

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

2 Samuel 21:1–14

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."

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).

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?"

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."

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,

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*."

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.

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

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.

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.

11 When it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done,

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 Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines struck down Saul in Gilboa.

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.

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.

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

2 Samuel 13:1–22

1 Now it was after this that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her.

2 Amnon was so frustrated because of his sister Tamar that he made himself ill, for she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her.

3 But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very shrewd man.

4 He said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Then Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, the sister of my brother Absalom."

5 Jonadab then said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill; when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me *some* food to eat, and let her prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat from her hand.'"

6 So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

7 Then David sent to the house for Tamar, saying, "Go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him."

8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, and he was lying down. And she took dough, kneaded *it*, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes.

9 She took the pan and dished *them* out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Have everyone go out from me." So everyone went out from him.

10 Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." So Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them into the bedroom to her brother Amnon.

11 When she brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."

12 But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing!

13 As for me, where could I get rid of my reproach? And as for you, you will be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you."

14 However, he would not listen to her; since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.

15 Then Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Get up, go away!”

16 But she said to him, “No, because this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you have done to me!” Yet he would not listen to her.

17 Then he called his young man who attended him and said, “Now throw this woman out of my *presence*, and lock the door behind her.”

18 Now she had on a long-sleeved garment; for in this manner the virgin daughters of the king dressed themselves in robes. Then his attendant took her out and locked the door behind her.

19 Tamar put ashes on her head and tore her long-sleeved garment which *was* on her; and she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went.

20 Then Absalom her brother said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with you? But now keep silent, my sister, he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart.” So Tamar remained and was desolate in her brother Absalom’s house.

21 Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry.

22 But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

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

2 Samuel 13:23–39

23 Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king’s sons.

24 Absalom came to the king and said, “Behold now, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant.”

25 But the king said to Absalom, “No, my son, we should not all go, for we will be burdensome to you.” Although he urged him, he would not go, but blessed him.

26 Then Absalom said, “If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us.” And the king said to him, “Why should he go with you?”

27 But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.

28 Absalom commanded his servants, saying, “See now, when Amnon’s heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon,’ then put him to death. Do not fear; have not I myself commanded you? Be courageous and be valiant.”

29 The servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons arose and each mounted his mule and fled.

30 Now it was while they were on the way that the report came to David, saying, “Absalom has struck down all the king’s sons, and not one of them is left.”

31 Then the king arose, tore his clothes and lay on the ground; and all his servants were standing by with clothes torn.

32 Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David’s brother, responded, “Do not let my lord suppose they have put to death all the young men, the king’s sons, for Amnon alone is dead; because by the intent of Absalom this has been determined since the day that he violated his sister Tamar.

33 Now therefore, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart, namely, ‘all the king’s sons are dead,’ for only Amnon is dead.”

34 Now Absalom had fled. And the young man who was the watchman raised his eyes and looked, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain.

35 Jonadab said to the king, “Behold, the king’s sons have come; according to your servant’s word, so it happened.”

36 As soon as he had finished speaking, behold, the king’s sons came and lifted their voices and wept; and also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

37 Now Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, the king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day.

38 So Absalom had fled and gone to Geshur, and was there three years.

39 *The heart of King David* longed to go out to Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, since he was dead.

Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation La Habra, Calif. Used by permission. All rights reserved. For Permission to Quote Information visit <http://www.lockman.org>.

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.