

Having determined to build a permanent home for the Ark of the Covenant, and having heard the praise of God concerning David, along with a new covenant for Israel through the House of David, we now move to 2 Samuel 8 and 9, chapters which include military victories and a display of kindness toward Saul's legacy.

DAVID'S VICTORIES (2 SAMUEL 8)

Chapter 8 of 2 Samuel provides a chronologically compressed update on David's reign, signifying his immense success up until this point. This chapter recounts various victories, including those over the Philistines (v. 1), the Moabites (v. 2) - where he killed two-thirds of the prisoners and enslaved the remaining third, and the Kingdom of Zobah (v. 3), which is modern Syria.

From Zobah, he seized "a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen" (v. 4). The phrase "David houghed all the chariot *horses*" refers to David hamstringing the horses, rendering them unfit for warfare. (Note: "houghed" is pronounced as "hocked").

Additionally, David defeated the Syrians of Damascus who came to aid Hadadezer (v. 5), and made them slaves (v. 6).

The summary of David's military victories is encapsulated in the phrase, "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went" (v. 6). God's hand of favor was upon David, guiding his actions and granting him victory in all his battles. David's successes were not just a result of his own skills and strategies, but were also a manifestation of God's intervention and favor on his behalf.

Verses 7-12 speak of the spoils of war, both materially and politically, which David acquired from his victories. Notably, David dedicated these spoils to the Lord (v. 11), demonstrating his acknowledgement of God's hand in his victories and his commitment to honoring God with his successes.

Verses 13-18 detail more of David's victories and introduce several key figures in David's leadership. These include Joab, who served as the military chief; Jehosaphat, the recorder; Zadok and Ahimilech, who were priests; Seraiyah, the scribe; and Benaiah, who was later introduced as one of David's mighty men.

The concluding verse of this section, "David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people" (v. 15), encapsulates the essence of David's reign - a reign marked by comprehensive control, fair and just leadership, and consistent victories, all under the favor and guidance of God.

DAVID'S KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH (2 SAMUEL 9)

Despite his military successes, David didn't forget his deep friendship and commitments to Jonathan, Saul's son. In Chapter 9, David inquires if anyone is left from the house of Saul to whom he could show kindness (v. 1).

In 2 Samuel 4:4, we learn Mephibosheth became disabled at five due to an accident. By Chapter 9, Mephibosheth, now with a son, is clearly a grown man, suggesting at least 20 years have passed.

A servant of Saul's household, Ziba, informs David about Mephibosheth, Jonathan's disabled son, living in Lodebar, a barren, isolated town east of the Jordan River (v. 5). David immediately shows kindness by restoring Saul's land to Mephibosheth (v. 7), symbolizing the restoration of his family's honor. David also invites him to live in the palace and dine at the king's table, significantly elevating Mephibosheth's status. These actions showcase David's grace, compassion, and commitment to Jonathan.

David further instructs Ziba, his fifteen sons, and thirty servants to work Mephibosheth's land (v. 12), ensuring its productivity. Despite this, Mephibosheth himself was to live in the palace and dine at the king's table, as if he were one of the king's own sons (v. 11), illustrating David's compassionate leadership.

Mephibosheth and his son Micha lived in Jerusalem, continually eating at the king's table (v. 13), treated as part of the king's family. This symbolized David's high regard for Jonathan and Saul and honored the privilege of dining at the king's table.

The story of Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9 can be compared to "Oliver Twist" by Charles Dickens. Both Mephibosheth and Oliver are unfortunate children living in unfavorable conditions—Mephibosheth in barren Lodebar and Oliver in a workhouse. Both experience significant changes in fortune: David's kindness restores Mephibosheth's grandfather's land and brings him to the palace, while Oliver is taken in by Mr. Brownlow, who offers him a comfortable life. Both stories feature a deceased relative causing good fortune—Mephibosheth's deceased grandfather and Oliver's father. Noble characters—David and Mr. Brownlow—demonstrate compassion and generosity, transforming the lives of the less fortunate.

CONCLUSION

In these two chapters, we witness two contrasting yet complementary aspects of David's character. On one hand, we see David the military victor, who could at times be ruthless. On the other hand, we see David, the caring and compassionate friend, generous in every way. These two facets of David remind us that a single vignette of an individual, whether biblical or otherwise, is likely not the whole story. Humanity possesses an amazing capacity to be multifaceted, capable of displaying a wide range of characteristics and behaviors. When we hear "David was one of the most brutal kings of the Bible," it might be true. On the other hand, when we hear "David was one of the most compassionate kings of the Bible," it also might be true.

And such dichotomy is likely true of most people we know.