

## **Dr. August Konkel, Chronicles, Session 9, Historical Israel**

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This is Dr. August Konkel in his teaching on the books of Chronicles. This is session 9, Historical Israel.

We left David with having established the worship in Jerusalem.

We now want to come back to talk about David's kingdom, which the chronicler gives in some unique chapters to describe the kingdom the way he imagines it to be, the way he thinks it represents God's kingdom in his time, as well as in David's time. And so, these next chapters are ones in which the chronicler essentially leads us to the administration of David's kingdom in relation to the Levites and the state officials and all of the events. So, the chronicler in chapter 18 here moves back to talk about some of the wars that enabled David to acquire territory.

You know, if there is going to be a nation, if there is going to be a kingdom of some kind, there has to be territory. And the kingdom of Judah, the tribe of Judah, is a relatively small territory, so it was under the leadership of David that we came to have something of what is a kingdom or an empire in which the territory is controlled. So, the Chronicler leads us to understand some of the wars of David.

He begins with the wars of Philistia and Moab. Those are the local people. The Philistines are the ones who had been the enemies of Israel traditionally to the west, but who were very much in decline.

The Philistine cities were Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod. If you think of modern Israel, the Gaza Strip is a part of what was the traditional Philistine territory. And so, the Philistines were always seeking to extend that territory over into the tribe of Judah and, if possible, all the way to the Jordan River as they did when they conquered Saul.

But what David does then is reverse that and conquer Philistia. And Moab, of course, was the territory just north of the Arnon River, which flows into the middle of the Dead Sea. And from there, it was kind of a tableland, a high mountainous ridge that served as the land of Moab.

Its larger territories extended all the way up to Heshbon, which is past the tip of the Dead Sea. So, this is the account of how David took over that territory to the east of the Dead Sea. The chronicler then goes on to talk about David's conquest of Edom.

Now, we noticed Edom earlier in the genealogies as being the mountain of Seir. This is that territory from the southern tip of the Dead Sea all the way to the Gulf of Aqaba. And this territory was really occupied by a loose federation of peoples.

But it was very important always to Israel, and it was conquered by David in order to gain access to the port, Ezion-Geber, which is on the Gulf of Aqaba. Israel has access to the Mediterranean, and then access to the south came through the Gulf of Aqaba. And for the empires of David and Solomon to function, they needed the help of the Phoenicians and Tyre and Sidon to the north, because they were mariners.

And then the people of Ezion-Geber to the south. So that's the significance of these wars. After the chronicler describes this, he gives a list of David's chief people.

And here we have a repetition of names that we've had before. The ones who were their military leaders, like Benaiah and Joab. The ones who were their administrative officials, priests, and scribes, like Zadok, and so forth.

And the palace guards, so that would be Benaiah. And so just a short list there of the fact that David had a very well-organized kingdom, a very well-organized nation, a state, and was expanding this towards becoming a kingdom. Then David's wars expanded over to the east.

Here, we have a record of David's wars with Ammon and then with the Arameans. If you think of the territory to the east of the Dead Sea, we have the Yabak River. And the Yabak River is one that flows into the Jordan River in kind of in the middle between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee.

And the Yabak River tips down towards the south, as we can see it there, where you have the main city of Rabah. So, this battle is actually quite a famous battle, told in some detail in Samuel, where the people of Ammon, who were over towards the east of the Yabak River, the Ammonites, were the ones who caused difficulty for David and for his empire. Now, in the book of Samuel, between chapter 10 and chapter 11, there really is a very abrupt transition as to who the Ammonites were and what they were doing.

I want to read to you a little portion that has been found in the Samuel of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This portion, without question, came to be omitted by what we call haplography. In other words, the scribes I skipped from similar words and letters on one line to similar words and letters on several lines below.

In Samuel's records, which we had up until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, these verses were unknown. But in the scroll of Samuel, as we have it from the Dead Sea Scrolls, these verses are very much present. I find it disappointing that as much

as Bible translators like to do textual criticism and to get back to the texts as they were written, they tend not to have included this.

There are actually two translations that do. One is the New Living Translation, and the other one is the Revised Standard Bible. But I think it's a very significant couple of verses, which I'm going to read to you about the Ammonites.

Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the people of Gad and Reuben, who lived east of the Jordan River. Now, we will remember that this was the territory of Reuben, right here, and Gad, over here. Now, they were theoretically to the west of the Ammonites, but of course, the Ammonites, who lived over here in the main city of Rabbah, at the sources of the Jabbok River, were often at war, trying to expand their territory.

So, he gouged out the right eyes of each of the Israelites living there, and he didn't allow anyone to come and rescue them. Now, war is always gruesome, and it is always brutal. When we read these things about war in the Old Testament, we should be reminded that it really isn't any different in our day.

We talk now more about post-traumatic stress syndrome, but really what it is is the effects of what one sees in war, and it's very much present with us, whether we're talking about Afghanistan or Iraq a few years ago. These things are awful, and they're brutal. Now, the point of gouging out the right eye was that most warriors shot by pulling the arrow back with their right hand, and so the right eye was the one that they used for the aim.

So, this was the way of disabling the Israelite soldiers. So, the Ammonites were warring against the tribes of Reuben and of Gad and disabling their warriors. In fact, of all the Israelites east of the Jordan, there wasn't a single one whose right eye Nahash had not gouged out.

But there were 7,000 men who had escaped from the Ammonites, and they had settled in Jabesh Gilead. So, Jabesh Gilead was a town a little bit to the north, up there in the area of Sukkot, where they had more protection as an Israelite state. And then that's where we get introduced to Nahash, king of the Ammonites, coming and humiliating the Israelite soldiers, which is what the chronicler tells us, and what the book of Samuel also tells us.

So, that is the background to this particular story of the provocation of Ammon. Now, in this story, as the chronicler tells it, the Ammonites decided that they were no match for the Israelites, and they sought help from the Arameans to the north. And Aram, of course, extended all the way north of the Sea of Galilee, past Damascus to the area called Aram-zoba.

But the Chronicler would remind us that because David was faithful and because God was the one who was fighting for him, this alliance was defeated. So, this defeat then ended with the destruction of the Ammonite capital at Rabah. The chronicler then goes back to tell us something more about other victories over the Philistines, the war in Gaza, which is to the west of Judah, and the defeat of the brother of Goliath.

This is something that's very clear in Chronicles, that's not quite so clear in Samuel. In Samuel, in the narrative, it is David who kills Goliath. But actually, in the account of the heroic soldiers of 2 Samuel chapter 3 [2 Sam. 21L:19], it is Elhanan who kills Goliath.

Now, the chronicler read these texts in a different way, and there's every reason to think that he was right, that the chronicler read the defeat, the conquest of Elhanan was the brother of Goliath. So, I don't know that it was the contradiction that bothered the chronicler. I don't think so, because he leaves contradictions the way they are in his sources, if that's the way that he finds them.

He simply interpreted his sources to say that the man that Elhanan defeated was the brother of Goliath. Then, there was a war in Gath, and the Chronicler talks about the defeat of the giant there. So, this was the way in which the kingdom of David expanded from being the city of Jerusalem and the territories around it, to the east over Moab, to the south over Edom, to the west over the Philistines, but then to the east and the north on the other side of the Jordan River by the defeat of the Arameans along with the Ammonites, because the two had allied together and both were defeated by the armies of David.

So, now we have a large territory that has become the empire of David under his control, that which is going to be known as the kingdom of David, which extends all the way from the Gulf of Aqaba north to the Lebanon ranges in the territory of Aram-zoba. So, this now is an area that is not ruled by David, so much so that it is a territory over which he exercises jurisdiction, he appoints their leaders, and he collects tribute from them. In other words, the Chronicler is here telling us the way in which David becomes an empire.

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