

Second Samuel

Lesson 10

How to Respond to Unexpected Kindness

David was the triumphal king for Israel. The good news is, David was also a thoughtful and gracious king. David knew how to give thanks for the victories, but, because of his nature, he also knew to give thanks to his people.

E. The Kindness of the Kingdom (9:1-13)

1. David's Kindness to Mephibosheth (9:1-12)

In chapter 9, we see the kindness of the kingdom in King David. David's kindness to Mephibosheth is simply one example. Chapter 9, verse 1 says, *"Then David said, 'Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?'"*² Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, *"Are you Ziba?"* And he said, *"I am your servant."*³ The king said, *"Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?"* And Ziba said to the king, *"There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet."*⁴ So the king said to him, *"Where is he?"* And Ziba said to the king, *"Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar."*⁵ Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. *"Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, 'Mephibosheth.' And he said, 'Here is your servant!'"*⁷ David said to him, *"Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly."*⁸ Again he prostrated himself and said, *"What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?"*

Mephibosheth was only five years old when Jonathan, his father, was killed at the battle of Gilboa with his grandfather, King Saul. At least ten years had passed by the time the compiler delivered chapter 7 and the birth of Solomon. Solomon was born when David was forty years old, and Solomon became king at the age of thirty when David was seventy years old. Therefore, Mephibosheth was fifteen years old when Solomon was born. Now, after all the battles with the surrounding nations, another set of years have passed, and we have lost our sense of timing. However, in the next passage, in verse 12, we will learn that at this point in the story, Mephibosheth is married with a son named Mica. But the question we must ask is this, *"Was Mica born to Mephibosheth before he arrived to live with David or after?"* We simply do not know that answer. Nevertheless, Mephibosheth did not think very highly of himself and stated that to David. However, David was going to be kind to Mephibosheth because of his father, Jonathan.

Notice how Mephibosheth responded to David's unexpected kindness. *"Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself."* It was the correct and perfect response in the day they lived. After David explained his reasoning for showing the kindness to Mephibosheth, he *"... prostrated himself and said, 'What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?'"* Mephibosheth, lame in the feet, did not have a good self-image. Frankly, he thought he was worthless. We know that because he uses the word's *"dead dog."* As we discovered in our last lesson from the Levitical law, dogs had paws and it was sin to touch anything animal that had paws. Nevertheless, we will find in the end in chapter 16 that Mephibosheth was truly grateful to David and loyal too. We will pick up with this story again in chapter 16.

2. David's Direction to Ziba (9:9-13)

The compiler tells us of David's direction to Ziba. Verse 9. *"Then the king called Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, 'All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson.'"*¹⁰ *You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce so that your master's*

grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall eat at my table regularly." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.¹¹ Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons.¹² Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth.¹³ So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king's table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet."

David had enlisted Ziba to care for the family allotment of land and houses that once belonged to King Saul in Gibeah, and by default, became the property of Mephibosheth after the deaths of King Saul and all his sons. Women and sisters were living on the land that needed support and David placed all that in the hands of Ziba. We would like to say that Ziba did well with that job, but when we arrive in chapter 16, we will learn that all was not well with Ziba's caretaking. Nevertheless, Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, away from the family land, and resided with David.

F. The Enemies of the Kingdom (10:1-19)

1. Ammon and Aram Defeated (10:1-19)

a) David's Friend (10:1-2a)

Back in chapter 8, verse 12, the compiler mentioned that David defeated the Ammonites and took the spoils that he brought back to Israel. However, the story and details of that battle were not recorded in that passage. Previous to the mention of Ammon, the compiler did mention Hadadezer, who will be mentioned in the following story. There, the compiler told the story of how David defeated Hadadezer. David did not kill Hadadezer. Rather, he defeated him and his armies and put them under subjection. It is my position that the compiler is now going to tell the story of how David defeated the Ammonites, who had become the enemies of the kingdom. Thus, we will see Ammon and Aram defeated. Chapter 10, verse 1. "Now it happened afterwards that the king of the Ammonites died, and Hanun his son became king in his place.² Then David said, "I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nabash, just as his father showed kindness to me." So David sent some of his servants to console him concerning his father."

Here we come to the reason for this story being the defeat of Ammon mentioned in chapter 8, verse 12. Previous to the death of the King of Ammon, he and David were friends. Nahash was the dead king's name, and he had shown David kindness in the past, and David wanted to return that kindness. Indeed, David had not gone to war against his kind friend. Therefore, it seems that David's trouble with his Ammonite cousins did not begin until Nahash was dead and his son, Hanun, came to power. First Chronicles 19:1-2 agrees. "Some time after this, King Nabash of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun became king.² David said, "I am going to show loyalty to Hanun because his father, Nabash, was always loyal to me." So David sent messengers to express sympathy to Hanun about his father's death."

b) David's Enemy (10:2b-5)

When David's servants arrived in the kingdom of Ammon, they were treated as spies and proved to be David's enemy, Nahash's son, Hanun. Verse 2b. "But when David's servants came to the land of the Ammonites,³ the princes of the Ammonites said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David is honoring your father because he has sent consolers to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?"⁴ So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away."

Again, First Chronicles 19:2b-4 agrees. "But when David's ambassadors arrived in the land of Ammon,³ the Ammonite commanders said to Hanun, "Do you really think these men are coming here to honor your father? No! David has sent them to spy out the land so they can come in and conquer it!"⁴ So Hanun seized David's ambassadors and shaved them, cut off their robes at the buttocks, and sent them back to David in shame." Here we have a clear example of how not to respond to unexpected kindness.

For the men of that part of the world, the beard was the mark of being a free man. Cutting off one side of the beard was an insult that reduced the men to the status of slaves. Since Israel was not allowed to have slaves, it was truly an insult that lasted until the beard grew. In addition, to cut a

man's robe off at his waist to show that which was below was a vile and detestable affront. Hanun's action was an outright request for the beginning of a war with Israel.

c) David's Men (10:5)

What would David's men do? They were insulted with half a beard and vile clothing. David told them to stay in Jericho. Verse 5. *"When they told it to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and then return."* Verse 5 in First Chronicles 19 says the same. *"When David heard what had happened to the men, he sent messengers to tell them, "Stay at Jericho until your beards grow out, and then come back." For they felt deep shame because of their appearance."*

David felt sorry for his insulted men, and he understood that his men were insulted by the actions of their cousins in Ammon. David, heartfelt for his men, wanted them to remain in Jericho until their beards grew and they had new clothing before they returned to Jerusalem. David did not want his people to see them in such a shameful appearance. We cannot be sure, but because David's sons were his assistants, as we learned at the end of chapter 8, some of them may have, and were probably among these insulted men. It only makes sense.

d) David's Army (10:6-8)

David did not wait for his men to grow their beards and arrive with new clothing. David's army was assembled, and the Ammonites realized they had stirred the anger of David. Verse 6. *"Now when the sons of Ammon saw that they had become odious to David, the sons of Ammon sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob with 12,000 men. ⁷When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army, the mighty men. ⁸The sons of Ammon came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, while the Arameans of Zobah and of Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the field."*

First Chronicles 19:6-7 agrees. *"When the people of Ammon realized how seriously they had angered David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent 75,000 pounds of silver to hire chariots and charioteers from Aram-nabaraim, Aram-maacah, and Zobah. ⁷They also hired 32,000 chariots and secured the support of the king of Maacah and his army. These forces camped at Medeba, where they were joined by the Ammonite troops that Hanun had recruited from his own towns."*

Hanun had enlisted the help of the Aramites, whom David had already defeated and put under subjection to Israel. When they arrived, they would come up behind the army of Israel while Hanun would fight Israel on the front.

e) David's Plan (10:9-15)

David's plan was in the hands of his commander, Joab. We hear what Joab decided in verse 9. *"Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him in front and in the rear, he selected from all the choice men of Israel, and arrayed them against the Arameans. ¹⁰But the remainder of the people he placed in the hand of Abishai his brother, and he arrayed them against the sons of Ammon. ¹¹He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me, but if the sons of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come to help you. ¹²Be strong, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight." ¹³So Joab and the people who were with him drew near to the battle against the Arameans, and they fled before him. ¹⁴When the sons of Ammon saw that the Arameans fled, they also fled before Abishai and entered the city. Then Joab returned from fighting against the sons of Ammon and came to Jerusalem."*

First Chronicles 10:10-15 agrees. *"When Joab saw that he would have to fight on both the front and the rear, he chose some of Israel's elite troops and placed them under his personal command to fight the Arameans in the fields. ¹¹He left the rest of the army under the command of his brother Abishai, who was to attack the Ammonites. ¹²"If the Arameans are too strong for me, then come over and help me," Joab told his brother. "And if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will help you. ¹³Be courageous! Let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. May the LORD's will be done." ¹⁴When Joab and his troops attacked, the Arameans began to run away. ¹⁵And when the*

Ammonites saw the Arameans running, they also ran from Abishai and retreated into the city. Then Joab returned to Jerusalem.

Joab's plan worked for David. Israel was victorious. The Aramites and the Ammonites ran for their lives in fear of the armies of Israel. But that does not mean the battle was over. The Aramites did not want to surrender to Israel.

f) David's Foes (10:16-19)

The Aramites became David's foes even though they ran from the battle with their Ammonite allies. The compilers tell us their next step in verse 16. *"The Arameans now realized that they were no match for Israel, so they sent messengers and summoned additional Aramean troops from the other side of the Euphrates River. These troops were under the command of Shobach, the commander of Hadadezer's forces. ¹⁷ When David heard what was happening, he mobilized all Israel, crossed the Jordan River, and positioned his troops in battle formation. Then David engaged the Arameans in battle, and they fought against him. ¹⁸ But again the Arameans fled from the Israelites. This time David's forces killed 7,000 charioteers and 40,000 foot soldiers, including Shobach, the commander of their army. ¹⁹ When Hadadezer's allies saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they surrendered to David and became his subjects. After that, the Arameans were no longer willing to help the Ammonites."*

First Chronicles 19:15-19 agrees. *"When the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered themselves together. ¹⁶ And Hadadezer sent and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the River, and they came to Helam; and Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer led them. ¹⁷ Now when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Arameans arrayed themselves to meet David and fought against him. ¹⁸ But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 charioteers of the Arameans and 40,000 horsemen and struck down Shobach the commander of their army, and he died there. ¹⁹ When all the kings, servants of Hadadezer, saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans feared to help the sons of Ammon anymore."*

David had defeated Hadadezer twice and brought him into servitude to Israel. As for Shobach, he died with his men. You will notice a difference in the number of charioteers that David killed. Samuel says 7,000; Chronicles says 700. The Hebrew language and the Syriac language have no numbers in their vocabulary. Each letter in their alphabet represents a numerical value. Therefore, a set of letters in either language would represent a number based on the context of the sentence. The difference between the two is what we call a "gloss." It means that the scribe who was making a hand copy translation of the manuscript failed to copy the letters in the number correctly. It was not an error in the original manuscript. It was an error in the copying of the copies which were copies of the copies of the original manuscripts. You will also see that in Samuel, it is 40,000-foot soldiers, and in Chronicles, it is 40,000 horsemen. The Syriac Old Testament says 700 chariots and 4,000 calvary. This, too, is a "gloss" as the Syriac version was being translated and recorded. No errors were in the originals. No original manuscripts exist that we have found. If the Ark of the Covenant is ever truly found and open, it might contain the original books written by Moses, but the Ark has never been found and place on exhibit to date. Wouldn't that be a revelation to all of the world?

And so, we end this lesson with examples of how people respond to unexpected kindness. Some will be grateful and some will use it to start a war. The sad part of this story is, "You never know how other people will respond to your kindness." When you do a good deed for someone, it is your attempt to show kindness. But you never know what the other person is thinking. Some will use your kindness to lash back at you. I have a saying for this. "No good deed goes unpunished." Nevertheless, we are called by the LORD to do good deeds, to show kindness. It has now been by experience over the years that very often your good deeds are going to be punished by some. But strange as it seems, later on in life, the same person who punished your good deed will come back to you in time of need because of your kindness and you will have a time to once again share the love of the LORD with them.