

1 Chronicles Chapter 19

Verses 1-3

Located to the east of Israel, the people of Ammon” (the Moabites), descended from an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter (Gen. 19:30-38).

At times, the Ammonites were Israel’s enemy (see Judges).

Just as in the case of Rehoboam (2 Chron. Chapter 10), the new king listened to advisors that steered him in the wrong direction.

God’s people must be careful about whose advice they take.

For verses 1-19 (see notes on 2 Sam. 10:1-19).

1 Chronicles 19:1 "Now it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead."

The same phrase as at (1 Chron. 18:1).

It has no chronological significance (see note there).

The conflict with Ammon, which has been glanced at in (1 Chron. 18:11), is now to be described at length (1 Chron. 19:1 to 20:3), and in connection there with the overthrow of Hadadezer (1 Chron. 18:3-8), is again related, with additional details.

"Nahash":

Means serpent.

This could be a name, or a title for the king of the Ammonites.

They, probably used this name to cause others to fear them.

In (2 Samuel chapter 10 beginning with verse 1), we find a very similar account of the same event that is mentioned here.

Verses 2-5

See the notes on 2 Sam. 10:2 and 10:4.

1 Chronicles 19:2 "And David said, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. So the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him."

"Because his father showed kindness to me":

The instance of kindness here alluded to is not recorded.

There may have been many opportunities and calls for it during David's persecuted life.

And when the Ammonite king would feel a motive beyond any intrinsic goodness of heart to "show kindness" to the youth who was Saul's object of hatred.

It is, however, very remarkable that we find a genuine kindliness towards David still cleaving to the succession of Ammonite kings, even after the events of this chapter (2 Samuel 17:27-29).

Nothing else is known of this Hanun.

Though here the name of an Ammonite king, we find it in (Neh. 3:13, 30), the name of two of those who helped repair the city.

The Assyrian Inscriptions contain the name as that of a Philistine king, tributary to Tiglath-pileser.

The offer of condolence on the death of another leader is done even today.

Sometimes, heads of state will go half-way around the world to another leader's funeral.

This act of kindness from David was explained, for some favor the king had done for David in the past.

David had to find help from many different people, when he was fleeing from Saul.

David did not go himself, but sent his servants to carry his message of comfort from him to the king's children.

1 Chronicles 19:3 "But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land?"

"Are not his servants come ... for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land":

Literally, is it not for to search, that his servants are come unto thee?

This is hardly an improvement on Samuel: "Is it not to search the city (Rabbath-Ammon, the capital), and to spy it out, and to overthrow it, that David hath sent his servants unto thee?"

The Syriac and Arabic agree with Samuel in reading "city;" LXX and Vulgate, "land."

It seemed the children of Ammon were not as smart as their king who died.

They were suspicious of David, and thought he would take advantage of their time of grief to overthrow them.

They did not count David's servants as messengers of good will, but as spies.

Verses 4-5

In this culture, the beard was as symbol of manhood and respect.

The ambassadors from David were deeply humiliated when they were "shaved", something David understood and compassionately addressed.

1 Chronicles 19:4 "Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst hard by their buttocks, and sent them away."

"Shaved them":

I.e., the half of their beards (Samuel).

"Hard by their buttocks":

Literally, unto the extremities.

The chronicler has substituted a more decorous term for the one which appears in Samuel.

"Cut off their garments":

To look like captives (Isa. 20:4).

The shaving of these men was to humiliate them.

It shamed them.

It was a direct statement against their religion, and their customs.

A man who had grown a beard had spent quite a long time in the process.

This to them, was a great humiliation.

They shamed them further by cutting off half their garment.

In some societies, the beard is a symbol of standing in the community.

This whole thing is a terrible insult.

1 Chronicles 19:5 "Then there went [certain], and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them: for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and [then] return."

“Ashamed”.

Not the usual term (bôsh), but a stronger word, confounded (niklam; properly, pricked, wounded; Compare Psalm 35:4 where it forms a climax to the other).

"Be grown":

Sprout, or shoot (Judges 16:22, of Samson's hair).

"Jericho lay on their road to the capital.

They could quickly get a new garment to wear, but it would take some time for their beards to grow out.

David gave them permission not to come into the camp, until their beards had grown out again.

They probably, found a favorable home to dwell in at Jericho.

1 Chronicles 19:6 "And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Syria-maachah, and out of Zobah."

There is no way of knowing what might have happened in this situation if the Ammonite king had gone to David, admitted his error, and asked for forgiveness.

Instead, he “sent ... to hire” horses and soldiers from neighboring countries in order to prepare for war.

The word "odious" means dimness of sight.

David had offered them friendship, now he could not even see them for his anger at what they had done to his men.

In 2 Samuel, where this is stated, the word "stank" is used in place of odious.

They suddenly realized they had incited the anger of David and hired them mercenaries to fight for them against David.

In this particular case, 3,000 shekels made up one talent, so we can quickly see this is a tremendous amount of money.

It would total 3,000,000 shekels of silver.

The names of the places they sent for soldiers vary a little, but that is not important here.

This was such a foolish thing to do, and now, they will pay for it.

In the parallel Scripture in (2 Sam. 10:6), we find they hired 32,000 men to fight for them.

1 Chronicles 19:7 "So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people; who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle."

The account which the chronicler has followed here did not state the relative strength of the contingents.

Yet its estimate of the total number of the allied forces is in substantial accord with that of Samuel.

The chronicler puts the total at 32,000 plus the Maachathite contingent.

Samuel at 32,000 plus 1,000 Maachathites.

The expression "32,000 chariots" (rèkeb), is not to be pressed.

The writer wished to lay proper stress on the chariots and cavalry as the chief arm of the Aramean states, and at the same time to be as concise as possible.

That he was not thinking of 32,000 chariots in the literal sense is clear.

(1) Because he must have known that an army would not consist of chariots only;

(2) In (1 Chron. 18:4), he had already assigned to the army of Zobah its natural proportions of chariots, cavalry, and infantry (compare 1 Chron. 19:18 below).

The present text of Samuel can hardly be right, as it makes the whole army consist of infantry (compare 2 Sam. 8:4).

The great plains of Aram were a natural training ground for horsemen and charioteers.

"Who came and pitched before Medeba":

Their camp.

Another detail peculiar to the Chronicles.

Medeba, the meeting place of the Aramean forces, lay southeast of Heshbon, on a site now known as Madibiya.

"And the children of Ammon gathered themselves":

The muster of the Ammonites is not mentioned in Samuel.

They now felt confident that they could kill David and his men.

Medeba is a few miles southeast of Heshbon.

The only thing these Ammonites had not taken into consideration, was the God of David.

1 Chronicles 19:8 "And when David heard [of it], he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men."

"David ... sent Joab":

Why in such a crisis did he not go himself?

Perhaps because he could watch the gathering of the more serious storm described in (1 Chron. 19:16-19), better from Jerusalem.

Joab was the leader of David's army.

The army that Joab led in this, was a much smaller group, but with the help of the LORD, they would defeat this mighty army the Ammonites had hired to fight them.

Verses 9-19

The "city" was the capital, Rabbah or Rabbath-ammon, the site of modern day Amman, Jordan.

Joab laid siege to this city in the year after the events described here (20:1-3).

1 Chronicles 19:9 "And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array before the gate of the city: and the kings that were come [were] by themselves in the field."

"Before the gate of the city":

Literally, in the outlet of the city.

Samuel has “in the outlet of the gate.”

The city appears to have been Medeba (1 Chron. 19:7).

"And the kings that were come":

Samuel repeats the names: “And Aram-zobah and Rehob, and the men of Tôb and Maachah.”

"Were":

Rather, put the battle in array (to be supplied from the former sentence).

"In the field":

In the open country, or plain (mîshôr) of Medeba (Joshua 13:9; 13:16), where there was room for the movements of cavalry and chariots.

It appears from this, that the troops of the Ammonites were separated from the troops they had hired to fight for them.

The Ammonites remained close enough to their city, so they might run for safety to the city.

The hired troops were a good way out in the field from the city.

1 Chronicles 19:10 "Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put [them] in array against the Syrians."

Literally, the front of the battle had become towards him, front and rear.

The order of words is different in Samuel, and a preposition added (“on front and on rear”).

The Ammonites lay in front of the city, their Aramean allies at some distance away, in the plain.

For Joab to attack either with his entire army would have been to expose his rear to the assault of the other.

He therefore divided his forces.

"The choice of Israel":

Literally, the chosen or young warriors (singular collective), in Israel (i.e., in the Israelite army).

These Joab himself led against the Arameans, as the most dangerous enemy, while he sent a detachment, under his brother Abishai, to cope with the Ammonites.

"Put them in array":

Rather, set the battle in array, or drew up against (1 Chron. 19:17; 12:33).

The same Hebrew phrase recurs (in 1 Chron. 19:11).

It seems that Joab was between the two groups of soldiers.

The Syrians would have been the more skilled of the two armies Joab faced.

Joab chose the most skilled of his men to go against the Syrians.

Joab would lead the group of elite soldiers in battle against the Syrians.

1 Chronicles 19:11 "And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set [themselves] in array against the children of Ammon."

Joab directed his brother Abishai, with a suitable detachment, to attack the Ammonites.

God was with them, and the LORD had put this plan into the heart of Joab.

Abishai would attack the Ammonites, and Joab would attack the Syrians.

This would keep one of the armies from attacking them from the rear, and getting them in a cross fire.

Joab and Abishai would have their backs to each other.

No one would slip up behind them.

1 Chronicles 19:12 "And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee."

Literally, If Aram prevail over me, thou shalt become to me for succor.

The word "succor" here is *těshû'āh*, a less frequent synonym of *yěshû'āh*, the term in Samuel and means to give assistance.

"I will help thee":

Samuel, "I will march to succor thee."

This verb is often rendered "to save," and the cognate noun, "salvation."

This way they could quickly tell which side needed more soldiers.

Whichever one was winning their battle, could send additional soldiers to help the other one.

1 Chronicles 19:13 "Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do [that which is] good in his sight."

The same verb was rendered "be strong" in (1 Chron. 19:12).

"Let us behave ourselves valiantly":

The same verb again, in reflexive form. Thus, the whole runs literally: Be strong, and let us show ourselves strong!

"And let the LORD do":

Literally, And Jehovah, the good in his own eyes may he do!

The order in the Hebrew of Samuel is that of the Authorized Version here.

The chronicler lays stress on the auspicious word "good."

There is also emphasis on "Jehovah," as leaving the issue in His hands who is LORD of hosts and God of battles; and on the verb, expressive of a pious wish that right may not miscarry.

Evidently the spirit which inspired the prayer, "Thy will be done," was not unknown to the warriors of the old theocracy.

This was Joab telling Abishai and all of the men to be of good courage, that God would help them.

Joab was an unusually brave man, and it caused the men under his command to be courageous, as well.

Joab says, "If the LORD wants us to win this battle, we will".

1 Chronicles 19:14 "So Joab and the people that [were] with him drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him."

Rather, against Aram; so Samuel, with the more classical construction.

The preposition used here was rendered to meet (1 Chron. 12:17).

"Before the Syrians":

Without fear for their own rear advanced against the Syrian front.

We must remember, the Syrians were hired soldiers.

They did not have as good a reason to stand and fight as Joab and his men.

The bravery portrayed in the attack of these few whom Joab led, caused the Syrians to fear and run for safety.

1 Chronicles 19:15 "And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem."

Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

This is equivalent to saying that, for what he deemed sufficient reasons, Joab did not stay to besiege the Ammonites in the city, within the walls of which they had taken refuge, nor to pursue the Syrians.

Hence, we find these latter soon made bold to rally and to get additional aid.

The troops with Abishai had hardly begun to advance, when the Ammonites saw the Syrians running for their lives.

The Ammonites ran for safety into their city.

It appears that, Joab felt the battle was over, and went back to Jerusalem to proclaim the victory.

1 Chronicles 19:16 "And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that [were] beyond the river: and Shophach the captain of the host of Hadarezer [went] before them."

"They sent messengers":

Samuel, "Hadarezer sent and drew forth" literally, made to come out, i.e., to war (1 Chron. 20:1).

The name "Hadarezer" (Hadadezer), is important, as helping us to identify this campaign with that of (1 Chron. 18:3-8).

"Beyond the river":

The Euphrates, called Purât, Purâtu, by the Babylonians and Assyrians, Furât by the Arabs, and Ufrâtus by the ancient Persians.

The name is derived from the Acadian Pura-nunu (great river).

The Assyrian Purât, Hebrew Pěrâth, is simply the word Pura with a feminine ending; so that this well-known name means “The River par excellence (compare Gen. 15:18; Isa. 8:7).

The use of this phrase, “beyond the river,” to denote the position of the Eastern Arameans, shows that the narrative here borrowed by the chronicler was originally written in Palestine.

The Syriac and Arabic add here, “and they came to Hîlâm.”

So Samuel, see next verse.

Shophach.

Samuel, “Shobach.”

The letters p and b are much alike in Hebrew.

The Syriac has Sh’bûk.

Shophach may be compared with the Arabic safaka, “to shed blood” (saffâk, a shedder of blood).

“Went before them”:

Commanded them.

It thus appears that the suzerainty of Hadadezer was recognized by some Aramean States lying east of the Euphrates.

The Syrians, that Joab thought were defeated and would not be back, got additional help from the other Syrians.

They were refortifying their troops to come against Israel again.

They had retreated to get more help.

1 Chronicles 19:17 "And it was told David; and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set [the battle] in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him."

Samuel, “came to Hêlâm.”

The chronicler seems to have substituted an intelligible phrase for the name of an unknown locality.

Professor Sayce has suggested to the writer that this mysterious Helam is no other than Aleppo, the Halman of the Assyrian monuments.

Upon them ... against them”:

literally, unto them (’alêhem).

The Hebrew term, “to Helam” (Helâmah), contains the same consonants as this prepositional phrase, with one extra.

Perhaps, however, the term Helâmah was understood as a common noun implying to their army (hayîl, hêl, army).

So, when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians.

Literally, and David set the battle, etc., a needless repetition of the last clause.

Probably Samuel is right: “And Aram put the battle in array against David.”

David had sent his army that was in ready before.

Now he called for all the able soldiers to come to fight this enemy.

It appears that David led his troops in this.

It also appears, that he attacked the Syrians.

The troops would probably fight more bravely with their king at the battlefront.

1 Chronicles 19:18 "But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand [men which fought in] chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host."

“Slew ... seven thousand”:

2 Samuel 10:18 erroneously has 700.

This is apparently a discrepancy due to copyist error.

“Footmen”:

This is likely more correct than “horsemen” in (2 Sam. 10:18).

See the notes on (2 Sam. 8:4-5; 10:18 and 1 Chron. 18:4).

Assuming that all the passages are discussing the same campaign, the proper full figures are as follows: from the “Syrians” (Arameans), one thousand “chariots,” seven thousand charioteers, and 20,000 footmen (soldiers), were captured.

As well, 22,000 Aramean soldiers were killed.

Thus, the 40,000 “horsemen” soldiers either captured or slain.

The word “horsemen” (in 2 Sam. 10:18), is thus used imprecisely or may have been miscopied from the listing (in 2 Sam. 8:4).

This was a fierce battle, and we see that David and his men killed over 40,000 of the Syrians.

The Syrians, who were not killed, fled for their lives.

Shophach had been the general of the Syrian armies.

1 Chronicles 19:19 "And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more."

Samuel is fuller and clearer: “And all the kings, servants of Hadarezer.”

The tributaries of Hadadezer now transferred their fealty to David.

"They made peace with David":

Samuel, “with Israel.”

"And became his servants".

Literally, and served him.

Samuel, “and served them.”

To the writer of Samuel, God’s people is the main topic; to the chronicler, the divinely anointed king.

The difference therefore, though slight, is characteristic.

"Neither would the Syrians’ help”:

And Aram was not willing to come to the help of the sons of Ammon.

Samuel, “And Aram feared to come to the help,” etc.

The Syrians that fled, surrendered to David and became his servants.

One of the agreements they made with David, was that they would not help the Ammonites against Israel anymore.

1 Chronicles Chapter 19 Questions

1. _____ the king of the children of Ammon died.
2. What does "Nahash" mean?
3. Why did David want to show kindness to the children of Nahash?
4. What did the princes think of the men David sent?
5. What terrible thing did they do to David's servants?
6. What was the beard in some societies?
7. What did David tell them to do, to keep from being further embarrassed?
8. What does "odious" mean?
9. What word is used in 2 Samuel for odious?
10. When they realized that David was angry, what did they do?
11. How many shekels of silver did they send to pay them?
12. How many chariots did they hire?
13. When David heard of this army, who did he send to fight them?
14. Where did the children of Ammon set up for battle?
15. Where were the hired soldiers set up to fight?
16. What did Joab do, when he realized he was between the two armies?
17. Who would go against the Syrians?
18. Who led the troops against the Ammonites?
19. What advantage would this be to the Israelites?
20. What encouragement did Joab give the men?
21. What happened, when Joab and his men attacked Syria?
22. Where did the Ammonites retreat to?
23. When the Syrians got out of danger, what did they do?
24. What did David do, when he heard this?

25. How many Syrians did David and his men kill?

26. What did the servants that did not die in battle, do?