

**2Samuel 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.**

I am assuming that this famine that lasted three years happened after events recorded in the previous chapters. Maybe not—We know, however, that it was after he had taken steps to take care of Jonathan's son in light of the following verses.

In the third year David finally decided that the famine must be a judgment from the LORD and proceeded to find out the reason for it. When he enquired of the LORD (how? Through one of the seers?), he was told that it was in judgment against Saul and his bloody house for killing the Gibeonites. (There is no specific record in the scripture of when this happened as far as I could find.)

Reminder: Joshua had made a treaty with the Gibeonites (though it had been made due to the deceit of the men of Gibeon) that provided them sanctuary in Israel.

*Joshua 9:3–15 “And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us....**And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.**”*

Because the men of Gibeon had tricked the Israelites, they were made to serve in menial tasks at the “house of God.”

*Joshua 9:22–23 “And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.”*

Because of this, some commentators posit that this massacre happened in conjunction with the massacre of the priests at Nob.

*1 Samuel 22:18–19 “And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.”*

Maybe it is just me, but its always hard to process that the LORD sometimes waits for years before exacting judgment for sin—especially regarding nations it seems as I read through scripture. I remind myself that His view of time does

not match our perspective nor does He necessarily act in accordance with our sense of fairness. I do understand that dealing with nations is not the same as dealing with individuals. If David were aware of this massacre, it would make sense that the LORD would allow him time to do something to try to atone for the sin of the nation himself. Just some of my thoughts...

Again, despite my questions, I confidently rely on scripture.

*Deuteronomy 32:3–4 “Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”*

*Isaiah 55:8–9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

**2Samuel 21:2** And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

**2Samuel 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?

**2Samuel 21:4** And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you.

**2Samuel 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,

**2Samuel 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.

Now aware of the reason for the famine, David called for a meeting with the Gibeonite leaders. It is noted that the Gibeonites were descendants of the Amorites that had a covenant (see above) with Israel. Saul had disregarded the covenant in his zeal to increase the size of the nation and get rid of the Canaanites.

David asked the Gibeonites what he could do to make things right between them. The Gibeonites declared that they did not want silver or gold or any other of Saul's possessions. Neither did they want any of the men in Israel killed. So David asked again what he could do to make things right. They told him that the man that had killed their people—Saul—had tried to eliminate their people from out of Israel. They wanted seven of his sons to be handed over to them for hanging before the LORD in Gibeah, Saul's hometown. David agreed to do as they asked.

Logically, their request made sense. Saul had effectively decreased the numbers

of their people, so they wanted the numbers of his progeny reduced as well.

The fact that they mentioned hanging the men “unto the LORD” indicates to me that David must have explained that the LORD had revealed to him the reason for the famine.

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

**2Samuel 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:

**2Samuel 21:9** And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley harvest.

**2Samuel 21:10** ¶ And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

The king spared Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son, because of the oath he had taken with Jonathan. Instead, he took the two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, Armoni and Mephibosheth, and the five sons of Michal, Saul’s daughter, whom she had brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. These men were given to the Gibeonites and hanged before the LORD on a hill in Gibeah. They were put to death at the beginning of the barley harvest (April) and allowed to hang there until the LORD once again sent rain—a sign that He was satisfied with the atonement that had been made.

JFB offers this note: “Merab, Michal’s sister, was the wife of Adriel; but Michal adopted and brought up the boys under her care.”

*1 Samuel 18:19* “But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul’s daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.”

Guzik offers this insight: “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”)*.

Rizpah, the mother of Armoni and Mephibosheth, took sackcloth and spread on a rock to maintain a vigil over the bodies of her sons (and the others I assume) for the duration of the harvest season. She kept away the birds and animals from eating the flesh off their bodies throughout the day and night. Oh, the strength

of a mother's love...

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

**2Samuel 21:12** And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:

**2Samuel 21:13** And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

**2Samuel 21:14** And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land.

David was told what Rizpah had done. Her actions prompted him to go and get the bones of Saul and Jonathan from the men of Jabeshgilead who had taken them down after the Philistines had hung them up in shame after their deaths. They also gathered the bones of the seven men that were hung by the Gibeonites. He then had the bones of Saul and Jonathan given a proper burial in the land of Benjamin in Zelah in the family tomb with Saul's father Kish. I would assume that they buried the seven men in the family tomb as well.

It is assumed that God's justice was satisfied since he was "intreated" for the land—a reference to bringing the famine to an end by sending the rain.

**2Samuel 21:15** ¶ Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

**2Samuel 21:16** And Ishbibenob, which *was* of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear *weighed* three hundred *shekels* of brass in weight, he being girded with a new *sword*, thought to have slain David.

**2Samuel 21:17** But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

The Philistines once again came against Israel in war, and David led his men in battle against them. This time, however, David became tired; he no longer had the strength and physical endurance he once had.

Ishbibenob, one of the sons of the giant, was intent upon killing David. He carried a spear of brass that weighed 300 shekels (about 7.5 lbs. according to the IVP Commentary) and also carried a new sword. Abishai, David's nephew, rescued him and killed the Philistine.

In comparison, Goliath's spear was made of iron and weight 600 shekels.

*1 Samuel 17:4–7* "And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines,

*named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed **six hundred shekels of iron....**"*

Realizing that David had almost died, his men came to him and told him that he should no longer go out with them to battle and risk losing his life. He was important to Israel.

I can't help but think that the reference to the sons of "the giant" is a reference to Goliath and seems to be implied in the following verses.

**2Samuel 21:18** And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which *was* of the sons of the giant.

**2Samuel 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.

**2Samuel 21:20** And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

**2Samuel 21:21** And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him.

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

After this, there was yet another battle with the Philistines at Gob. In this battle Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, another one of the giant's sons.

In yet another battle against the Philistines in Gob, Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a man of Bethlehem, killed the brother of Goliath—identified as the one who had a spear like a weaver's beam. (See 1Samuel 17:4-7 above)

In yet another battle in Gath there was a man that was very tall that had six fingers on both hands and six toes on both feet that was also identified as a son of the giant. Jonathan, the son of Shimea the brother of David, killed this giant.

It is emphasized that all four men identified as having been killed by David's men were sons of "the giant in Gath." One of the men had been identified as Goliath's brother, but those words have been added as shown by the italics.