<sup>3</sup> John Lange, "Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Samuel," (Michigan: Zondervan, 1951) p. 459

were surrounded. Apparently this was the strategy of Hanun and his allies. Recognizing the danger, Joab quickly addressed the situation by splitting his forces. The best men were chosen to accompany him against the Syrians while the rest would remain with Abishai and face the Ammonites. Perhaps he recognized the Syrians as better fighters or he saw they had more men. If either group was threatened with defeat the other would turn back to help. Joab did not expect the worst but wisely prepared for it (Proverbs 24:27; Luke 14:28-33).

1. *Joab encouraged Abishai to remain strong* – he was to be an example of courage to his men who would follow him into battle (1 Corinthians 15:58). This was to be done for the sake of God's cities. It takes courage to serve the LORD and fight His battles.
2. *Joab encouraged Abishai in the LORD* – he trusted in the LORD to do that which was good (Romans 8:28). Joab did what was possible and placed his faith in the LORD for the impossible.

Joab led his men into battle against the Syrians and the enemy fled. When the Ammonites saw the Syrians leaving the battlefield, they retreated to their city and the fight was finished. Joab returned to Jerusalem before continuing on, perhaps to rest or gather more supplies.

### **Defeat of the Syrians: 2 Samuel 10:15-19**

#### **Syrians Regrouped**

The Syrians were beaten back but not finished. Instead of resigning in defeat, they sent for assistance from the Syrians that remained on the other side of the Jordan River. The combined Syrian forces gathered at Helam where they followed Shobach, the captain of the Syrians. Apparently, Shobach was a respected leader. He united the soldiers and prepared for battle.

The Syrians entered the war as mercenaries but continued to fight, even recruiting volunteers from across the river. Evidently they despised the Israelites and believed there was an opportunity to defeat them. The Ammonite war gave way to war with Syria. Sometimes it seems there is no rest for God's people, as soon as one trial is over another one begins. It is times like this when the LORD provides strength to continue (Psalm 105:4, 118:14).

#### **Syrians Overcome**

David gathered Israel's forces then went to meet the Syrians. After crossing the Jordan River, the two forces met at Helam, where David led the Israelites to victory. The Syrians fought and fled from the field of battle in defeat. Shobach, the captain of the Syrian forces, was slain in the fighting. The LORD protected David while giving the Israelites the victory (2 Samuel 5:10).

The Syrians, along with those that fought with them, made peace with Israel. The kings that followed Hadarezer submitted to David's authority. This was done after they had been beaten back and were certain of defeat. Because of this, the Ammonites would no longer receive their assistance. With the mercenaries eliminated the Ammonites would have to withstand a siege alone.