

## 2 Samuel 21 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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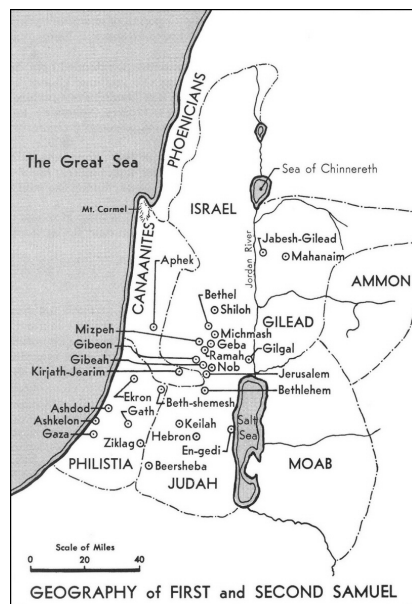
## To go directly to that verse

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Chart from recommended resource Jensen's Survey of the OT - used by permission  
2 Samuel Chart from Charles Swindoll

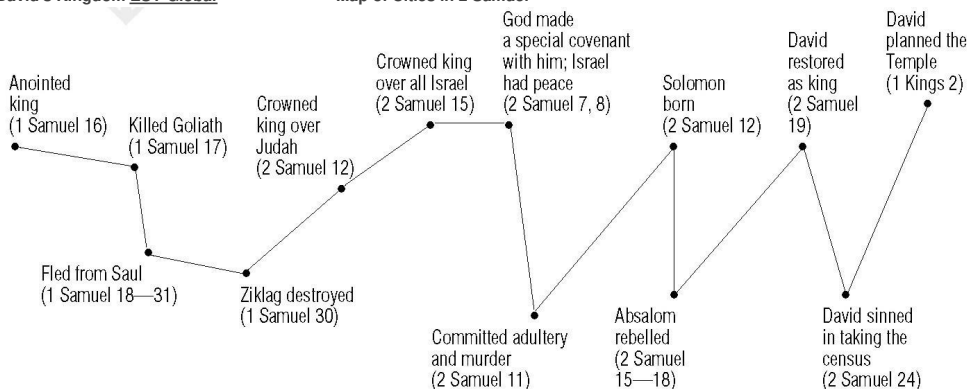
TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1Chr 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

**Legend:** B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931 BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931 BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.



Map of David's Kingdom-ESV Global

Map of Cities in 2 Samuel



HIGHS AND LOWS OF DAVID'S LIFE  
Source: [Life Application Study Bible \(borrow\)](#)

**2 Samuel 21:1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David sought the presence of the LORD. And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death."**

BGT 2 Samuel 21:1 καὶ γένητο λιμὲς ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Δαυὶδ τρεῖς ἔτη· καὶ ζήτησεν Δαυὶδ τὸ πρῶτον τὸ κυρίου καὶ ἐπεὶ κριὸς πρὸς Σαουλ καὶ πρὸς τὸν οἶκόν αὐτοῦ· οἱ ἀδελφεοὶ τῶν θυγατέρων περὶ οὓς θανάτωσεν τὸς Γαβωνίτας·

LXE 2 Samuel 21:1 And there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David sought the face of the Lord. And the Lord said, There is guilt upon Saul **and his house** because of his bloody murder, whereby he slew the Gabaonites.

KJV 2 Samuel 21:1 Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, **and for his bloody house**, because he slew the Gibeonites.

NET 2 Samuel 21:1 During David's reign there was a famine for three consecutive years. So David inquired of the LORD. The LORD said, "It is because of Saul **and his bloodstained family**, because he murdered the Gibeonites."

CSB 2 Samuel 21:1 During David's reign there was a famine for three successive years, so David inquired of the LORD. The LORD answered, "It is because of the blood shed by Saul **and his family** when he killed the Gibeonites."

ESV 2 Samuel 21:1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD. And the LORD said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul **and on his house**, because he put the Gibeonites to death."

NIV 2 Samuel 21:1 During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought

the face of the LORD. The LORD said, "It is on account of Saul and **his blood-stained house**; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death."

NLT 2 Samuel 21:1 There was a famine during David's reign that lasted for three years, so David asked the LORD about it. And the LORD said, "The famine has come because Saul **and his family are guilty** of murdering the Gibeonites."

NRS 2 Samuel 21:1 Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. The LORD said, "There is **bloodguilt on Saul and on his house**, because he put the Gibeonites to death."

NJB 2 Samuel 21:1 In the days of David there was a famine which lasted for three years on end. David consulted Yahweh, and Yahweh said, 'Saul and **his family have incurred blood-guilt**, by putting the Gibeonites to death.'

NAB 2 Samuel 21:1 During David's reign there was a famine for three successive years. David had recourse to the LORD, who said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and his family because he put the Gibeonites to death."

YLT 2 Samuel 21:1 And there is a famine in the days of David three years, year after year, and David seeketh the face of Jehovah, and Jehovah saith, 'For Saul and **for the bloody house**, because that he put to death the Gibeonites.'

GWN 2 Samuel 21:1 In the time of David, there was a famine for three successive years, and David asked the LORD's advice about it. The LORD answered, "It's because of **Saul and his family. They are guilty of murder** because they killed the people of Gibeon."

- **a famine:** Ge 12:10 Ge 26:1 Ge 41:57 42:1 43:1 Lev 26:19,20,26 1Ki 17:1 18:2 2Ki 6:25 8:1 Jer 14:1-18
- **of the Lord:** 2Sa 5:19,23 Nu 27:21 1Sa 23:2,4,11 Job 5:8-10 10:2 Ps 50:15 91:15
- **It is:** Jos 7:1,11,12
- **Saul:** 1Sa 22:17-19
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 9:20+ "This we will do to them, even let them (GIBEONITES - EVEN THOUGH THEY TRICKED THEM INTO CUTTING COVENANT - Joshua 9:3-27+) live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them."

Psalms 24:6 This is the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face—even Jacob. Selah.

Psalms 27:8 When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

### A FAMINE FOR THREE YEARS

In the 2 Samuel chart at the top of the page notice the last section entitled "Appendices" which is more like an epilogue and contains material which is not necessarily chronological in the reign of David.

**John MacArthur** has an interesting note on the "**Appendix**" or "**Epilogue**"(words attached at the end)" - There is a striking literary arrangement of the sections in this division of the book. The first and last sections (2Sa 21:1-14; 2Sa 24:1-25) are narratives that describe two occurrences of the Lord's anger against Israel. The second and fifth sections (2Sa 21:15-22; 2Sa 23:8-39) are accounts of David's warriors. The third and fourth sections (2Sa 22:1-51; 2Sa 23:1-7) record two of David's songs....This event (2Sa 21:1-14) occurred after the display of David's kindness to Mephibosheth (2Sa 21:7; cf. 2Sa 9:1-13) and before Shimei's cursing of David (cf. 2Sa 16:7, 8). (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Paul Apple's introduction** - This look at the latter years of David's reign picks up on some key aspects of the Lord's Providence and Power in preparation for David's glorious hymn of praise in Chapter 22. ("And David spoke the words of this song to the Lord in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul" 2 Sam. 22:1) We see the wisdom and diplomacy of David in responding to the discipline of the Lord by humbly seeking the path of restoration rather than becoming stiff-necked and rebellious. Despite numerous failures and the severe consequences of sin, David never lost his focus on trying to orient his heart to pursuing after his God. His family story speaks to us of restoration and forgiveness and being used by God in spite of his many blemishes. We also see the courage and military exploits of David and his key warriors as they faced untold dangers on every side; yet found the power of God to be sufficient to uphold them, deliver them and establish His kingdom.

[Chuck Swindoll](#) refers to chapters 21-24 as an appendix with miscellaneous narratives - A famine (ch. 21) A song (ch. 22) A prophecy (ch. 23) A failure (ch. 24). (As an aside as you come to the end of 2 Samuel, for review you might listen to Swindoll's message on 2 Samuel at the top of [this page](#))

**Ryrie:** This section is a non-chronological appendix to the book and records many events that occurred earlier in David's reign. (Borrow [The Ryrie study Bible](#) )

**Davis:** The events described in these verses probably span a period from the revolt of Absalom to the last days of David. It is apparent (I AM NOT SURE THIS IS AS CLEAR AS HE MAKES IT SOUND, BUT IT IS A LOGICAL PRESUMPTION) that the Philistines took the occasion of Absalom's revolt and the subsequent confusion to attack the borders of Israel. The record of these battles is a summary of a number of encounters that took place during this period of time.

**Gordon:** Chs. 21-24, also dealing with David's reign, comprise a variety of material which has not been integrated into the narrative of the preceding chapters. On the contrary, the symmetrical (concentric) arrangement of the several sections in the 'appendix' gives it an integrity of its own; it is anything but a haphazard assortment of traditions relating to David. At its centre stand two poetic pieces celebrating respectively Yahweh's delivering acts on behalf of David (22:1-51), and the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the house of David upon which so much of Israel's hope for the future is based (23:1-7). These, we are reminded, are the secret of David's greatness. The lists of heroes and heroic exploits that frame the poetic centre-piece represent human instrumentality, but not the underlying reality, which is Yahweh.

**Blaikie:** In the concluding part of Samuel the principal things recorded are two national judgments, a famine and a pestilence, that occurred in David's reign, the one springing from a transaction in the days of Saul, the other from one in the days of David. Then we have two very remarkable lyrical pieces, one a general song of thanksgiving, forming a retrospect of his whole career; the other a prophetic vision of the great Ruler that was to spring from him, and the effects of His reign. In addition to these, there is also a notice of certain wars of David's, not previously recorded, and a fuller statement respecting his great men than we have elsewhere.

**Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year-** Who causes (or allows) famines? Was this just an accident? Clearly God used famines in the lives of his saints - Moses Ge 12:10 Isaac in Ge 26:1 Joseph Ge 41:57. In the book of Ruth famine in the land drove Elimelech and his family to Moab, where Mahlon married Ruth the Moabitess who returns to Bethlehem with Naomi, marries Boaz and enters into the line of Messiah, all because of a famine in Bethlehem! So God uses famines in various ways in the lives of His children. Famine was one of the four judgments of God (Ezekiel 14:21; cp. 1 Ki 8:35-37).

**THOUGHT** - God still uses "famines" in one form or another in our lives. Sometimes the "famine" may reflect discipline for sins we have committed and even confessed, but sins for which we must still face consequences much as David had done after his sin with Bathsheba (2Sa 12:10-14). Sometimes God allows "famines" for tests (cf Dt 8:2-3+) to drive us to Him and/or to strengthen our faith. Notice what this famine did in David's life!

**John Trapp** on why David waited **3 years** - "The first and second year he might look upon it as a punishment laid upon them for the common sins of the land: but when he saw it continuing a third year also, he thought there was something in it more than ordinary, and therefore, although he well knew the natural cause to be drought, yet he inquired after the supernatural, as wise men should do."

[Guzik](#) adds "David wisely sought God in the face of chronic problems. David was concerned after the first year of famine, and even more after the second – but two years of famine didn't make him look to a spiritual cause."

**And David sought the presence of** (Literally = sought the face of - see 1Ch 16:11+) **the LORD** - Sought the face of Jehovah is a phrase not found elsewhere in Samuel. This is a key passage in understanding why David, despite his many failures, was considered a man after God's own heart, which here is exemplified by the fact that he sought the will of the LORD with all his heart! The affliction comes in the form of famine and it drove David to his knees for he sensed that the famine was discipline from the LORD. David did not know the cause of the divine discipline and sought Him for the "Why?"

**THOUGHT** - When affliction comes (as it will in all of our lives), where does it drive you? To God? To drugs? To drink? To other human counselors? God grant us by His Spirit, that our first reaction when affliction (trials, tests, etc) hit us, is that we hit our knees in Jesus' Name. Amen

[Paul Apple](#) adds these **THOUGHTS** - How long does a trial have to persist in our life before we seek the Lord for its significance or for deliverance? Did David wait for three years before earnestly entreating the Lord regarding this famine? When has the discipline of the Lord seemed harsh to us? How have we responded to the Lord's discipline?

**And the LORD said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house** - David (presumably) did not know about this past sin of Saul. It had to

be revealed to him. And so God answers David, explaining that the cause of the famine is punishment for sins committed by King Saul, which would have been decades earlier. Note that this is God's judgment and He does not just limit this bloodguiltiness to Saul, but clearly ascribes guilt to Saul's family (see [other translations above](#)). He does not tell us specifically how they became guilty, but clearly in God's eyes, they were guilty. This helps us understand the passage later in which the Gibeonites ask for 7 of Saul's sons and David agrees to their condition.

**THOUGHT** - The wheels of God justice may grind slowly, but they grind surely! That is a truth that should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted!

Deuteronomy 21:9 "So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

**Because** (term of explanation) **he put the Gibeonites to death** - Although we have no record in Scripture of the massacre, David does not question God's explanation. And so thankfully God doesn't leave David in the dark about the sins of Saul and his house, but specifically says his sin was putting to death the Gibeonites and thereby breaking the covenant Joshua had made with the Gibeonites and thereby calling down the wrath of God.

[Gleason Archer](#) helps us understand why the **famine** was on the entire nation of Israel - In the case of King Saul's grandchildren, no ordinary crime was involved. **It was a matter of national guilt on a level that affected Israel as a whole.** We are not given any information as to the time or the circumstances of Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites, but we are told that it was a grave breach of a covenant entered into back in the days of Joshua and enacted in the name of Yahweh (Josh. 9:3–15). All the nation was bound by this oath for all the days to come, even though it had been obtained under false pretenses. Therefore when Saul, as head of the Israelite government, committed this atrocity against the innocent Gibeonites, God saw to it that this covenant violation did not go unpunished. He sent a plague to decimate the population of all Israel, until the demands of justice could be met. God had delayed this visitation until it would do the least possible damage to the security of the nation, that is, until after the surrounding nations had been defeated and subdued to the rule of King David.

**Gotquestions** has an interesting comment - Notice that the famine was **not simply because of Saul's sin** but because of **"his bloody house"** (NASB). Seven of Saul's descendants were killed because of their own bloodguilt. Perhaps they had aided Saul in some manner in the slaughter of the Gibeonites. As the NLT says, "The famine has come because **Saul and his family are guilty of murdering the Gibeonites.**"

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#### QUESTION - [Who were the Gibeonites?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Gibeonites were a group of people, descended from the [Amorites](#) (2 Samuel 21:2). They are described in Joshua 9 as people who deceived the Israelites in order to protect themselves. After the Israelites had defeated the cities of Jericho (Joshua 6—7) and Ai (Joshua 8), many of the nearby Canaanites united to form a large army to fight Israel (Joshua 9:1–2).

The Gibeonites, however, took a different approach: "They resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, 'We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us'" (Joshua 9:4–6).

The Israelites did not consult with God before agreeing to the treaty and fell for the Gibeonites' scheme. The Israelites soon discovered they had been tricked and discussed how to respond. The leaders of Israel decided, "'We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that God's wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.' They continued, 'Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers in the service of the whole assembly.' So the leaders' promise to them was kept" (Joshua 9:19–21).

The end of this account notes, "That day [Joshua] made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly, to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose. And that is what they are to this day." (Joshua 9:27). In other words, the Gibeonites survived, yet they served as slaves to the Israelites for generations to come. The land of Gibeon would later be allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 21:17).

King Saul later broke the treaty that Joshua had signed and attacked the Gibeonites. Later still, during the time of King David, a famine occurred in Israel. When David asked the Lord about the famine, God said, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death" (2 Samuel 21:1). To appease the Gibeonites and put an end to the famine, seven descendants of Saul were given to them to be put to death (2 Samuel 21:6). God healed Israel's land after that (2 Samuel 21:14).

Though the Gibeonites were enemies of the Israelites, they teach us some important lessons today. The Gibeonites' deception was

effective because Joshua and his people did not first consult God for wisdom. Thus, Joshua 9 reveals the need for believers in Christ to pray concerning all major decisions and to seek His will before moving forward. Also, the fact that the Lord held the Israelites to their covenant with the Gibeonites shows that God requires faithfulness of His people. Breaking a covenant is a serious thing. Finally, the eventual incorporation of the Gibeonites into Israel shows the mercy and grace of God to all people. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### Related Resource:

- [What is the significance of Gibeon in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**2 Samuel 21:2** So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the sons of Israel made a covenant with them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah).

- **So:** Jos 9:3-21
- **the Amorites:** Ge 15:16
- **in his zeal:** De 7:16 1Sa 14:44 1Sa 15:8-9 2Ki 10:16,31 Lu 9:54,55 Joh 16:2 Ro 10:2 Ga 4:17
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 9:7+ The men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you are living within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?"

Joshua 11:19+ There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle.

### COVENANT CALLED FOR PROTECTION OF THE GIBEONITES FROM BLOODSHED

**So** - This is a term of conclusion. It means for this reason, and should always prompt a simple question as you are reading "for what reason?" In this case it follows up God's explanation of the cause of the 3 year famine which was related to death of the Gibeonites.

**The king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them** - This shows the humility of David in his willingness to solicit this response from Gibeonites whose status in the kingdom was that of lowly servants.

**(now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant[[yether](#)] of the Amorites** - These names can be very confusing in the Old Testament. Basically the **Amorites** were all of the non-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan and consisted of multiple different "-ites" (like Canaanites, Perizzites, etc). The **Gibeonites** were called **Hivites** ([see note](#)) in Joshua 9:7 and Joshua 11:19. So are you confused now? **Amorites** is the "umbrella term" which would include the **Gibeonites**, aka the Hivites! Now it's all clear! Note that parenthetical phrase **(now the Gibeonites were not of the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites)** is critical because it teaches that covenant before God is still a covenant whether the two parties were Hebrews or as in this case Hebrews and pagans! This teaches how serious God is regarding the truth of covenant. He considered it solemn, binding and not to be broken.

**THOUGHT** - This should greatly encourage every believer who has entered into the New Covenant in His blood by grace through faith. God will never, ever break His covenant with you. You cannot lose your salvation. God's faithfulness to His covenant is your absolute assurance that once you have truly entered into covenant with Him (Eph 2:8-9+), then rest assured that you will never be disqualified or removed from that covenant agreement! In short, it is trite but true, once saved, always saved! We just need to be sure we are truly born again ("once saved") and once in, we will never be put out.

**And the sons of Israel made a covenant** (all one word - [shaba](#)) **with them** - **NET** = has "made a promise," **CSB** = "taken an oath concerning them." **ESV** = "had sworn to spare them." **NLT** = "Had sworn not to kill them." Normally the word for **made** in "**made a covenant**" is the verb [karath](#) (meaning to cut) but here the verb is [shaba](#) which is similar in that it means to make an oath or to swear (literally "to seven something"). In fact in this passage "made (swore) a covenant" is all one word, so not even the Hebrew word for **covenant** ([beriyth](#)) is used here. And yet the concept of covenant is the key to the case so to speak. Joshua had bound himself to an immutable **covenant**. The covenant remained valid even though (1) It was a covenant cut some 400 years earlier, (2) the Gibeonites tricked Joshua and Israelites into entering into the covenant under false pretenses and (3) the covenant was not with



God's elect people Israel, but actually with pagans, presumably idol worshippers! The point is that independent of these variables, the terms of the covenant were binding on all subsequent generations of Israelites in their interactions with the Gibeonites. No exception clauses were allowed! The covenant was "sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel," and He would stand behind keeping and enforcing it!

Joshua 9:15 Joshua made peace with them and **made (cut = [karath](#)) a covenant ([beriyth](#))** with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation **swore an oath** (all one word - [shaba](#) as used here in 2Sa 24:2) to them. 16 It came about at the end of three days after they had **made a covenant** with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land. 17 Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. 18 The sons of Israel **did not strike them** because the leaders of the congregation **had sworn** (one word - [shaba](#)) to them **by the LORD the God of Israel**. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. 19 But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We **have sworn ([shaba](#))** to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and **now we cannot touch them**. 20 "This we will do to them, even let them live, **so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore ([shaba](#))** to them." 21 The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them.

[Guzik](#) adds that this story "emphasizes many important principles:

1. · God expects us to keep our promises.
2. · God expects nations to keep their promises.
3. · God does not excuse the obligations to keep our promises because of the passage of time.
4. · God's correction may come a long time after the offense.

**But Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah - NJB** = "Saul...had done his best to exterminate them." Out of ignorance or willful disobedience Saul broke the conditions of the 400 year old covenant, which was still in force. One other consideration regarding Saul's zeal is that he was thinking of passages like Dt 7:2+ which said "when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall **utterly destroy** (annihilate, exterminate) them. **You shall make no covenant** with them and show no favor to them." (cf Ex 34:11-16) Recall his zeal to cleanse the land from " mediums and spiritists." (1 Samuel 28:3). The problem of course was that Joshua had been deceived and disobeyed this command and made a covenant with the Gibeonites! It would also be a reasonable conclusion that King Saul had not read the passages in Joshua 9:20 which clearly WARN not to even touch the Gibeonites, much less kill them!

[Guzik](#) - We normally think of such zeal as something good. Yet Saul's *misguided* zeal was a sin and brought calamity on Israel. This is a good example of *good intentions* not excusing *bad actions*. We often excuse bad actions in ourselves and in others because of what we think are good intentions. But God examines both our *intentions* and our *actions*.

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#### QUESTION - [Who were the Amorites?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Amorites were an ancient nation mentioned frequently in the Old Testament. They were descended from one of the sons of Canaan (Genesis 10:15–16). In early inscriptions, the Amorites were also known as Amurra or Amurri. The "land of the Amorites" included Syria and Israel. Some of the southern mountains of Judea were also called the hill country of the Amorites (Deuteronomy 1:7, 19-20).

Two kings of the Amorites named [Sihon](#) and [Og](#) were defeated by the Israelites under Moses' leadership (Deuteronomy 31:4). In Joshua 10:10, five Amorite kings were defeated by the people of Israel, and the victory was decisively won in Joshua 11:8. In the time of Samuel, peace existed between Israel and the Amorites (1 Samuel 7:14).

Less than a century later, King Solomon forced the remaining Amorites into slavery: "All the people who were left of the Amorites . . . who were not of the people of Israel—their descendants who were left after them in the land, whom the people of Israel were unable to devote to destruction—these Solomon drafted to be slaves" (1 Kings 9:20-21). The Amorites are last mentioned in Amos 2:10. It is assumed they either died out or were absorbed into the culture of Israel.

The Amorites were known as fierce warriors during their prime. Moses referred to Og, the king of the Amorites, as a very tall man whose bed was approximately 13.5 feet long (Deuteronomy 3:11). Despite their strong numbers and military might, the Amorites were destroyed due to their worship of false gods. Israel's conquest of their land was part of God's judgment on the pagan Amorite culture.

Here are a couple lessons to learn from the Amorites:

First, only the one, true God is worthy of worship. The idols of the Amorites and the false gods they represent cannot compete with the omnipotent God of Israel.

Also, God gives nations opportunity to repent before judgment (2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 2:20-21). The Amorite nation had plenty of time to turn from their idolatry, but they despised God's goodness and longsuffering and refused to repent (Romans 2:4). The Lord's judgment upon them was severe, and anyone who imitates their rebellion will eternally regret it (Romans 2:5; Matthew 10:28; Revelation 2:22-23). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AMORITE (BDB 57, KB 67)**

The term "Amorite" (Akkadian, "land to the west" or "west wind") is used in four senses.

1. one of the several indigenous tribes of Canaan (e.g. Gen. 10:16; 15:18-21; Exod. 3:8,17; Deut. 20:17; Josh. 24:11; Ezra 9:1; Neh. 9:8 [nomadic tribes from Akkadian texts])
2. a general name for people to the west of Mesopotamia (cf. Jdgs. 6:10; 2 Kgs. 21:11; Ezek. 16:3, also from Assyrian and Babylonian texts)
3. inhabitants of the highlands as opposed to Canaanites who occupy the lowlands (cf. Num. 13:29; Deut. 1:7,19,20; 3:2)
4. "Canaanite" and "Amorite" are both used in a collective sense to designate all the indigenous tribes of Palestine/Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16; Jdgs. 6:10; Josh. 7:7; 1 Sam. 7:14; 1 Kgs. 21:26; 2 Kgs. 21:11). Usually "Canaanite" denotes those living on the coastal plain, while "Amorite" denotes those dwelling in the hill country (#3). For more detailed information, see ABD, vol. 1, pp. 199-202.
5. [SPECIAL TOPIC: PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE](#)

### **2 Samuel 21:3 Thus David said to the Gibeonites, "What should I do for you? And how can I make atonement that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?"**

BGT 2 Samuel 21:3 κα ε πεν Δαυιδ πρ ς το ς Γαβαων τας τ ποι σω μ ν κα ν τ νι ξιλ σομαι κα ε λογ σετε τ ν κληρονομ αν κυρ ου

LXE 2 Samuel 21:3 And David said to the Gabaonites, What shall I do to you? and wherewithal shall I make atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?

KJV 2 Samuel 21:3 Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

NET 2 Samuel 21:3 David said to the Gibeonites, "What can I do for you, and how can I make amends so that you will bless the LORD's inheritance?"

CSB 2 Samuel 21:3 He asked the Gibeonites, "What should I do for you? How can I make atonement so that you will bring a blessing on the LORD's inheritance?"

ESV 2 Samuel 21:3 And David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And how shall I make atonement, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?"

NIV 2 Samuel 21:3 David asked the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make amends so that you will bless the LORD's inheritance?"

NLT 2 Samuel 21:3 David asked them, "What can I do for you? How can I make amends so that you will bless the LORD's people again?"

NRS 2 Samuel 21:3 David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? How shall I make expiation, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?"

- **What should I do for you:** Ex 32:30 Lev 1:4 1Sa 2:25 Mic 6:6,7 Heb 9:22 10:4-12
- **bless:** 2Sa 20:19
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passage:**

2 Samuel 20:19+ "I am of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel. You are seeking to destroy a city,



even a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up **the inheritance of the LORD?**"

## DAVID'S APPEAL FOR RECONCILIATION

Thus David said to the Gibeonites, "What should I do for you? And how can I make atonement ([kaphar](#); Lxx - exilaskomai - see related [hilaskomai](#)) that you may bless ([barak](#)) the inheritance of the LORD?" - David comes to the Gibeonites more as a servant than as a king, another indicator of why he is a man after God's own heart (cf Mk 10:45+). David is asking the Gibeonites to tell him what actions could he take that would make amends for breakage of the covenant, ultimately so that they would then bless the LORD's **inheritance** which is another way of saying the LORD'S people and His land of Israel. Thus the paraphrase of the **NLT** = "so that you will bless the LORD's people again?"

[Kirkpatrick](#) - The "atonement" is a covering, which hides the offence from the eyes of the offended party, and withdraws the guilt from the gaze of an avenging God.

[Bob Utley](#) - Atonement (BDB 497, KB, 493, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is a powerful sacrificial term. David sensed the need for an act of eye-for-eye justice. [SPECIAL TOPIC: ATONEMENT](#)

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**Make atonement** (forgive, appease) (See "mercy seat") ([03722](#)) [kaphar](#) means to make atonement, to make reconciliation (to reconcile), to purge, to make propitiation (to propitiate), to pacify, to cancel. There are two main ideas regarding the meaning of **kaphar** - (1) Kaphar means to cover over sin (2) A number of resources however favor the idea that kaphar means to wipe away. These ideas are discussed more below.

**Richards** notes that "It is often said that the idea expressed (in kaphar) is one found in a possibly related Arabic root that means "to cover or conceal." **Atonement** would then denote a *covering* that *conceals* a person's sin and makes it possible for him to approach God. Although this relationship is possible, the language link is not at all certain. What is certain is the role that atonement played in the religion of Israel—a role given to atonement by God to carry a vital message about our faith."

The **NET Bible Note** (these are usually very good, even if a bit technical) states that the primary sense of the **kaphar** is "to wipe [something off (or on)]" (see esp. the goal of the sin offering, Lev 4, "to purge" the tabernacle from impurities), but in some cases it refers metaphorically to "**wiping away**" anything that might stand in the way of good relations by bringing a gift (see, e.g., Ge 32:20, "to appease; to pacify" as an illustration of this). The translation "**make atonement**" has been retained in Leviticus 1:4 because, ultimately, the goal of either **purging** or **appeasing** was to maintain a proper relationship between the LORD (Who dwelt in the tabernacle) and Israelites in whose midst the tabernacle was pitched.

As might be surmised the verb **kaphar** is found most often in the Pentateuch, especially in Leviticus. In Leviticus, **kaphar** is especially prominent in Leviticus 16, occurring 16 times in the great chapter that describes the annual Day of Atonement.

**Vine** writes that "Most uses of **kaphar** involve the theological meaning of "**covering over**," often with the blood of a sacrifice, in order to atone for some sin. It is not clear whether this means that the "**covering over**" hides the sin from God's sight or implies that the sin is **wiped away** in this process."

**Mounce** writes that while **kaphar** can mean "to cover, to ransom, or to wipe clean/purge, it is the last one that seems most appropriate in the OT."

(1) When **kāpar** is used in verses not connected with Israel's sacrificial system, it has the nuance of wiping something clean or appeasing someone. Jacob attempts to appease Esau's anger (i.e., to wipe the anger off his face) by the enormous gift he has sent on ahead of his actual encounter with him (Gen 32:20). Similarly, a wise man knows how to wipe away a king's wrath (Pr 16:14).

(2) In Israel's religious ceremonies other than the Day of Atonement, **kāpar** usually refers to God's wiping away our sins through various sacrifices (cf. Lev 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31). Note especially the parallel lines of Jer 18:23: "Do not forgive their crimes or blot out their sins from your sight." To *forgive* sins is to *blot* them out and *wipe* them clean. As Ps 65:3 attests, when we come to God overwhelmed by our sins, God *wipes* them clean (KJV, "will purge them away"; NIV "forgave"; cf. Ps 78:38 where "forgave" = kaphar).

(3) As described in Lev 16 (**kāpar** occurs 16x), the Day of Atonement was a **day of purging** sins from the holy sanctuary. All throughout the year, the priest sprinkled the blood of sacrificial animals in front of the curtain of the sanctuary (e.g., Lev 4:6) and thus symbolically transferred the sins of God's people into his Holy Place. By the end of the year, that place was, as it were, filled up with all their sins. Something had to be done in order to "clean house"; this was the purpose of the Day of Atonement. Note how in the final stage of this ceremony, the

sins of God's people were placed on the head of the live goat, who then carried them far away into the desert, never to be seen again. There was now "room" for another year's worth of sin in the Most Holy Place. Jesus, of course, has by his sacrifice taken away our sins once for all (Heb 9–10). See NIDOTTE, 2:699–702. (Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words)

**Here are the cognate (related) words:**

- Make Atonement (03722) [kapor](#) כָּפַר
- Atonement (03725) [kippur/kippurim](#) כִּפּוּרִים
- Mercy Seat (03727) [kapporet](#) כַּפֹּרֶת
- Ransom (03724) [koper](#)

**ATONEMENT** — the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings. The word can be broken into three parts that express this great truth in simple but profound terms: "at-one-ment." Through God's atoning grace and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of at-one-ment with God, in spite of our sin... Although Old Testament believers were truly forgiven and received genuine atonement through animal sacrifice, the New Testament clearly states that during the Old Testament period God's justice was not served: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" ([Heb. 10:4](#)). Atonement was possible "because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" ([Rom. 3:25](#)). However, God's justice was served in the death of Jesus Christ as a substitute: "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" ([Heb. 9:12](#)). "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant" ([Heb. 9:15](#)). (Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary)

**ATONEMENT.** The word 'atonement' is one of the few theological terms which derive basically from Anglo-Saxon. It means **a making at one**, and points to a process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity... Its use in theology is to denote the work of Christ in dealing with the problem posed by the sin of man, and in bringing sinners into right relation with God. (New Bible dictionary)

**ATONEMENT** - The English word atonement is derived from the two words "at onement" and denotes a state of togetherness and agreement between two people. Atonement presupposes two parties that are estranged, with the act of atonement being the reconciliation of them into a state of harmony. The theological meaning is the reconciliation between God and his fallen creation, especially between God and sinful human beings. Atonement is thus a solution to the main problem of the human race-its estrangement from God stemming from the fall of Adam and Eve. (Dictionary of biblical imagery)

**ATONEMENT** - The root meaning in English, "reparation," leads to the secondary meaning of reconciliation, or "at-one-ment," the bringing together into harmony of those who have been separated, enemies. (New International Bible Dictionary)

**ATONEMENT** In Christian thought, the act by which God and man are brought together in personal relationship. The term is derived from Anglo-Saxon words meaning "making at one," hence "at-one-ment." It presupposes a separation or alienation that needs to be overcome if human beings are to know God and have fellowship with him. As a term expressing relationship, atonement is tied closely to such terms as reconciliation and forgiveness. (Tyndale Bible dictionary)

**ATONEMENT** - Primarily in the Old Testament, atonement refers to the process God established whereby humans could make an offering to God to restore fellowship with God. Such offerings, including both live and dead animals, incense, and money, were required to remove the bad effects of human sin. ([Atonement - Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**2 Samuel 21:4** Then the Gibeonites said to him, "We have no concern of silver or gold with Saul or his house, nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel." And he said, "I will do for you whatever you say."

- We have no concern of silver or gold Ps 49:6-8 1Pe 1:18,19
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE GIBEONITE'S RESPONSE TO DAVID

**Then** - Marks progression in the narrative, in this case the response of the Gibeonites.

**the Gibeonites said to him, "We have no concern of silver or gold with Saul or his house, nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel."** - The Gibeonites did not desire a monetary payment or death of anyone in Israel, both quite magnanimous

answers for men who presumably were still pagans (but perhaps not?).

**Kirkpatrick** on no concern of silver or gold - No money compensation could expiate Saul's offence. Money-compensation for murder is allowed by the laws of most nations in a primitive stage, e.g. of the ancient Germans (Tac. Germ. 21); the Anglo-Saxons; and the Arabs of the present day. It was expressly forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Nu 35:31-32), because a mere money fine is insufficient to enforce strict regard for life, and such a custom may easily be abused by the rich.

**Utley** - The Gibeonites do not want a money compensation to cover Saul's genocide (cf Nu 35:31-32; see [Hard Sayings of the Bible pp. 170-171](#)). They want a blood atonement (i.e., eye-for-eye justice).

**And he said, "I will do for you whatever you say** - David is open to carry out whatever the Gibeonites request. Remember he has heard from the LORD and which would presumably mean he had heard that he was to do what the Gibeonites desired.

**2 Samuel 21:5 So they said to the king, "The man who consumed us and who planned to exterminate us from remaining within any border of Israel,**

LXE 2 Samuel 21:5 And he said, What say ye? speak, and I will do it for you. And they said to the king, The man who would have made an end of us, and persecuted us, who plotted against us to destroy us, let us utterly destroy him, so that he shall have no standing in all the coasts of Israel.

KJV 2 Samuel 21:5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

NET 2 Samuel 21:5 They replied to the king, "As for this man who exterminated us and who schemed against us so that we were destroyed and left without status throughout all the borders of Israel—

CSB 2 Samuel 21:5 They replied to the king, "As for the man who annihilated us and plotted to destroy us so we would not exist within the whole territory of Israel,

ESV 2 Samuel 21:5 They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel,

NIV 2 Samuel 21:5 They answered the king, "As for the man who destroyed us and plotted against us so that we have been decimated and have no place anywhere in Israel,

NLT 2 Samuel 21:5 Then they replied, "It was Saul who planned to destroy us, to keep us from having any place at all in the territory of Israel.

NRS 2 Samuel 21:5 They said to the king, "The man who consumed us and planned to destroy us, so that we should have no place in all the territory of Israel--

- **The man:** 2Sa 21:1 Es 9:24,25 Mt 7:2
- **planned to exterminate,** Da 9:26
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GIBEONITES REPLY INTRODUCES SAUL AS THEIR MAJOR ADVERSARY**

**So they said to the king, "The man who consumed us and who planned to exterminate us from remaining within any border of Israel - CSB** = "so we would not exist within the whole territory of Israel." Clearly in context the man **who consumed us**, etc, is a reference to King Saul. In his zeal he had planned to annihilate the Gibeonites, a task he clearly did not accomplish for these men were offspring of the mistreated people group.

**Utley** - Notice three things Saul wanted to do to the Gibeonites. (1) consumed us – BDB 477, KB 476, *Piel* PERFECT, (2) planned to exterminate us – BDB 1029, KB 1552, Niphal PERFECT (3) that we should have no place in Israel – BDB 426, KB 427, *Hithpael* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

**2 Samuel 21:6 let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD." And the king said, "I will give them."**

BGT 2 Samuel 21:6 δ τω μ ν π τ νδρας κ τ ν υ ν α το κα ξηλι σωμεν α το ς τ κυρ ν Γαβαων Σαουλ κλεκτο ς κυρ ου κα ε πεν βασιλε ς γ δ σω

LXE 2 Samuel 21:6 Let one give us seven men of his sons, and let us **hang them up in the sun** to the Lord in Gabaon of Saul, as chosen out for the Lord. And the king said, I will give them.

KJV 2 Samuel 21:6 Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we **will hang them** up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them.

NET 2 Samuel 21:6 let seven of his male descendants be turned over to us, and **we will execute them** before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, who was the LORD's chosen one." The king replied, "I will turn them over."

CSB 2 Samuel 21:6 let seven of his male descendants be handed over to us so we **may hang them** in the presence of the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the LORD's chosen." The king answered, "I will hand them over."

ESV 2 Samuel 21:6 let seven of his sons be given to us, so that we may **hang them** before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the chosen of the LORD." And the king said, "I will give them."

NIV 2 Samuel 21:6 let seven of his male descendants be given to us to **be killed and exposed** before the LORD at Gibeah of Saul--the LORD's chosen one." So the king said, "I will give them to you."

NLT 2 Samuel 21:6 So let seven of Saul's sons be handed over to us, and we will **execute** them before the LORD at Gibeon, on the **mountain** (Cf 2Sa 21:9) of the LORD. " "All right," the king said, "I will do it."

NRS 2 Samuel 21:6 let seven of his sons be handed over to us, and we will **impale** them before the LORD at Gibeon on the **mountain** (Cf 2Sa 21:9) of the LORD." The king said, "I will hand them over."

NJB 2 Samuel 21:6 we want seven of his descendants handed over to us; and we shall **dismember** them before Yahweh at Gibeon on Yahweh's hill.' 'I shall hand them over,' said the king.

NAB 2 Samuel 21:6 let seven men from among his descendants be given to us, that **we may dismember** them before the LORD in Gibeon, on the LORD'S mountain." The king replied, "I will give them up."

YLT 2 Samuel 21:6 let there be given to us seven men of his sons, and **we have hanged** them before Jehovah, in the height of Saul, the chosen of Jehovah.' And the king saith, 'I do give;'

- **hang**: 2Sa 17:23 18:10 Ge 40:19,22 Nu 25:4,5 De 21:22 Jos 8:29 10:26 Ezr 6:11 Es 9:10,13,14 Mt 27:5
- **in**: 1Sa 10:26 11:4
- **chosen of the Lord**, 1Sa 9:16,17 10:1,24 Ac 13:21
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 35:33-34+ 'So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and **no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.** 34' You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.'"

Exodus 20:5+ "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

1 Samuel 10:24+ Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom **the LORD has chosen?** Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

## THEIR TERMS - HEADS OF TWO SONS & SEVEN GRANDSONS OF SAUL

**Let seven men from his sons be given to us, and we will hang them**(NAS note = "expose them") **before the LORD in Gibeah** (Saul's hometown) **of Saul, the chosen of the LORD** - Thankfully the Gibeonites did not seek a wholesale slaughter of Israelites as Saul had apparently done to their tribe. **Seven** is the Biblical number signifying completion, in this case in the eyes of the Gibeonites completely fulfilling the payment of blood for blood ([see above](#)) for the covenant which was broken 400 years before. Notice these (presumably) pagan peoples say **before the LORD**, implying they understand something of Jehovah and His law. Interesting! Note they also dictate the place of the hanging is to be in **Gibeah** the hometown of the perpetrator King Saul, whom they add was **chosen of the LORD** implying they knew something about 1Sa 10:24+!

[Kirkpatrick](#) on **seven** - A sacred number, for their execution was to be a solemn religious act of expiation.

[Utiley](#) on **let seven men...be given to us** - This is a good example of Ex 20:5+ (but not Ex 20:6+; see Gleason Archer, [Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#), and [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)). The number seven was a symbolic number (See [SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE](#))

**Guzik** - Obviously, we are not told *everything* about this incident; we must trust the principle stated by Abraham: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* (Genesis 18:25)

[Utiley](#) on **hang them** - The [Masoretic Text](#) has a VERB (BDB 429, KB 431, *Hiphil* PERFECT with *waw*) which basically means "be dislocated" or "alienated," but the Arabic root means "to fall" (REB). KB suggests the Akkadian root "to impale on a stake" (JPSOA, NRSV). BDB says "some solemn form of execution" (NJB, Peshitta). There is no example of hanging (i.e., rope around the neck) in the ANE. Often once someone was executed for a crime, their body was publicly exposed on a stake.

**Kirkpatrick** - They were to be impaled or crucified, as a public exhibition of the punishment inflicted. In all probability they were put to death first. The practice corresponds to that of hanging a criminal's body in chains on the scene of his crime, which was once common in England. **BEFORE THE LORD** - For the punishment was demanded by divine justice. Cp. Numbers 25:4. **CHOSEN OF THE LORD** - The exact title, the chosen of Jehovah, is nowhere else given to Saul, but is implied by 1 Samuel 10:24. That it should be thus used by his enemies is strange.

**Blaikie**: What the Gibeonites asked had a grim look of justice; it showed a burning desire to bring home the punishment as near as possible to the offender . . . Seven was a perfect number, and therefore the victims should be seven. Their punishment was, to be hanged or crucified, but in inflicting this punishment the Jews were more merciful than the Romans; the criminals were first put to death, then their dead bodies were exposed to open shame. They were to be hanged "unto the Lord," as a satisfaction to expiate His just displeasure. They were to be hanged "in Gibeah of Saul," to bring home the offence visibly to him, so that the expiation should be at the same place as the crime. ([2 Samuel 21](#))

**NET Note** - The exact nature of this execution is not altogether clear. The verb [יָצַק](#) (*yaqa'*) basically means "to dislocate" or "alienate." In Gen 32:26 it is used of the dislocation of Jacob's thigh. Figuratively it can refer to the removal of an individual from a group (e.g., Jer 6:8; Ezek 23:17) or to a type of punishment the specific identity of which is uncertain (e.g., here and Num 25:4); cf. NAB "dismember them"; NIV "to be killed and their bodies exposed."

**And the king said, "I will give them** - David agrees to their terms. The **TSK** note is speculative but reasonable writing "As God accepted the expiation here demanded, we must suppose that both the enquiry of David, and the answer of the Gibeonites, were directed by some open or secret intimation from him."

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**Hang** ([03363](#)) (*yaqa*) means to be dislocated or alienated. It can mean to kill by impaling and mutilating a person's body, most probably involving the dislocation of limbs or the head. *Yaqa* can also mean to turn quickly, to turn away, to be alienated (Jer. 6:8; Ezek. 23:17, 18). Used of a bodily joint, it has the meaning of dislocation, "so the socket of Jacob's thigh was **dislocated**" (Ge. 32:25). It has the sense of violent, total rejection, amounting to execution in Nu 25:4 = "The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and **execute** them (Lxx = *paradeigmatizo* = hold up to contempt, expose, make an example of, disgrace someone publicly, expose) in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." A similar meaning is suggested by the context in 2Sa 21:6, 9, 13.

**Gilbrant** - *Yāqa'* has a variety of nuances in its eight appearances in the Hebrew Bible. The basic sense of the root hinges upon the notion of "separation," yielding the primary meaning, "to dislocate." The verb is used in the sense of "to revile" in three of its occurrences. In the lengthy allegory of the adulterous sisters (representing Israel and Judah) in Ezek. 23, the younger sister (Judah) becomes reviled at her bed partner (Babylon, allegorically representing the rebellion of the vassal Judah, who then sought a political and military alliance with Egypt), while the whole situation reviles, even alienates Yahweh from the younger sister (vv. 17f). Alienation of Yahweh indicates covenant revocation, that the end is now in sight for Judah. Jeremiah used this verb in the same sense, in that Yahweh was ready to abandon Jerusalem to the Babylonians, as the Covenant, so frequently broken by the people, was finally about to be annulled (Jer. 6:8). Another unambiguous nuance is found in Gen. 32:25. Clearly Jacob's hip "became" dislocated by the act of the Being he struggled with. The remaining four usages are all in the *Hiphil* (causative) stem. In line with the primary nuance of separation, one wishes to see the verb show some sort of physical rending of the bodies of those in question (the Arabic cognate means "to crack"). The two contexts these forms appear in are found in the account of the Baal Peor incident in the wilderness (as the people worshiped Moabite deities) and in the narrative concerning the avenging of the Gibeonites on the house of Saul (2 Sam. 21:6, 9, 13). Some sort of



desecration was done to the bones of those who are killed. One might presume that the action described is the scattering of the bones, a terrifying fate in the eyes of the Israelites. However, the Numbers context seems to demand a quicker desecration. It has been suggested that the nuance might be to impale the corpses, as impaling serves as a way to separate the vertebrae of the executed. ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Yaqa** - 8x/8v - alienated(1), became disgusted(2), dislocated(1), execute(1), hang(1), hanged(2).

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**Gleason Archer** - see page 165 in [Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - **Deuteronomy 24:16 says that children will not be killed for the sins of the fathers. Yet 2 Samuel 12:15–18 shows that the baby born to David and Bathsheba died because of their sin. Later, in 2 Samuel 21:5–9, Saul’s seven grandchildren were put to death because of his sin, in order to bring the three year famine to an end. How do we reconcile these?**

Deuteronomy 24:16+ lays down a general principle that human courts and human governments are not to impute to children or grandchildren the guilt of their parents or forebears when they themselves have not become implicated in the crime committed. It is clearly recognized in Scripture that each person stands on his own record before God. If one is personally guilty of unbelief or wickedness and fails to repent and trust in God’s mercy through the blood shed on the altar, that person will die for his own sin—not for that of his father. But if the child is upright and a true believer, he is justified before God; yet he cannot be justified on the basis of his father’s righteousness if he himself rejects the grace of God (Jer. 31:29–30; Ezek 18:1–20). On at least one occasion it is mentioned in the history of Judah that after the assassination of King Joash, his son Amaziah punished only his assassins themselves, sparing their children (2 Kings 14:6).

Although this legal principle of dealing with each person according to his deeds is firmly laid down in Scripture, it is also made clear that God retained for Himself the responsibility of ultimate judgment in the matter of capital crime. In the case of the child conceived by Bathsheba of David when she was married to Uriah, the loss of that baby (in that Old Testament setting) was a judgment visited on the guilty parents for their gross sin (which actually merited the death penalty under Lev. 20:10). It is by no means suggested that the child was suffering punishment for his parents’ sin but that they were being punished by his death.

**In the case of King Saul’s grandchildren, no ordinary crime was involved. It was a matter of national guilt on a level that affected Israel as a whole. We are not given any information as to the time or the circumstances of Saul’s massacre of the Gibeonites, but we are told that it was a grave breach of a covenant entered into back in the days of Joshua and enacted in the name of Yahweh (Josh. 9:3–15). All the nation was bound by this oath for all the days to come, even though it had been obtained under false pretenses. Therefore when Saul, as head of the Israelite government, committed this atrocity against the innocent Gibeonites, God saw to it that this covenant violation did not go unpunished. He sent a plague to decimate the population of all Israel, until the demands of justice could be met. God had delayed this visitation until it would do the least possible damage to the security of the nation, that is, until after the surrounding nations had been defeated and subdued to the rule of King David.**

However, the high mortality resulting from the famine compelled David to inquire of the Lord what was the reason for this new calamity. God’s answer came to him: “It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death” (2 Sam. 21:1, NASB). Saul himself and his sons had already fallen in battle, slain by the Philistines at the battle of Mount Gilboa; but the full measure of his guilt had yet to be paid for. This vengeance had to be visited on seven descendants of that king, for seven was a number symbolizing the complete work of God. Israel had to learn by this solemn object lesson that their covenants with foreign nations, sworn to in the name of Yahweh, had to be observed at all costs.

Under special circumstances, then, the general rule of safeguarding children against punishment for the sins of their parents was subject to exceptions, so far as God’s administration of justice was concerned. In each of the above cases it is fair to conclude that if the children involved had been permitted to live out a normal lifespan, they would have chosen to follow in the evil example of their forebears and thus occasioned much suffering and woe to others. Only God could know that for a certainty, however, for only He can foreknow the potential of each new soul. For man to inflict such preventive penalty without express permission from God (as in the case of Joshua and the population of Jericho) would be the height of injustice and presumption.

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**QUESTION - [Was the killing of Saul’s descendants a just response to Saul’s killing of the Gibeonites?](#)**

**ANSWER** - 2 Samuel 21:9 says that David gave seven of Saul’s descendants (two sons and five grandsons) “over to the Gibeonites, who killed them and exposed their bodies on a hill before the LORD. All seven of them fell together; they were put to death during the first days of the harvest, just as the barley harvest was beginning.” The grisly proceedings were obviously sanctioned by David. Did God also approve of the slaughter?

The background for the slaying of Saul’s descendants was this: years before, King Saul had tried to eradicate the Gibeonites from



Israel; however, his action violated the covenant Joshua had made with Gibeon in Joshua 9. As a direct result of Israel's breaking their covenant, God sent a famine upon Israel for three years. After Saul's time, David had the responsibility to provide justice for the Gibeonites. When he asked them what they would require to make things right, the Gibeonites requested the lives of seven of Saul's sons, and David handed them over.

It seems that Saul's seven descendants who were killed were no better men than Saul had been: the fruit had not fallen far from the tree. Reading 2 Samuel 21:1, we see that "during the reign of David there was a famine for three successive years, and David sought the face of the LORD. And the LORD said, 'It is because of the blood shed by Saul **and his family**, because he killed the Gibeonites'" (emphasis added).

Notice that the famine was not simply because of Saul's sin but because of '**his bloody house**' (NASB). Seven of Saul's descendants were killed because of their own bloodguilt. Perhaps they had aided Saul in some manner in the slaughter of the Gibeonites. As the NLT says, "The famine has come because Saul and his family are guilty of murdering the Gibeonites."

In short, David (and God) saw the killings as justice against the "bloody house" of Saul. Yes, God did approve of the killing of the guilty in this case, because it was a just punishment for their involvement in the prior murder of innocent men. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**2 Samuel 21:7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the oath of the LORD which was between them, between David and Saul's son Jonathan.**

- **Mephibosheth:** 2Sa 4:4 2Sa 9:10 16:4 19:25
- **because:** 1Sa 18:3 1Sa 20:8,15,17,42 1Sa 23:18
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

2 Samuel 9:3+ 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 (AKA "MEPHIBOSHETH")."

1 Samuel 20:14-16+ (THIS WAS THE SECOND COVENANT - FIRST WAS 1Sa 18:3-4+. NOW WE READ JONATHAN'S WORDS TO DAVID) "If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness of the LORD, that I may not die? 15 "You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." 16 So Jonathan made a *covenant* with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD require it at the hands of David's enemies."

1 Samuel 20:42+ Jonathan said to David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and **between my descendants and your descendants forever.**'" Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city.

1 Samuel 23:18+ So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.

### COVENANT MERCY FOR MEPHIBOSHETH

**But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the oath of the LORD which was between them, between David and Saul's son Jonathan** - Notice how this passage uses **oath** as a synonym in this context for covenant, thus paralleling the use of the verb [shaba](#) ("*made a covenant*" or swear an oath - 2Sa 21:2). David is demonstrating his faithfulness to his solemn, binding covenant with Jonathan. And so in this section we see the intertwining of two covenants, one that Joshua had made with the Gibeonites and one which Jonathan had made with David. David had shown covenant kindness to Jonathan's son, grandson of Saul and he was "off limits" because of his love for Jonathan that had led them to cut a personal covenant. And so we see **the power of covenant** - punishment for breaking one covenant and protection based on keeping the second covenant.

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**Oath** ([07621](#)) [shebua](#) from **sheba** - seven) "a sacred promise attesting to what one has done or will do. God swore an oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He would fulfill His covenant with them (Gen. 26:3; Deut. 7:8; 1 Chr. 16:16). An oath could also be sworn by a person to declare innocence (Ex. 22:11[10]; Num. 5:21); to proclaim friendship (2 Sam. 21:7); to affirm a promise (Lev.

5:4; 1 Ki. 2:43); to ratify a peace treaty (Josh. 9:20); to pledge loyalty to God (2 Chr. 15:15); or to another person (Neh. 6:18). An oath was considered to be an unbreakable contract; however, in two instances, the Bible presents well-defined possibilities in which an oath could be nullified and the obligated party could be acquitted. Abraham provided for his servant to be released from his obligation to find a bride for Isaac if the woman refused to follow (Gen. 24:8); and the spies provided for their own release from their oath to Rahab if she did not display the scarlet cord and stay in her house or if she revealed the intentions of the Israelites (Josh. 2:17, 20)." (Complete Word Study Dictionary) "Abraham sealing an oath (shāba', q.v.) by Abimelech that a well of water is his, Abraham's, by forcing upon Abimelech seven lambs (Genesis 21:28, 30). So too in [Genesis 29:18](#) it is precisely seven years that Jacob must serve Laban for Rachel and for Leah. These instances seem to be examples of an ancient traditional respect for the number seven, the original basis of which is a matter of conjecture and debate." (TWOT)

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Multiple resources on the incredible, crucial truths of covenant...

- [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)
- [Covenant: Why Study It?](#)
- [Covenant: Introduction](#)
- [Lesson 1 Covenant: Summary Table](#)
- [Lesson 2 Covenant: The Exchange of Robes](#)
- [Lesson 3 Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts](#)
- [Lesson 4 Covenant: Solemn and Binding](#)
- [Lesson 5 Covenant: A Walk Into Death](#)
- [Lesson 6 Covenant: The Oneness of Covenant](#)
- [Covenant: Oneness Notes](#)
- [Lesson 7 Covenant: Withholding Nothing from God](#)
- [Lesson 8 Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#)
- [Lesson 9 Covenant: New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Lesson 10 Covenant: Why the New is Better](#)
- [Lesson 11 Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)
- [New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Name change](#)
- [Covenant Meal](#)
- [Friend a covenant word \(notes\)](#)
- [Covenant memorial](#)
- [Phylacteries in OT](#)
- [Commingle of blood \(notes\)](#)
- [Common life of covenant](#)
- [Striking of hands](#)

In case you feel like a deeper study of the truth of covenant is not worthwhile listen to the words of **Andrew Murray**, the gifted nineteenth century writer who speaks to the importance of studying covenant

Blessed is the man who truly knows God as his God; who knows what the **Covenant** promises him; what unwavering confidence of expectation it secures, that all its [covenant's] terms will be fulfilled to him; what a claim and hold it gives him on the **Covenant**-keeping God Himself. To many a man, who has never thought much of the **Covenant**, a true and living faith in it would mean the transformation of his whole life **ED**: BELOVED I CAN TESTIFY THIS IS TRUE AS THE SPIRIT OF GOD LITERALLY USED THE STUDY OF COVENANT TO "RESURRECT" OUR DEAD MARRIAGE!!! WE HAVE NOW -- 2023- BEEN IN COVENANT 54 YEARS! PRAISE THE LORD AND PRAISE HIM FOR HIS LIFE-CHANGING TRUTH OF COVENANT!). The full knowledge of what God wants to do for him; the assurance that it will be done by an Almighty Power; the being drawn to God Himself in personal surrender, and dependence, and waiting to have it done (ED: BUT NOT "LET GO, LET GOD," BUT MORE ACCURATELY "LET GOD, LET'S GO!" SEE "[100%/100%](#)"); all this would make the Covenant the very gate of heaven. May the Holy Spirit give us some vision of its glory. ([Murray, Andrew: Two Covenants](#))

**2 Samuel 21:8** So the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth whom she had born to Saul, and the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had born to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

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KJV 2 Samuel 21:8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of **Michal** the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

NET 2 Samuel 21:8 So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah whom she had born to Saul, and the five sons of Saul's daughter **Merab** whom she had born to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

**NET NOTE-** The Masoretic Text reads "Michal" here, but **two Hebrew manuscripts** read "**Merab**," along with some LXX manuscripts.

CSB 2 Samuel 21:8 But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, who were the two sons whom Rizpah daughter of Aiah had borne to Saul, and the five sons whom **Merab** daughter of Saul had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite

ESV 2 Samuel 21:8 The king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of **Merab** the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite;

NIV 2 Samuel 21:8 But the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah, whom she had borne to Saul, together with the five sons of Saul's daughter **Merab**, whom she had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

NLT 2 Samuel 21:8 But he gave them Saul's two sons Armoni and Mephibosheth, whose mother was Rizpah daughter of Aiah. He also gave them the five sons of Saul's daughter **Merab**, the wife of Adriel son of Barzillai from Meholah.

NRS 2 Samuel 21:8 The king took the two sons of Rizpah daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of **Merab** daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite;

- **Rizpah:** 2Sa 3:7
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 18:19 So it came about at the time when [Merab](#), Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to [Adriel](#) the [Meholathite](#) for a wife.

1 Kings 2:7 "But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother.

### SEVEN SONS OF SAUL TO APPEASE THE GIBEONITES

**So** - For the reason. What reason? This would bring the sin of Saul to a conclusion.

The king took the two sons of [Rizpah](#) (concubine of Saul -2Sa 3:7) the daughter of [Aiah](#), [Armoni](#) and [Mephibosheth](#) whom she had born to Saul, and the five sons of [Merab](#) the daughter of Saul, whom she had born to [Adriel](#) the son of [Barzillai](#) the [Meholathite](#) - Note KJV says "five sons of Michal" but this is not correct and all the translations use **Merab**, not Michal ([see above](#)). And [comparing Scripture with Scripture](#), clearly it was Merab who was married to [Adriel](#) the [Meholathite](#). Note this is obviously not Jonathan's **Mephibosheth**, but one of Saul's two sons, the other 5 being Saul's grandsons. So even as David's sin had brought bloodshed to his family, Saul even though dead, reaped bloodshed for his "sons" because he had broken God's covenant.

**Targum** on **Merab** versus **Michal** - the explanation given in the Targum...."the five sons of Merab, (whom Michal the daughter of Saul brought up), whom she bare to Adriel."

The other name (other than [Mephibosheth](#)) that might be confusing is [Barzillai](#) who had helped feed David's army in the civil war with Asalom and had received a blessing from him. This Barzillai in 2Sa 21:8 is a different Barzillai, there being 3 men of this name in the OT - (1) [Barzillai](#), the Gileadite (an Israeli) leader who helped David defeat Absalom's rebellion (2Sa 17:27-29; 2Sa 19:31-40; Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63 - As an aside notice the "positive" ripple effect of godly old Barzillai's lineage!) and David on his death-bed, remembered his kindness and commended godly Barzillai's offspring children to the care of Solomon (1Ki 2:7), (2) a priest, son-in-

law to Barzillai the Gileadite and (3) (THIS IS THE BARZILLAI IN 2Sa 21:8) an Israelite from Mahalath whose son **Adriel** married Merab, Saul's daughter, his sons ending up on the short end of the noose.

**THOUGHT** - We might be tempted to point an accusing or condemning finger at King Saul, but when we do, we need to remember that one index finger pointing toward Saul, usually leaves 4 fingers pointing back at us! There is not one of us fathers or grandfathers that should not cringe at least a little as we read these passages, realizing that a sin we commit now could theoretically reverberate down the generations of our lineage and fall on them like it fell on Saul's sons (not implying that our sins would have such a dramatic consequence, but just that they might have a consequence that we would not even be aware of, because we are already "dust to dust!"). O God, by Thy Spirit enable us to walk worthy of our high, regal calling (cf Rev 5:9, et al), that we would not sow seed that later generations would be forced to reap. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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**BARZILLAI** - bar-zil'-a-i, bar-zil'-i (barzillay; Berzelli, "man of iron" (BDB, but compare Cheyne, Encyclopedia Biblica)):

(1) **A Gileadite of Rogelim** who brought provisions to David and his army to Mahanaim, in their flight from Absalom (2 Sam 17:27-29). When David was returning to Jerusalem after Absalom's defeat, Barzillai conducted him over Jordan, but being an old man of 80 years of age, he declined David's invitation to come to live in the capital, and sent instead his son Chimham (2 Sam 19:31-39). David before his death charged Solomon to "show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai." (1 Ki 2:7). Cheyne in Encyclopedia Biblica, without giving any reason, differentiates this Barzillai from Barzillai the Gileadite (Ezra 2:61 = Neh 7:63).

(2) **The father of a family of priests** who in Ezra's time, after the return of the exiles, could not trace their genealogy. "Therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood." This Barzillai had taken "a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite," and had adopted his wife's family name (Ezr 2:61,62 = Neh 7:63,64). His original name is given as Jaddus (the King James Version Addus) (1 Esdras 5:38).

(3) **Barzillai the Meholathite**, whose son Adriel was married to Saul's daughter, Merab (1 Sam 18:19).

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**QUESTION** - [Who was Rizpah in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Rizpah was a [concubine](#) of King Saul's who played a minor role in two events in David's rise to power. Although David was anointed by Samuel to succeed Saul as king of Israel when David was quite young, David was content to wait for God's timing to actually become king. In fact, he executed Saul's supposed killer (2 Samuel 1:1–16) and did not kill Saul's remaining male heirs, defying the standard custom in many cultures. David paid particular respect for Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son (2 Samuel 9).

Rizpah's part in the first event concerning [David](#) is very small. In 2 Samuel 3, Saul had died and David is king over the southern half of the kingdom, but Saul's son [Ish-Bosheth](#) has garnered support in the northern half. [Abner](#), Saul's cousin and general, had been a rising star in Saul's court and now champions Ish-Bosheth as king. Possibly out of paranoia, Ish-Bosheth accuses Abner of sleeping with Rizpah, essentially charging him with trying to take Saul's throne for himself. Abner is incensed to the point that he immediately switches his allegiance and swears to support God's oath to "transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish David's throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba" (2 Samuel 3:10). Abner gathers support for David, including from Saul's own tribe of Benjamin, and visits David to declare his loyalty. David lets Abner leave in peace, but [Joab](#), David's second-in-command, secretly calls Abner back and murders him (verses 26–27). David asserts his innocence in the matter and even takes part in the funeral procession for Abner. Shortly thereafter, Ish-Bosheth is murdered, too. David, who did not want to take the throne through intrigue against Saul's house, has Ish-Bosheth's assassins executed (2 Samuel 4).

While there is speculation that Abner did indeed sleep with Rizpah and that Rizpah was willing to transfer her own loyalties to the stronger leader, the Bible doesn't say. All we know is that Abner denied being involved with Rizpah.

Rizpah had two sons by [Saul](#), both of whom were spared when David came into power. Years later, when David held the northern part of the kingdom as well as the southern, Israel was struck by a famine that lasted three years (2 Samuel 21:1–14). David, recognizing that the famine may be a divine judgment against the nation, asks God if this is so. God affirms that the famine is punishment for Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites, who had been protected by a treaty since the Israelites first invaded the Promised Land (Joshua 9:1–27). The breach of contract was serious enough that God sent the famine in response. David approaches the Gibeonites to ask how Israel can make restitution, and they demand the lives of seven of Saul's descendants.

David complies with the Gibeonites' demand, taking the remaining seven sons and grandsons of Saul (except for Jonathan's son Mephibosheth) and giving them to the Gibeonites. After the executions, Rizpah stood guard over the bodies of her sons and the five others, sleeping on a rock on a bed of sackcloth and chasing away birds and wild animals. Rizpah did this "from the beginning of

the harvest till the rain poured down from the heavens" (2 Samuel 21:10). For a body to be exposed to the elements and eaten by wild animals after death was a sign of dishonor and possibly even a curse. Rizpah's self-sacrificing devotion reminds David that he had neglected the bodies of Saul and Jonathan, which were held at Jabesh Gilead. David took Saul's and Jonathan's bones along with the remains of the seven who were executed by the Gibeonites and buried them properly in Saul's family tomb. In response, God lifted the famine....

So Rizpah played a role in two different stories of how David strived to take the crown God had promised without disrespecting (or destroying) the family of his predecessor. Her devotion to Saul's sons and grandsons also served to remind David that he had a duty to his former king and, as long as Saul and his descendants were not properly buried, his succession was not complete. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**2 Samuel 21:9 Then he gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before the LORD, so that the seven of them fell together; and they were put to death in the first days of harvest at the beginning of barley harvest.**

- **before the Lord:** 2Sa 21:6 6:17,21 Ex 20:5 Nu 35:31-34 De 21:1-9 1Sa 15:33 2Ki 24:3,4
- **in the beginning:** This happened in Judea about the vernal equinox, or 21st of March. Ru 1:22
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Deuteronomy 21:22-23+ "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 24:16+ "Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin. (See [Kaiser's discussion below](#))

### GIBEONITES AVENGE THEIR BLOOD WITH SAUL'S BLOOD

**Then** - Marks progression in saga of the story of "pay day, some day," that is, the sins of Saul would come home to roost.

**He gave them into the hands** ([yad](#) = power) **of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the mountain before the LORD-** There seems to be a bit of "poetic justice" here as the covenant Saul had broken was before the LORD, and the reaping of the consequences was **before the LORD**.

**MacArthur** points out that "These pagans were not bound by the law of Dt 21:22, 23, which forbade leaving a dead body hanging over night. (THIS NEXT STATEMENT SEEMS A BIT SPECULATIVE) Their intention was to let the bodies hang until God signaled He was satisfied and sent rain to end the famine. Such a heathen practice, designed to propitiate their gods, was a superstition of these Gibeonites. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Guzik - The *method* of death was also important because it fulfilled the promise of Deuteronomy 21:23: *he who is hanged is accursed of God*. These descendants of Saul bore the curse Saul deserved and so delivered Israel from the guilt of their sin against the Gibeonites. This promise from Deuteronomy 21:23 explains why Jesus died the way He did. Galatians 3:13 explains: *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")*.

**So that** (marks result or purpose) **the seven of them fell together; and they were put to death in the first days of harvest at the beginning of barley harvest - Barley harvest** preceded wheat harvest, and began about the middle or end of April. Cp. Ex 9:31-32; Ru 1:22; Ru 2:23. It is interesting that these seven were hung in the spring, even as the Son of David would hang from a cross in the spring, also "before the LORD," also to atone (in the greatest sense of the word) for sins against Him.

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**Paul Apple has an interesting application of this pericope 2Sa 21:1-14 -**

**LESSONS ABOUT ATONEMENT:** share the gospel from this passage ! -

- God's Presence and God's Favor = What is Most Important in Life

- Covenant Relationship Dictates Certain Acceptable Behavior to Maintain the Relationship
- Covenant Breaking = Serious Business
- Sin Alienates from God's Presence and God's Favor – Separates us from God
- Judgment of Famine designed to awaken our conscience and show us our need for reconciliation
- Key Question; How Can I Make Atonement?
- Answer determined by offended party – not the invention of the sinner
- Atonement cannot be purchased or earned by good works
- Substitutionary Death involved – the shedding of blood; death and burial
- (No picture of resurrection here; limited analogy)

**Walter Kaiser - Why Were Saul's Descendants Killed?** - see page 198 in [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#) - The background for this episode goes all the way back to the days of Joshua. Under the pretense of being from afar, the inhabitants of the town of Gibeon in Canaan, known variously as Hivites (Josh 9:7) and Amorites (2 Sam 21:2), precipitously won a treaty from Joshua and the elders, who later discovered that these people were not from a great distance, but in fact lived right in the path of the ongoing conquest. Reluctantly Joshua and the elders conceded that they had sworn an oath before Yahweh that they would do these people no harm. So the Gibeonites remained untouched in Israel, though they were required to serve as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God (see Josh 9 for details).

Psalm 15:4 makes it a point of honor to keep one's oath, even when it hurts. But in his zeal for Israel Saul had violated Joshua's ancient oath and brought "blood-guiltiness" on the whole land. Apparently, some dissatisfaction with the Gibeonites had provided Saul with a pretext to vent his prejudices against these non-Israelites who lived in their midst. And the Lord, who inspects all that is said and done on earth, required justice to be done. Thus it was that even as late as David's reign a famine fell on all the land for three successive years. Having asked the Lord why they were experiencing this continual drought, David was told of the injustice that had been done to the Gibeonites. Whether David had known about this wrongdoing previously is not told.

When David consulted with the Gibeonites, asking what they wished by way of compensation for Saul's attack on them, they demanded that seven of Saul's sons be killed and displayed in Saul's hometown and capital city, Gibeah. David agreed to their request.

What made David agree to such a hideous retribution, and how could that compensate the Gibeonites? And why did it satisfy divine justice (since the rains came after the act had been completed)? Does God favor human sacrifice?

The Mosaic law clearly prohibits human sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:2). But the text we are considering does not depict the killing of Saul's descendants as an offering to anyone, so this is not a case of sacrifice.

Neither does the Old Testament deny the principle of individualism, so dear to (and so abused by) Westerners. Deuteronomy 24:16 teaches that "fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin." Yet sometimes factors beyond individual responsibility are at work in a world of sin.

The Old Testament also reminds us of our corporate involvement, through which a member of a group can be held fully responsible for an action of the group, even though he or she personally may have had nothing to do with that act. Thus the whole group may be treated as a unit or through a representative. This is not to argue for a type of collectivism or a rejection of individual responsibility. Ten righteous men could have preserved Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18). A righteous man blesses his children after him (Prov 11:21). On the flip side, however, the sin of the few can bring judgment on the many, as in the story of the Korah, Dathan and Abiram incident in Numbers 16+.

Certainly, there was to be collective punishment in Israel when a whole city was drawn into idolatrous worship at the incitement of a few good-for-nothing fellows (Deut 13:12–16). Complicity in the crime perpetrated against Naboth, in the taking of his land and life by the throne, led to judgment against the royal house, since there was no repentance in the interim (1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 10:1–11).

David granted the Gibeonites' request because, according to the law of Moses, "bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it" (Nu 35:33+). This being so, the members of Saul's house had to be delivered over to the Gibeonites. Hope of the land's deliverance from the judgment of God did not lie in any other avenue. In fact, 2 Samuel 21:3 specifically mentions "making expiation" or "atonement" (kipper). (The NIV translates it as "make amends"!) The Gibeonites insisted that it was not possible for them to accept a substitute such as "silver or gold." The seriousness of the crime demanded something more, as Numbers 35:31, 33+ teaches.

David was careful to spare Mephibosheth, the recently discovered son of Jonathan, because of the covenant he had made with Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3; 20:8, 16). But he delivered to the Gibeonites two sons of Rizpah, a concubine of Saul, and five sons of Saul's eldest daughter, Merab.



After killing them, the Gibeonites impaled the bodies on stakes and left them hanging in Saul's hometown of Gibeah as a rebuke to all who would attempt genocide, as Saul apparently had. According to Deuteronomy 21:22–23+, persons who were executed were not to remain hanging through the night on a stake, but were to be buried before evening. This law, however, did not appear to have any application to this case, where expiation of guilt for the whole land was concerned, and where non-Israelite Gibeonites were involved (**ED**: AS PAGANS THEY WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE MOSAIC CODE). It seems that the bodies remained on display until the famine actually ended; they were taken down as the rains began to fall.

Though David complied with the Gibeonite request, **there is nothing in the text that suggests that he engineered the situation so as to get rid of any potential rivals from Saul's line. Rather, the text stresses how important it is to honor covenants made before God.** In the so-called second plague prayer given by the Hittite king [Mursilis II](#) (fourteenth century B.C.), he similarly blames a twenty-year famine in his land on a previous ruler's breach of a treaty between the Hittites and the Egyptians. How much more accountable would Israel be for a similar violation before Yahweh!

One traitor can affect the outcome of a whole battle and the lives of a whole army. So, too, the acts of those who rule on behalf of a whole nation can affect all either for good or for ill. Blood-guiltiness left on the land, whether through the betrayal of a covenant made before God or through a failure to put to death those who deliberately took the lives of innocent victims, must be avenged on those who caused the guilt. Otherwise, the land will languish under the hand of God's judgment. (**ED**: ONE CANNOT HELP BUT THINK OF THE MILLIONS OF LIVES THAT HAVE BEEN ABORTED IN AMERICA! WOE!)

**See also comments on**

- GENESIS 9:6 (PAGE 84 [Capital Punishment Mandated by God?](#));
- NUMBERS 35:21 (PAGE 143 [No Ransom for a Murderer?](#));
- DEUTERONOMY 24:16 (PAGE 150 - [Should Children Be Punished for Their Parents' Sins?](#));
- JOSHUA 7:1, 10–11 (PAGE 156 - [Was It Achan or All Israel That Sinned?](#)).

**2 Samuel 21:10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until it rained on them from the sky; and she allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.**

- **took sackcloth**: 1Ki 21:27 Joe 1:18
- **from the**: 2Sa 21:9 De 21:13
- **until it rained**: De 11:14 1Ki 18:41-45 Jer 5:24,25 14:22 Ho 6:3 Joe 2:23 Zec 10:1
- **the birds**: Ge 40:19 Eze 39:4
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **RIZPAH'S VIGIL THE SIGN OF A BROKEN HEART**

And [Rizpah](#) the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth (See [GRIEVING RITES](#)) and spread it for herself on the rock (possibly the large stone - 2Sa 20:8+), **from the beginning of harvest until it rained on them from the sky**- There had been a famine for 3 years, so was this rain evidence of Jehovah being appeased by the hanging of 7 sons of Saul? If it refers to the rains that occur in the autumn in Israel, it would mean Rizpah stood watch over her sons (and the other 5 sons) from March until October (late rains - Dt 11:14), which could have been from 5-7 months! Oh, the love of a mother for her children is a powerful force!

**Kirkpatrick** - The bodies were left hanging, instead of being taken down on the day of execution (Deuteronomy 21:23), until assurance was given that the satisfaction had been accepted.

**Guzik on it rained** -- The coming of rain showed that the famine was over, that justice was satisfied, and that Israel was delivered.

**And she allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night** One cannot even imagine what she witnessed as March-April would give way to the more intense heat which would cause the bodies to significantly decay. Ponder the incredible commitment Rizpah made -- this would have required 24 hour guard from wild animals who might have come at night while she was sleeping (surely she slept some during these many months)!

"If an animal falls at night," writes an Eastern traveller, "it is not attacked till daylight, unless by the jackals and hyænas; but if it be slaughtered after sunrise, though the human eye may scan the firmament for a vulture in vain, within five minutes a speck will appear overhead, and wheeling and circling in a rapid downward flight, a

huge griffon will pounce on the carcass. In a few minutes a second and third will dart down; another and another follows—griffons, Egyptian vultures, eagles, kites, buzzards and ravens, till the air is darkened by the crowd. 'Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.' " [Tristram's Nat. Hist. of the Bible](#), p. 169.

**Blaikie:** Unburied corpses were counted to be disgraced, and this, in some degree, because they were liable to be devoured by birds and beasts of prey. Rizpah could not prevent the exposure, but she could try to prevent the wild animals from devouring them. The courage and self-denial needed for this work were great, for the risk of violence from wild beasts was very serious. All honour to this woman and her noble heart! David appears to have been deeply impressed by her heroism. ([2 Samuel 21](#))

**MacArthur** - It was considered a disgrace for the bodies of the slain to become food for the birds and beasts (cf. Dt 28:26; 1Sa 17:44, 46; Rev 19:17, 18). (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**TSK** note on **until it rained** - Some suppose that this means a providential supply of rain, in order to remove the famine; but from the manner in which it is introduced, it seems to denote the autumnal rains, which commence about October. For five months did this broken-hearted woman watch by the bodies of her sons!

**2 Samuel 21:11 When it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done,**

- **told David:** 2Sa 2:4 Ru 2:11,12
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### DAVID COMPASSIONATE RESPONSE TO RIZPAH

**When it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done-** Here we see another aspect of why David was a man after God's own heart, hearing of Rizpah's grief (and David knew grief himself!) and being mercifully moved to take action.

**2 Samuel 21:12 then David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the open square of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines struck down Saul in Gilboa.**

- **the bones of Saul:** 2Sa 2:5-7 1Sa 31:11-13
- **Bethshan:** Jos 17:11, Beth-shean, 1Sa 31:10
- **in Gilboa:** 2Sa 1:6,21 1Sa 28:4 31:1 1Ch 10:1,8
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### DAVID'S ACTIONS SYMBOLIZE HIS MERCY FILLED HEART

**then** - Marks progression in David's response to Rizpah. It is almost like a "term of conclusion" in this context. David seemed have been moved by the woman's incredible example of dedication! **Kirkpatrick** adds "Touched by Rizpah's maternal devotion, and wishing to shew that he had no personal enmity to the house of Saul."

**David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the open square of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines struck down Saul in Gilboa** - The men of Jabesh-gilead boldly "stole" the bones in the sense they took them from the Philistines (who were still in control of the territory of Bethshan at the time). The men of Jabesh-gilead actually buried their bodies after [cremating](#) them (1Sa 31:12-13+).

**Utley** - Even though David was an active partner in the death of these seven children of Saul, he honors them and Saul by a special burial of all the family in the land of Benjamin (i.e., the family tomb of Kish)

**Kirkpatrick on the men of Jabesh-gilead** - The citizens, lit. lords or possessors of Jabesh-Gilead; a term peculiar to the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel (Joshua 24:11; Jdg 9:2 ff; Jdg 20:5; 1 Samuel 23:11-12). For their bold rescue of the bodies see 1

**2 Samuel 21:13 He brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there, and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged.**

- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID'S KINDNESS IN BURYING SAUL'S SONS

**He brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there, and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged** - So the two older collections of bones were collected with the fresher bones (most of the flesh would likely have decomposed) of the seven "sons of Saul" who were hanged. As an aside, this action by David would support that he was not taking personal revenge against the house of Saul.

**2 Samuel 21:14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land.**

- **buried:** 2Sa 3:32 4:12
- **Zela:** Jos 18:28 1Sa 10:2, Zelzah
- **God:** 2Sa 24:25 Ex 32:27-29 Nu 25:13 Jos 7:26 1Ki 18:40,41 Jer 14:1-7 Joe 2:18,19 Am 7:1-6 Jon 1:15 Zec 6:8
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A PROPER BURIAL IN THE FAMILY PLOT

**They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin** ("son of the right hand" or "son of good fortune") **in Zela** ("slope," "rib"), **in the grave of Kish** ("snare," "bent") **his father; thus they did all that the king commanded** - The Israelites obeyed the king's command to bury all the bones.

**Gordon:** Strangely, the preoccupation of these verses is with the honourable burial of the remains of Saul and Jonathan, as if David hoped to forestall criticism for the harsh treatment of Saul's family by this act of piety towards the memory of its most senior members. It would not have been the first time that he had tried to make political capital out of the bones of Saul and Jonathan (cf. 2Sa 2:4-7+). (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel](#))

**and after that God was moved by prayer for the land**(of Israel) - We learn how God responds when people repent, humble themselves before Him, and seek Him in prayer. How would God be **moved**? Apparently the famine was broken. The significance of the rain mentioned in verse 10 is uncertain. Note that even though Saul's sins had been recompensed to the Gibeonites, prayer (presumably David and godly Israelites) was offered to Him and played a role (as the prayer of the righteous always does mysteriously) in moving the hand of God. In other words as the **CSB** says "After this, God answered prayer for the land" or the **ESV** "after that God responded to the plea for the land." The **NLT** is a paraphrase but is probably accurately in saying "God ended the famine in the land."

**NET Note** on God was moved by prayer - Heb "was entreated." The verb is an example of the so-called [niph'al tolerativum](#), with the sense that God allowed himself to be supplicated through prayer (cf. GKC 137 §51.c).

**Utley** on **God was moved by prayer for the land**" David's actions, (1) David's prayer, 2Sa 21:1 (2) justice involving Saul's descendants, 2Sa 21:2-9; (3) the proper burial of Saul and his sons and grandsons, 2Sa 21:10-14, all of which caused God to remove the curse (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28) of the famine (cf. 2Sa 24:25).

**Guzik** - It wasn't as if from the time Saul massacred the Gibeonites until David's day that God did not answer any of Israel's prayers. Yet there came a time when God wanted to deal with this sin, and at that time He would not answer their prayers until they dealt with it. There are many reasons for unanswered prayer. When we see that our prayers are not answered we should seek God to address the problem.

**Kirkpatrick** - accepted the entreaty or intercession thus made on behalf of the land. Cp. ch. 2 Samuel 24:25; Genesis 25:21; 2

**2 Samuel 21:15 Now when the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David went down and his servants with him; and as they fought against the Philistines, David became weary.**

- **the Philistines:** 2Sa 5:17,22 1Ch 20:4
- **David became weary:** Jos 14:10,11 Ps 71:9,18 Ps 73:26 Ec 12:3 Isa 40:28-30 Jer 9:23,24 1Pe 1:24,25
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MORE WAR WITH PHILISTINES WEARIES DAVID

2 Samuel 21:15–22 summarize heroic exploits in the Philistine wars.

**Blaikie** asks "Why have these passages been inserted in the history of the reign of David? Apparently for two chief purposes. In the first place, to give us some idea of the dangers to which he was exposed in his military life, dangers manifold and sometimes overwhelming, and all but fatal; and thus enable us to see how wonderful were the deliverances he experienced, and **prepare us for entering into the song of thanksgiving which forms the twenty-second chapter, and of which these deliverances form the burden.** In the second place, to enable us to understand the human instrumentality by which he achieved so brilliant a success, the kind of men by whom he was helped, the kind of spirit by which they were animated, and their intense personal devotion to David himself. ([2 Samuel 21 - Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Now** is used to draw attention to a particular statement or point in a narrative. In that sense, it can often serve somewhat as a "time sensitive" term.

**When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David went down** (from the high lands of Judah to the low country of Philistia —the [Shephêlah](#) or maritime plain.) **and his servants with him; and as they fought against the Philistines, David became weary** - Note that David again leads the troops and he became "exhausted" (NET, CSB, NIV, NLT) The man after God's own heart seems to step out of one adversity/crisis and into another, although the chronology of the events in these last 4 chapters are difficult to determine. Note the repetition of the phrase war again in this last section (2Sa 21:15, 18, 19, 20).

**THOUGHT** - The recurrent phrase **War again** reminds us of the believer's continual spiritual war against our inveterate (having a particular habit, activity, or interest that is long-established and unlikely to change) enemies, the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#), will not end even when we are old and gray (at 77 I can testify to truth of this truth!)

**Guzik** on **David became weary** - Even a great man of God grows old. As the years went on, David became unable to fight as he once did. In this battle against the Philistines David's life was endangered when he **grew faint** in battle against a descendant of Goliath. The Israelites faced the challenge of what they would do when they saw weakness in their leader. Since it was a weakness that could be understood – David's increasing frailty in old age – they needed to rally around their leader and supply what he could not.

**2 Samuel 21:16 Then Ishbi-benob, who was among the descendants of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred shekels of bronze in weight, was girded with a new sword, and he intended to kill David.**

- **among the descendants** : Ge 6:4 Nu 13:32,33 De 1:28 2:10,21 3:11 9:2 1Sa 17:4,5
- **of the giant:** or, Rapha, 2Sa 21:18,20 2Sa 5:18 Ge 14:5
- **he intended to kill David** 1Sa 17:45-51
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A GIANT PROBLEM

**Then** - Progression in the narrative describing war with the Philistines and what transpired because David was weary or exhausted, resulting in his life being in jeopardy.

**Ishbi-benob**, (Literally - "man of Nob"; NJB = "there was a champion") **who was among the descendants of the giant** (rapha; Lxx treats it like a person named "Rapha"), **the weight of whose spear** (Heb = staff or head) **was three hundred shekels** (added by translators) **of bronze in weight** (~7-7.5 lbs), **was girded with a new sword** (added by translators, CSB favors "new armor"), **and he intended to kill David** - Why did he focus on David? Perhaps Goliath was in his paternity and there was an element of revenge. One wonders if David was aware that he had a "giant target" on his head?

**NET on giant** (rapha) - This name has the definite article and may be intended to refer to a group of people rather than a single individual with this name. (ED: ALBEIT SEE 2Sa 21:22 WHERE THERE IT REFERS TO A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL - FATHER OF THE 4 GIANTS).

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**NOTE:** THIS WORD GROUP IS SOMEWHAT CONFUSING AND THERE SEEMS TO BE OVERLAP WITH THE STRONG'S NUMBERS AS USED IN THE NASB. KEEP THAT IN MIND AS YOU STUDY THESE TWO WORDS BELOW. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE WORD REPHAIM (IN KJV) CAN MEAN 3 THINGS - GIANT, REPHAIM (AN ETHNIC PEOPLE GROUP) AND A VALLEY. THE FOLLOWING IS AN ATTEMPT EXPLAIN THESE WORDS AS USED IN THE NASB AND THE KJV. APOLOGIES FOR THIS BEING SOMEWHAT CONFUSING, AS AFTER CONSIDERABLE READING, I AM STILL A BIT CONFUSED. TO FURTHER CONFUSE THE ISSUE ANOTHER WORD THAT SOME VERSIONS TRANSLATE GHOSTS OR DEPARTED SPIRITS IS CLOSELY RELATED (SEE BELOW FOR THE DEFINITION OF RAPHA FROM THE TWOT)

**Giant** (07498) (rapha) (but see the related word **rephaim** below which can also mean "giant") refers to a Philistine whose descendants warred with the Israelites in the time of David (1 Chr. 20:6, 8). Rapha is usually translated as "the giant," but "Rapha" is may be the family name. Rapha was a descendant of Benjamin (1 Chr. 8:2)

**NASB - Rapha** - 7v - **giant(4), giants(3)**. 2 Sam. 21:16; 2 Sam. 21:18; 2 Sam. 21:20; 2 Sam. 21:22; 1 Chr. 20:4; 1 Chr. 20:6; 1 Chr. 20:8

**Rephaim** (07497) (raphaim) (רפאים repā'iyim, רפא rāpā', רפה rāpah) A masculine noun which has 3 meanings - a **giant**, **Rephaim** (an ethnic people group), **Valley of Rephaim**. Frequently, the term (only with the plural form) designated a Canaanite tribe that inhabited the Promised Land prior to the Hebrew conquest and who were known for their unusually large size (Gen. 14:5; 15:20; Deut. 2:11, 20; 3:11, 13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; 17:15). In two accounts, the singular form was utilized to refer to a particular giant, perhaps an ancestor of the tribe of the Rephaim (2 Sam. 21:16, 18, 20, 22; 1 Chr. 20:6, 8). In a different vein, the word (also only in the plural form) acted as the proper name of a valley located southwest of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:18, 22; 23:13; 1 Chr. 11:15; 14:9; Isa. 17:5).

#### THE KJV COMBINES THE WORDS GIANTS AND REPHAIM UNDER ONE HEBREW WORD "RAPHAIM" THE NASB DIVIDES THE WORDS INTO "GIANTS (RAPHA)" AND "REPHAIM" (RAPHAIM)

**KJV - Raphaim** - 25x in 24v translated **giant 17, Rephaim 8** - Ge 14:5 (Lxx translates with **giga** = giant; mighty one; the Giants, a savage race destroyed by the gods, Od.; the sons of Gaia, ); Ge. 15:20; Deut. 2:11; Deut. 2:20; Deut. 3:11; Deut. 3:13; Jos. 12:4; Jos. 13:12; Jos. 15:8; Jos. 17:15; Jos. 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:18; 2 Sam. 5:22; 2 Sam. 21:16; 2 Sam. 21:18; 2 Sam. 21:20; 2 Sam. 21:22; 2 Sam. 23:13; 1 Chr. 11:15; 1 Chr. 14:9; 1 Chr. 20:4; 1 Chr. 20:6; 1 Chr. 20:8; Isa. 17:5

**NASB - Raphaim** - 17v all translated **Rephaim** - Gen. 14:5; Gen. 15:20; Deut. 2:11; Deut. 2:20; Deut. 3:11; Deut. 3:13; Jos. 12:4; Jos. 13:12; Jos. 15:8; Jos. 17:15; Jos. 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:18; 2 Sam. 5:22; 2 Sam. 23:13; 1 Chr. 11:15; 1 Chr. 14:9; Isa. 17:5

**NASB - Rapha (SEE ABOVE)** - 7v - **giant(4), giants(3)**. 2 Sam. 21:16; 2 Sam. 21:18; 2 Sam. 21:20; 2 Sam. 21:22; 1 Chr. 20:4; 1 Chr. 20:6; 1 Chr. 20:8

**TWOT** ([link to the TWOT](#)) - רפאים (rēpā'îm). **Giants, Rephaim**. A term of Ugaritic origin, the designation for one of the most primitive pre-Semitic peoples of Palestine. According to the Ugaritic myths and legends the hero Danel (no relationship to the biblical Daniel), and the champion of Baal are both called "Rephaites." Whether this is a folk etymology or a term based upon some ancient historical term is unknown. The OT historians used it to describe the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine. Deuteronomy 2:20 mentions that the Ammonites called them the "Zamzummim" but no data is extant on this name. The versions are confused in translating the term. The usages are as follows: Gen 14:5; 15:20; Deut 2:11 KJV, "giants," RSV "Rephaim," JPS "Rephaim." In several passages, the KJV translates "giants," while the RSV renders "Re-phaim": Deut 2:20; 3:11; Josh 12:4; 13:12; 17:15. In I Chr 20:4, 6, 8, KJV renders "giant," RSV "giants." **Other passages follow a similar confused pattern.** The KJV justification for substituting "giant" in all cases is based upon the details about the Rephaim in Deut 2:11, 21, where they are said to be "tall as the Anakim." The LXX also translated the word as "giant" in Josh 12:4; 13:14; I Chr 20:4, 6. The exact relationship between Rephaim I and II ([see II below](#)) is very difficult and no plausible explanation as yet has appeared. [As to Og's famous bed, it may have been a

sarcophagus which was large not because Og was a giant but because other objects would have been buried with him. R.L.H.]

**Gilbrant** - The “**Rephaim**” were an early race, or group of races, who lived in Canaan and east of the Jordan (Gen. 14:5; 15:20; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; 17:15). They were of **giant** stature, such as King Og of Bashan (Deut. 3:11, 13). Several groups were regarded as Rephaim, including the Anakim, Emim and Zamzummim (Deut. 2:10–22). However, these are probably local names for a people descended of the same racial stock. The Valley of Rephaim was in the border territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:16), an area known for its grain crops (Isa. 17:5). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

#### Related Dictionary Articles:

- [Rephaim, The Valley Of](#)
- [Rephaim, Vale Of](#)
- [Rephaim, Valley of](#)
- [Rephaims](#)
- [Rephaite](#)

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**Departed Spirits** ("Ghosts") ([07496](#))(rapha) in KJV = dead 7, deceased 1. In NASB = dead(3), departed spirits(4), spirits of the dead(1).

**Rapha - 8x/8v** - Job 26:5; Ps. 88:10; Prov. 2:18; Prov. 9:18; Prov. 21:16; Isa. 14:9; Isa. 26:14; Isa. 26:19

**TWOT** has this discussion - רֶפְאִים (rēpā’îm). Ghosts of the dead, shades. A word and idea of Ugaritic origin, rp’i, which means “the dead inhabitants of the netherworld” is cognate to both Hebrew and Phoenician rēpā’îm. In grave inscriptions from Sidon, the kings Tabnith and Eshmunazar refer to the rēpā’îm, but this usage dates from Hellenistic times. The primary fact concerning the eight occurrences of the root in the OT is that it appears exclusively in poetic passages. Its use is prescribed as a “B” word or second synonym in parallel series. The most common parallelism is death (dead) // ghosts (Prov 2:18; Isa 26:14, 19 a more complex poetic structure; Ps 88:10, 11 [H 11, 12]). The parallelism ghosts// sheol occurs in two passages (Prov 9:18; Job 26:5). In one other passage the parallelism is reversed to form sheol/ghosts (Isa 14:9) and in another single instance (Prov 21:16) a complicated parallelism of what has been called the modified “staircase” type sets “foolish men”// to ghosts. It is clear that this ancient quasi-mythological term was used merely to satisfy the requirements of Hebrew poetic structure and in no way indicates any specific connotation to the root rēpā’îm other than as a synonym for “the dead” and the “place of the dead.”

[It may be added that the Ugaritic evidence is uncertain. The root rp’i is translated by Gordon as “deities, shades of the dead” (UT 19: no. 2346), by Aistleitner as “1) prince (Fuerst), 2) God as Prince, 3) Baal as Prince of the gods” (AisWUS no. 2575). Several of the passages refer to the gentile Rephaites; in the Tale of Aqhat, Daniel is called a Rapha-man (ANET pp. 149ff., and see rēpā’îm below). In some of the other passages the translation is dubious, e.g. Ginsberg translates by “community” in italics (ANET, p. 146, KRT iii, 1.3). It is methodologically questionable to use these Ugaritic data extensively in determining the OT meaning of this word as some have done (see KB). There seems to be no clear Ugaritic connection of the root with the netherworld and the Hebrew theology differs from the Ugaritic in any case. The Hebrew evidence adduced by W. White for parallelism of rp’i with death, dead, sheol (or grave, cf. also Ps 88:11 [H 12]) is important and convincing. However, the ghost-like character of the dead is not so clear. Really, as the term refers to dead persons, the translation “dead ones” would fit very well in all cases. This does not deny that other passages refer to continuing life of the soul, but not necessarily in shadowy semi-existence R.L.H.]

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#### NIDOTTE article - Giants, Heroes, Mighty Men: Theology

1. Although the word “giant(s)” does not occur in the NIV, it is attested 21× in the OT of the KJV as the rendering of four different noms.:

- a. גִּבּוֹרִים (Job 16:14 [LXX δυνάμεις; NIV warrior]). Elsewhere in the KJV (e.g., 2 Sam 10:7) and in other Eng. translations, including the NIV (e.g., 2 Sam 23:8), the word is translated “mighty man” and the like. The LXX, however, uses γίγας / γίγαντες for גִּבּוֹרִים in Gen 6:4 (NIV heroes); 10:8–9; 1 Chron 1:10; Ps 19:5 (6; LXX 18:6); 33:16 (LXX 32:16); Isa 3:2; 13:3; 49:24–25; Ezek 32:12, 21, 27; 39:18, 20 (#1475).
- b. גִּבּוֹרִים (Gen 6:4; Num 13:33 [2×]; #5872). The LXX renders the word as γίγαντες in both verses.
- c. 2) הַכֹּפֶה Sam 21:16, 18, 20 [LXX Παῖδες], 22 [LXX “descendants τῶν γίγαντων in Gath, the house/family of Παῖδες”]; #8335).
- d. [הַ]רְפָּאִים II (Deut 2:11, 20; 3:11, 13; Josh 12:4; 13:12; 15:8; 17:15; 18:16; 1 Chron 20:4, 6 [LXX γίγαντες], 8 [LXX Παῖδες and γίγαντες; #8325; sg.]; #8328; pl.). The LXX translates γίγαντες also in Gen 14:5; Josh 12:4; 13:12; 1 Chron 11:15; 14:9. Despite the overall LXX usage, it is safe to say that “the true Heb. word for giant is ... רֶפְאִים ... and ... the variant רְפָאִים” (Beecher, 166).



Cognate evidence for understanding the meaning of the root  $\text{אָפּ}$  in many OT contexts is especially strong in Ugar. Note the following incantation text labeled RS 24.252 (= KTU 1.108):

1 [hl]n.yšt.rpu.mlk.‘lm.wyšt  
2 [il.]gtr.wyqr.il.wtb.b‘ttrt  
3 il.tpt.bhdr‘y.dyšr.wydmr  
[Loo]k! Let the Warrior-Hero, the eternal king, drink! And let drink  
the god dwelling in ‘Athtartu,  
[the god] Gathru-and-Yaqaru,  
the god ruling in Haddura‘iyu, who sings and plays!

Thus the Ugar. rpum, a (semi-)divine guild of warrior kings, would appear to have been headquartered at Ashtaroth and Edrei, the same two centers where the biblical Rephaites held sway (Josh 12:4; 13:12) (de Moor, 187, n. 3; Youngblood, EBC 3:865, n. 18). The Rephaites were the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Transjordan and were noted for their great height (Gen 14:5; 15:20; Deut 2:10–11, 20; 3:11, 13; Josh 17:15). The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites (Deut 3:13). Rapha was the eponymous ancestor of one distinct group of Rephaites (2 Sam 21:16, 18, 20, 22; 1 Chron 20:4 [“Rephaite”], 6, 8) (Youngblood, EBC 3:863; Waltke, 64–66). The Philistine giant Goliath (1 Sam 17:4) may have been one of their number (2 Sam 21:19; 1 Chron 20:5). The people of Moab referred to the Rephaites as Emite (Deut 2:11), while “the Ammonites called them Zamzummites” (2:20). The Rephaites may have been the Transjordanian equivalent of the Cisjordanian Anakites (2:10–11, 20–21; McCarter, 137).

Apart from Goliath, the best-known Rephaite was doubtless King Og. Indeed, he was one of the last of the pre-Israelite group of Rephaites. He reigned over Ashtaroth and Edrei in the territory of Bashan (Deut 3:11; Josh 12:4; 13:12). Apparently a giant of a man, he possessed a king-sized iron bed that was “more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide” (Deut 3:11).

Equally impressive statistics are attested for other Rephaites and assorted giants. Ishbi-Benob’s bronze spearhead weighed seven and a half pounds (2 Sam 21:16). An unnamed Rephaite was “a huge man with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot” (21:20). Lahmi, Goliath’s brother, was so big that he had a spear with a shaft “like a weaver’s rod” (1 Chron 20:5). Benaiah son of Jehoiada struck down an Egyptian who was seven and a half feet tall (11:22–23). Goliath himself was “over nine feet tall” (1 Sam 17:4).

2. Should the descriptions of the unusual height of the Rephaites and other giants be taken literally or figuratively? Is it necessary to assume that the attribution of great size to them “was probably a narrative way of expressing their military prowess” (Clifford, 345)? Hardly. Even the account of Goliath’s height is paralleled in modern times by reports concerning R. P. Wadlow, who was eight feet eleven inches tall at the time of his death on July 15, 1940, at the age of 22 (Insight 18, 1985, 51). Nor is it true that “there are no remains [skeletons and the like] of any aborigines of abnormal size” (Wright, 307). Skeletons 3.2 meters tall have “been excavated in Palestine” (Wiseman, 23; cf. 244, n. 58).

Although the causes of ancient gigantism are unknown, it has been suggested that they had “a condition such as hypertrophy of the long bones of the skeleton” (Van Broekhoven, 519). In any event, in the case of one of the giants genetic mutations are described in 2 Sam 21:20; 1 Chron 20:6.

3. A final subject for investigation is the identity and fate of the enigmatic Nephilim (Gen 6:4; Num 13:33). The term itself almost certainly means “fallen ones,” whether morally fallen in the general sense or fallen from (i.e., cast out of) heaven in a more specific sense. It has been plausibly proposed that the Nephilim were princes born into the royal houses of the “sons of God” (Gen 6:4) and that they were “the mighty tyrants who ... esteemed their might to be their right” (Kline, 196). Certain Jewish exegetes have ingeniously assumed that the later Nephilim strain of Num 13:33 was preserved through the Flood in the persons of Noah’s daughters-in-law (cf. Kline, 197, n. 30). Others, positing a local or regional flood, have suggested that the Nephilim survived through migration (Van Broekhoven, 519).

The literature of the intertestamental period, however, takes a different tack. According to Sir 16:7 the “ancient giants” were rebellious and deserved divine punishment. Wisd 14:6 and Bar 3:26–28 are even more specific: The giants were destroyed by the Flood. If so, the later Nephilim were namesakes, not descendants, of their earlier counterparts. In their own way, however, they were no less terrifying. The Israelite spies confessed, “We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (Num 13:33).

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### **Bob Utley - SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS USED FOR TALL/POWERFUL WARRIORS OR PEOPLE GROUPS (GIANTS)**

These large/tall/powerful people are called by several names.

1. *Nephilim* (giants, BDB 658, KB 709) – Gen. 6:4 (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: Sons of God in Genesis 6](#)); Num. 13:33. LXX translates it as "giants" (cf. 1 Enoch 6-19) See also [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEPHILIM](#)
2. *Rephaim* (giants, BDB 952 II, KB 1274) – Gen. 14:5; 15:20; Deut. 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; 2 Sam. 21:16,18,20,22; 1 Chr. 20:4,6,8 See also [SPECIAL TOPIC: REPHAIM](#)
3. *Zamzummin* (BDB 273, KB 266), – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:20 [Who were the Zamzummin? | GotQuestions.org](#)
4. *Emim* (BDB 34), ancient inhabitants of Moab. The name may be related to the Hebrew root (BDB 33), "terror" – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:10-11
5. *Anakim* (sons of Anak, the long-necked ones, BDB 778 I, KB 859 II) – Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10-11,21; 9:2; Jos. 11:21-22; 14:12,15; 15:14; Jdgs. 1:20 See also [SPECIAL TOPIC: ANAKIM](#)

Notice how Gen. 14:5 mentions three of these groups of large men (cf. LXX, Vulgate). The term *Rephaim* is also used of those living in *Sheol* (cf. Job 26:5; Ps. 88:10-11; Isa. 26:14,19).

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#### Related Resources:

- [Was Goliath one of the Nephilim? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who / what were the Nephilim? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Are there descendants of the Nephilim in the world today? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Are the demons the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who were the Rephaim? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**2 Samuel 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you do not extinguish the lamp of Israel."**

- **Abishai:** 2Sa 20:6-10
- **helped him:** 2Sa 22:19 Ps 46:1 144:10
- **You shall not** 2Sa 18:3
- **extinguish** (quench) : 2Sa 14:7 1Ki 11:36 15:4 Ps 132:17 Joh 1:8,9 5:35
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ABISHAI TO THE RESCUE

**But** - Contrast. Giant intended to kill David but by contrast, David was not alone and not without help.

**Abishai** (father of a gift) **the son of Zeruiah helped** ('azar; [boetheo](#) = strictly run to the aid of one who cries for help; hence help, come to the aid of, rescue) **him, and struck the Philistine and killed him** - It is interesting that **Abishai** (and Joab) are referred to as sons of David's sister some 25 times. The **Zeruiah** boys were impetuous but were quick to draw a sword which they wielded with skill. The last offer of **Abishai** to defend David against Shimei was refused (as was Abishai's willingness to pen Saul with a spear - 1Sa 26:6-8,9+), but now he would come to the aid of David to prevent the giant from killing David. How different this battle is from the first battle that David had with Goliath back in 1 Samuel 17. Here, if it had not been for the intervention of Abishai, it appears that exhausted, weary David would have lost his life in this conflict. However it does not appear that David was a non-participant in these giant slayings for 2Sa 21:22 says "they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants."

**Then** - Marks progression and in this context functions essentially like a term of conclusion.

**The men** (troops, soldiers) **of David swore** (took and oath) **to him, saying, "You shall not** ("must never" - CSB; "never again"- NIV) **go out again with us to battle** - **Swore** indicates they gave a strong admonition/exhortation to David. They realized that David was old and weary and that the enemy sought to take out their leader and they wanted to minimize any possibility of that occurring.

**So that** (purpose clause) **you do not extinguish** (quench) **the lamp of Israel."** - NLT - "Why risk snuffing out the light of Israel?" The metaphor is interesting, in that David's men see him as a light and his death would bring darkness in the land.

**Kirkpatrick** - Extinguishing the lamp is a natural metaphor for changing the light of prosperity into the darkness of calamity; and in particular David's sovereignty was the lamp which God's favour had lighted for the well-being of His people. An Arab in misfortune says, "Fate has put out my lamp." Cp. Job 18:6; Proverbs 13:9.

Adam Clarke - David is considered as the *lamp* by which all Israel was guided, and without whom all the nation must be involved in

darkness.”

**Laney** says, “The points of the record is that David was delivered from four great foes. That theme of deliverance prepares the reader for the psalm recorded in chap. 22. David’s faithful soldier Abishai is noted to have slain the Philistine giant Ishi-Benob, whose spear weighed approximately 7 and (1/2) pounds. The ‘lamp of Israel’ refers to David, whose life and actions were as a light kindled for Israel.”

**Utley** on "**You shall not go out again with us to battle**" David's men saw his weakness and did not want him to fight anymore lest "the lamp of Israel" (cf. 1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19; Ps. 132:7) be extinguished. David was the friend of YHWH and hope for Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 18:3). He was the fulfillment of Gen. 49:10 (i.e., Ps. 60:7; 108:8; even possibly Nu. 24:17).

**2 Samuel 21:18** Now it came about after this that there was war again with the Philistines at Gob; then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was among the descendants of the giant.

- **Sibbechai**: 1Ch 11:29 20:4
- **Saph**: or, Sippai, 1Ch 20:4
- **the giant**: or, Rapha, 2Sa 21:16,20
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

1 Chronicles 20:4+ Now it came about after this, that war broke out at Gezer with the Philistines; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the giants, and they were subdued.

### MORE PHILISTINE WAR WITH ANOTHER GIANT FALLING

Now it came about after this that there was war again with the Philistines at **Gob**; then **Sibbecai** the **Hushathite** struck down **Saph**, who was among the descendants of the giant- Again we see the phrase "the giant" which suggests that was the same giant as in 2Sa 21:16.

**Sibbecai** (The Lord sustains) was one of David's heroes (1Ch 11:29), general of the eighth division of the army (1Ch 27:11), is also called Mebunnai (2Sa 23:27).

**2 Samuel 21:19** There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

BGT 2 Samuel 21:19 καὶ γένητο πλεμος ἐν Γοβ μετὰ τὴν ἄλφοιων καὶ πτόξεν Ἐλεάναν υἱὸς Ἀριωργίμ Βαιθλεὲμ τῆς τῆς Γολιάθ τῆς Γεθθαὸν καὶ τὸ ξίλον τοῦ δόρατος αὐτοῦ ὡς νύον φαίνων

LXE 2 Samuel 21:19 And there was a battle in Rom with the Philistines; and Eleanan son of Ariorgim the Bethleemite slew Goliath the Gittite; and the staff of his spear was as a weaver's beam.

KJV 2 Samuel 21:19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

NET 2 Samuel 21:19 Yet another battle occurred with the Philistines in Gob. On that occasion Elhanan the son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

CSB 2 Samuel 21:19 Once again there was a battle with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam.

ESV 2 Samuel 21:19 And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

NIV 2 Samuel 21:19 In another battle with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim the

Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod.

NLT 2 Samuel 21:19 During another battle at Gob, Elhanan son of Jair from Bethlehem killed the brother of Goliath of Gath. The handle of his spear was as thick as a weaver's beam!

NRS 2 Samuel 21:19 Then there was another battle with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

NJB 2 Samuel 21:19 Again, war with the Philistines broke out at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jair, of Bethlehem, killed Goliath of Gath, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

NAB 2 Samuel 21:19 There was another battle with the Philistines in Gob, in which Elhanan, son of Jair from Bethlehem, killed Goliath of Gath, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's heddle-bar.

YLT 2 Samuel 21:19 And the battle is again in Gob with the Philistines, and Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim, the Beth-Lehemite, smiteth a brother of Goliath the Gittite, and the wood of his spear is like a beam of weavers.

GWN 2 Samuel 21:19 When more fighting broke out with the Philistines at Gob, Elhanan, son of Jaare Oregim from Bethlehem, killed Goliath of Gath. (The shaft of Goliath's spear was like a beam used by weavers.)

BBE 2 Samuel 21:19 And again there was war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan, the son of Jair the Beth-lehemite, put to death Goliath the Gittite, the stem of whose spear was like a cloth-worker's rod.

RSV 2 Samuel 21:19 And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

NKJ 2 Samuel 21:19 Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

ASV 2 Samuel 21:19 And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim the Beth-lehemite slew Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

- **Elhanan:** 1Ch 11:26
- **Jaareoregim: or, Jair,** 1Ch 20:5
- **Goliath:** 1Sa 17:4-11
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Chronicles 20:5+ And there was war with the Philistines again, and Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi**the brother of** Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

### WHO KILLED GOLIATH?

There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and [Elhanan](#) the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam - Who killed Goliath? The NLT tries to resolve the issue writing [Elhanan](#) "killed the brother of Goliath of Gath" as explained in the somewhat technical note. Some writers note at least three possible solutions: 1. There could have been two giants named Goliath. 2. Elhanan and David may be different names for the same person, just as Solomon had another name in 2 Samuel 12:24,25. 3. There has been a scribal error in transmission and the text should read, 'Elhanan killed the brother of Goliath.' Remembering that Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture ([Compare Scripture with Scripture](#)), the third view is clearly supported by the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 20:5.

**NET NOTE** - The Hebrew text as it stands reads, "[Elhanan](#) son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the [Gittite](#)." Who killed Goliath the Gittite? According to 1Sa 17:4-58 it was David who killed Goliath, but according to the [Masoretic Text](#) of 2Sa 21:19 it was Elhanan who killed him. Many scholars believe that the two passages are hopelessly at variance with one another. Others have proposed various solutions to the difficulty, such as identifying David with Elhanan or positing the existence of two Goliaths. But in all likelihood the problem is the result of difficulties in the textual transmission of the Samuel passage. The parallel passage in 1 Chr 20:5 reads, "Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath." Both versions are textually suspect. The Chronicles text appears to have misread "Bethlehemite" (בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי, bet hallakhmi) as the accusative sign followed by a proper name אֶת לַחְמִי ('et lakhmi). ([See the note](#) at 1 Chr 20:5 = The Hebrew text reads, "Elchanan son of Jair killed Lachmi**the brother of** Goliath the Gittite." But it is likely that the accusative marker in front of לַחְמִי (lakhmi, "Lachmi") was originally בֵּית (bet), and that אֶת

לַחְמִי ('et lakhmi) should be emended to בֵּית הַלַּחְמִי bet hallakhmi, "the Bethlehemite") The Samuel text appears to have misread the word for "**brother**" (אָח, 'akh) as the accusative sign (אֶת, 'et), thereby giving the impression that Elhanan, not David, killed Goliath. Thus in all probability the original text read, "**Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath**"

**NET NOTE** on - Heb "**Jaare-Oregim**," but the second word, which means "weavers," is probably accidentally included. It appears at the end of the verse. The term is omitted in the parallel account in 1 Chr 20:5, which has simply "Jair."

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### Walter Kaiser - Page 185 in [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#) - Who Killed Goliath?

In 1 Samuel 17 and 1Sa 21:9 it is claimed that David is the one who killed Goliath; however, in 2 Samuel 21:19 it says that **Elhanan** killed him. Both cannot be right, can they? And who was **Lahmi**, mentioned in 1 Chronicles 20:5?

While some have tried to resolve the contradiction by suggesting that Elhanan may be a throne name for David, a reference to David, under any name, in a summary of exploits by David's mighty men appears most peculiar.

The bottom line on this whole dispute is that David is the one who slew Goliath and Elhanan slew the brother of Goliath, as it says in 1 Chronicles 20:5. The problem, then, is with the 2 Samuel 21:19 text. Fortunately, however, we can trace what the original wording for that text was through the correctly preserved text in 1 Chronicles 20:5.

The copyist of the 2 Samuel 21:19 text made three mistakes: (1) He read the direct object sign that comes just before the name of the giant that Elhanan killed, namely Lahmi, as if it were the word "Beth," thereby getting "the Bethlehemite," when the "Beth" was put with "Lahmi." (2) He also misread the word for "brother" (Hebrew אָח) as the direct object sign (Hebrew אֶת) before Goliath, thereby making Goliath the one who was killed, since he was now the direct object of the verb, instead, as it should have been, "the brother of Goliath." (3) He misplaced the word "Oregim," meaning "weavers," so that it yielded "Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim," a most improbable reading for anyone: "Elhanan the son of the forests of weavers." The word for "weavers" should come as it does in 1 Chronicles 20:5 about the spear being "a beam/shaft like a weaver's rod."5

Elhanan gets the credit for killing Lahmi, the brother of Goliath; but David remains the hero who killed Goliath.

**2 Samuel 21:20** There was war at Gath again, where there was a man of great stature who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also had been born to the giant.

- **There was war:** 1Ch 20:6-7
- **the giant:** or, Rapha, 2Sa 21:16,18
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

1 Chronicles 20:6-7 (Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature who had twenty-four fingers and toes, six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot; and he also was descended from the giants. 7 When he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.



## SIX DIGITED GIANT FREAK OF NATURE

**There was war at [Gath](#) again** - Note the repetition of "war...again" (2Sa 21:15, 18, 19, 20). [Gath](#) (see map above) of course was Goliath's hometown and he could be **the giant** repeatedly referred to in this chapter (2Sa 21:16,18,20,22). It would not be unreasonable, that if Goliath had sons, they would seek to avenge their father's death at the hands of David.

**Where there was a man of *great* stature who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also had been born to the giant** - These extra digits indicate congenital malformations, suggesting he may have had abnormal development in other organ systems. Again he is the progeny of **the giant**, the same father (2Sa 21:22) in each of 4 uses (2Sa 21:16, 18, 20, 22).

**Guzik** - Bible commentators like Adam Clarke can't resist reminding us that this is a known phenomenon. "This is not a solitary instance: *Tavernier* informs us that the eldest son of the emperor of Java, who reigned in 1649, had *six fingers* on each hand, and *six toes* on each foot.... I once saw a young girl, in the county of Londonderry, in Ireland, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, but her stature had nothing gigantic in it."

**2 Samuel 21:21 When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down.**

- **defied:** 1Sa 17:10,25,26,36 2Ki 19:13
- **Jonathan:** 1Ch 27:32
- **Shimeah:** 1Sa 16:9 17:3, 1Ch 2:13
- [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

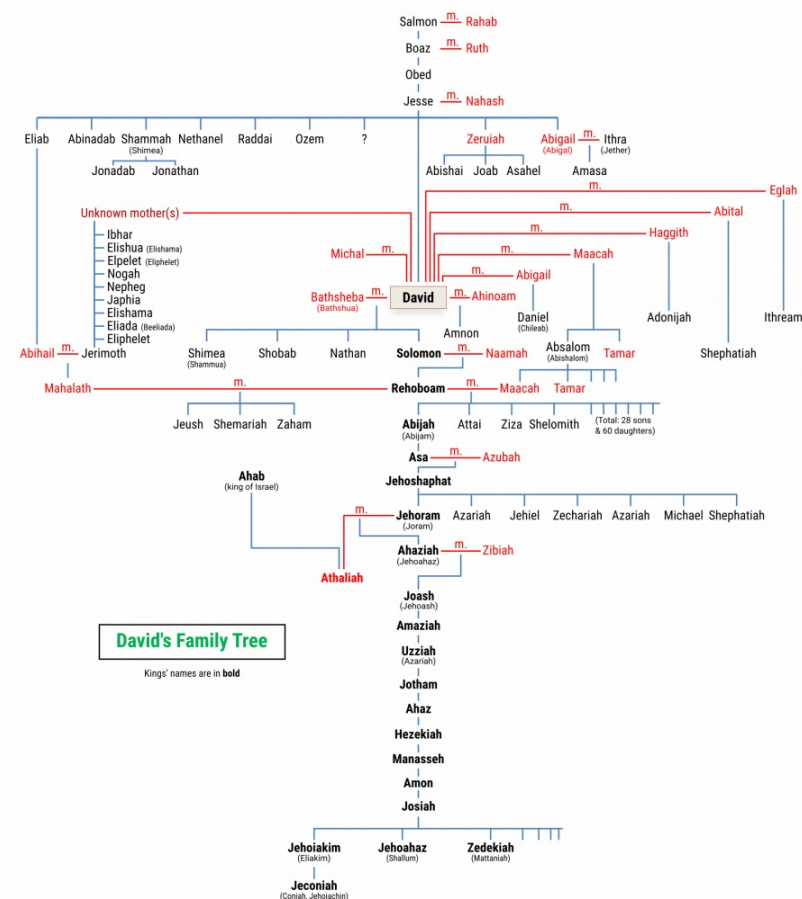
### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 17:10+ Again the Philistine said, "I **defy** ([charaph](#); Lxx - [oneidizo](#) cast insults at) the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together."

1 Samuel 17:25+ The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to **defy** ([charaph](#)) Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." 26 Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach ([charaph](#)) from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?"

1 Samuel 17:36+ "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has **taunted** ([charaph](#); Lxx - [oneidizo](#) cast insults at) the armies of the living God."





Click to Enlarge David's Family Tree  
 Source: [Bibletales.online](http://Bibletales.online)

## GOLIATH-LIKE TAUNTING OF TROOPS OF ISRAEL

When he defied ([charaph](#); Lxx - [oneidizo](#) cast insults at) Israel, Jonathan the son of [Shimei](#), David's brother (see family tree above), **struck him down** - Defied reminds us of Goliath in 1Sa 17:10,25,36,45+. **Shimei** is one of the sons of Jesse (1Sa 16:9), also called Shimeah (2Sa 13:3) and Shimea (1Ch 2:13). It seems that giants were not as feared as they had been in 1Sa 17:1-58 where not one soldier was willing to take on Goliath. In this chapter all four giants are slain and there is no statement that the men slaying them were fearful or intimidated by their excessive size. David had clearly trained a group of mighty men, men who imitated his bravery in warfare.

[Utley](#) on **Shimei, David's brother** - The first list of Jesse's sons is in 1 Sam. 16:9; 17:3, where this one is called "Shammah," but in 1 Chr. 2:13, he is called "Shimea." Names are often confused in the historical books.

**Defied** (reviled, scorned, taunted) ([02778](#)) [charaph](#) means to reproach or to agitate someone about something, especially to cast blame or scorn on them. It refers to sarcastic challenge in a mocking or insulting manner. It suggests a jeeringly provoking insult or challenge. As explained below this word actually has 3 senses. Vine says the idea "to say sharp things, reproach." The root with the meaning "to be sharp" is found in Northwest and South Semitic languages. In Hebrew the verb refers to a manner of speech, i.e., to reproach someone. The word appears about 50 times in the Old Testament, once in Psa. 42:10: "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" Charaph is more than mere rude talk, this strong verb denotes demeaning something or someone by complete devaluation, defiance, or despising.

BY FAR THE MOST COMMON MEANING is to reproach. It means to taunt or agitate someone about something (Ps. 119:42), e.g., the psalmist was the object of taunting from his enemies. Nehemiah is the object of reproaches from his enemies (Neh. 6:13). Israel as a whole was taunted and reproached by the Philistine, Goliath. God is the object of His enemies' reproaches or revilings (2 Ki 19:4, 16, 22, 23; Ps. 79:12) and by the enemies of His people. To reproach one's own life (soul) is to stake one's faith or trust in something and support it (Jdg. 5:18; 1Sa 17:10, 25, 26; Ps. 89:51)

**2 Samuel 21:22** These four were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

- 
- **four:** 1Ch 20:8
  - **fell by:** Jos 14:12 Ps 60:12 108:13 118:15 Ec 9:11 Jer 9:23 Ro 8:31,37
  - [2 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

1 Chronicles 20:8+ These were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

## **FOUR OF GIANTS SONS OF GATH SLAIN**

**These four were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand([yad](#) - power) of David and by the hand of his servants -** Although David did not slay the giants himself, as the leader of the troops he is credited with their deaths. David began his fighting career with a giant, and he ends it with the slaughter by the hands of his servants of the giant's four sons. This chapter concludes David's career as a warrior. God had delivered David from all of his enemies.

Matthew Henry writes a very beautiful observation: "The most powerful enemies are often reserved for the last conflict. David began his glory with the conquest of one giant, and here concludes it with the conquest of four. Death is a Christian's last enemy, and a son of Anak, but through him that triumphed for us, we hope to be more than conquerors at last, even that enemy."