

Saul's Blood-guilt Brings Famine upon Israel (c. 995 – c. 992 BC)

2 Samuel 21:1–14

1 There *was* a famine in the days of David *for* three years, year after year. And David inquired of Yahweh, and Yahweh said, “The bloodguilt *is* on Saul and on his household, because he killed the Gibeonites.”

2 So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites *were* not from the Israelites; they *were* from the remainder of the Amorites. Now the Israelites had sworn to them, but Saul tried to wipe them out in his zeal for the Israelites and Judah.

3 So David asked the Gibeonites, “What can I do for you, and with what can I make amends that you may bless the inheritance of Yahweh?”

4 Then the Gibeonites said to him, “It is not a matter for us of silver or gold with Saul or with his household. It is not for us to put to death anyone in Israel.” He asked, “What *are* you saying *that* I should do for you all?”

5 Then they said to the king, “The man who consumed us and who plotted against us *so that* we were destroyed from existing in all of the territory of Israel,

6 let seven men from his sons be given over to us, and we will execute them before Yahweh in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen one of Yahweh.” Then the king said, “I will give them over.”

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the sworn oath of Yahweh which *was* between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

8 So the king took two of the sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, namely Armoni and Mephibosheth, and five of the sons of Michal the daughter of Saul whom she had borne to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

9 He gave them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they executed them on the mountain in the presence of Yahweh, and the seven fell together. Now they were put to death in the days of the harvest, at the beginning of the harvest of barley.

10 Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took the sackcloth, and she spread it for herself on the rock at the beginning of the harvest until water gushed forth on them from heaven, but she did not allow the birds of heaven to rest on them by day nor the animals of the field by night.

11 David *was* told about what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

12 So David left and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the rulers of Jabesh Gilead, who had stolen them from the public square of Beth Shan, where *the* Philistines hung them when *the* Philistines killed Saul on Gilboa.

13 He brought up the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there, and they gathered the bones of the executed.

14 And they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the land of Benjamin at Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father. They did all that the king had commanded, and afterward God was entreated for the land.

David's Oldest Son Amnon Rapes His Half-Sister Tamar (c. 986 BC)

2 Samuel 13:1–22

1 It happened afterwards that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name *was* Tamar, and Amnon the son of David fell in love with her.

2 And Amnon was so frustrated that he felt ill because of Tamar his sister, because she *was* a virgin, and it *was* too difficult in Amnon's eyes to do anything with her.

3 Now Amnon had a friend whose name *was* Jonadab the son of Shimeah, the brother of David. (Now Jonadab *was* a very crafty man.)

4 And he said to him, “Why *are* you so sullen every morning, O son of the king? Will you not tell me?” And Amnon said to him, “I *am* in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom.”

5 Then Jonadab said to him, “Lie down on your bed and appear ill. If your father comes to see you, you shall say to him, ‘Please let Tamar my sister come and give me food to eat, and let her prepare the food before my eyes, in order that I may see it and eat from her hand.’”

6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill, and the king came to see him. Amnon said to the king, “Please let Tamar my sister come, and let her bake two cakes before my eyes that I may eat from her hand.”

7 So David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, “Please go to the house of Amnon your brother and prepare food for him.”

8 Tamar went to the house of Amnon her brother. Now he *was* lying down, and she took the dough and kneaded *it* and made cakes before his eyes, and she baked the cakes.

9 Then she took the pan and poured it out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Amnon said, “Let all *the* men go out from me.” So all *the* men went out from him.

10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food *to* the private room that I may eat from your hand.” So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them to Amnon her brother in the private room.

11 When she brought them near to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, “Come, lie with me, my sister!”

12 Then Tamar said to him, “No, my brother! Do not force me, for such a thing has not been done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!

13 As for me, where should I take my disgrace? You will be as one of the fools in Israel. So please, speak to the king, for he will not

withhold me from you.”

14 But he *was* not willing to listen to her voice. He *was* stronger than she, and he forced her and lay with her.

15 Then Amnon hated her very deeply, for the hatred with which he hated her *was* greater than *the* love with which he had loved her. So Amnon said to her, “Get up *and* go.”

16 She said to him, “No, because this evil in sending me away *is* greater than the other you have done to me.” But he *was* not willing to listen to her.

17 Then he called his young man who *was* serving him and said, “Please send this woman from me to the outside, and bolt the door behind her!”

18 Now there *was* a long-sleeved robe on her, for so they clothed the daughters of the king who *were* virgins, in robes. His servant put her outside, and he bolted the door behind her.

19 Tamar put ashes on her head, and she tore the long-sleeved robe which *was* on her. She put her hand on her head, and she went away, crying out as she went.

20 Absalom her brother said to her, “*Was* Amnon your brother with you? But now, my sister, be quiet; he *is* your brother. Do not take this matter to heart.” So Tamar remained a desolate woman in the house of Absalom her brother.

21 Now King David heard all these things, and he became very angry.

22 Absalom did not speak with Amnon either bad or good, for Absalom hated Amnon over the matter when he raped Tamar his sister.

Absalom, Tamar’s Brother, Murders Amnon (c. 983 BC)

2 Samuel 13:23–39

23 About two full years later, Absalom’s shearers were in Baal Hazor, which *is* near Ephraim, and Absalom summoned all the sons of the king.

24 Then Absalom went to the king and said, “Look, here *are* your servant’s shearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant.

25 The king said to Absalom, “No my son, not all of us shall go, so that we not be a burden to you.” And he urged him, but he *was* not willing to go, but he blessed him.

26 So Absalom said, “But *will* you not let Amnon my brother go with us?” And the king said to him, “Why should he go with you?”

27 But Absalom pressed him, so he sent Amnon with him and all of the sons of the king.

28 Absalom commanded his servants, saying, “Please watch. At the moment the heart of Amnon *is* tipsy with wine, then I shall say to you, ‘Strike Amnon down,’ and you shall kill him! Don’t be afraid. *Is* it not I myself who has commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant!

29 So Absalom’s servants did to Amnon just as Absalom commanded, and all the sons of the king got up, and each mounted his mule and fled.

30 While they were on the way, the message came to David, “Absalom has killed all the sons of the king, and not one of them *was* left.”

31 Then the king rose and tore his garments, and he lay on the ground, and all his servants standing by *were* tearing their garments.

32 Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, the brother of David, responded and said, “My lord should not think that all the young men, the sons of the king, *are* dead, because only Amnon *is* dead. Absalom was talking about it, as it was being determined from the day he raped Tamar his sister.

33 So then, let not my lord the king set his heart on this matter, thinking, ‘All the sons of the king *are* dead,’ for only Amnon alone *is* dead.”

34 So Absalom fled, and the young man who *was* keeping watch lifted up his eyes and saw, and there were many people coming from the road behind him from the side of the mountain.

35 Jonadab said to the king, “Look, the sons of the king have come. According to the word of your servant, so it has come about.”

36 When he finished speaking, look, the sons of the king came and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also, the king and all his servants wept a very great weeping.

37 Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihur, the king of Geshur. *David* mourned over his son day after day.

38 But Absalom had fled and went *to* Geshur, and he *was* there three years.

39 King David longed to go out to Absalom, for he was consoled that Amnon had died.

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Chronological Notes

1) There is no indication of when during David’s reign the famine of 2 Samuel 21:1–14 occurred. It was most likely after

Mephibosheth had come under David's protection in Jerusalem (cf. 9:1–13) and before Absalom's rebellion (cf. 16:7–8).¹ Dale Ralph Davis comments, "Our passage begins by reporting a famine 'in the days of David' (v. 1)—sometime during David's reign. By this very general time reference the writer keeps us from assuming that the episode of 21:1–14 followed chronologically the events of 2 Samuel 20. He does not place the famine in any tight time sequence; the famine, he says, happened sometime during David's reign. The writer does drop one hint. Verse 7 suggests that David had already brought Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, to Jerusalem before the famine and/or executions reported here. Hence 21:1–14 takes place after 2 Samuel 9. Those wanting to scour the depths of this matter may search elsewhere."²

¹ Robert D. Bergen, "1, 2 Samuel," *NAC*, 443–44. So also A. F. Kirkpatrick, "The Second Book of Samuel," *CBC*, 192.

² See the lucid discussion in Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 252–54; also M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Authorship and Other Biblical Studies*, 193–94. For a differing view, cf. R. A. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King*, 199–200.