

## ***“Lessons from the Life of David” – Pastor Jim Ruddy***

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### **Study # 49 – Justice for the Gibeonites – 2 Samuel 21:1-14**

#### **I. A NOTABLE REBUKE v1-2**

##### **A. THE DEVASTATION OF THE LAND v1**

- Sometime after David’s return to the throne, an unusual famine, lasting for three successive years, occurred.
- The Old Testament lists war, famine, wild beasts and pestilence as the four severe judgments against sin that indicated God’s extreme displeasure. cf. Eze. 14:21; 1 Ki. 8:35-37

##### **B. THE EXPLANATION OF THE LORD v1-2**

###### **1. DAVID’S INQUIRY**

- After David *“inquired of the LORD,”* he learns that the calamity was due to an offence perpetrated against the Gibeonites by King Saul. cf. Prov. 29:26; 1 Ki. 10:24; 2 Chr. 9:23

###### **2. JOSHUA’S TREATY**

- The Gibeonites, who were pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan, succeeded in deceiving Joshua and the elders of Israel, and were incorporated into Israel by a covenant which included a provision that Israel would *“let them live.”* cf. Josh. 9:1-27
- Although the covenant was made deceitfully, its binding nature was recognized by both parties. cf. Num. 30:1-2

###### **3. SAUL’S TREACHERY**

- In his misdirected zeal, Saul dishonored the covenant and exterminated some of the Gibeonites.
- Some believe the flight of the people of Beeroth to Gittaim (2 Sam. 4:2–3) may have been a result of Saul’s persecution of the Gibeonites. Joshua 9:17 locates Beeroth as within Gibeon’s sphere of influence and therefore presumably under the protection of Israel’s treaty with its citizens.
- Through his misguided actions, Saul violated the sworn covenant, incurring blood-guiltiness upon Israel.

#### **II. A JUSTIFIABLE REQUEST v2-5**

##### **A. DAVID APPROACHES GIBEON v2-3**

- David takes the lead in contacting the Gibeonites, requesting that they suggest a means for rectifying the situation.
  - *“With what shall I make atonement?”* (Heb: *kippur*)
    - cf. Ex. 32:30; Num. 16:46,47; 25:13
- David sought to appease the Gibeonites because, according to Numbers 35:33, *“blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.”*

## **B. GIBEON REPROACHES SAUL v4-6**

- The Gibeonites suggest two alternatives. The atonement could be made by a settlement in money (which gave rise to the expression, “blood money,”) or by the application of the law of revenge – blood vengeance. In light of the circumstances, the first was inadequate, and the latter is beyond the legal rights of the Gibeonites.
- When David expands his offer (cf. v3, v4) the Gibeonites request seven men of Saul’s family in order to “*hang them before the LORD in Gibeah of Saul*”
  - “Seven” speaks of full and complete retribution. cf. 1 Sam 2:5
  - “Hang them” – lit. “kill and expose;” carries the idea of “dislocate” (Gen. 32:25); severed, alienated – acting out the conditional curse of covenant breaking. cf. Gen. 15:7-21; Jer. 34:17-22
  - “before the LORD” is reminiscent of Agag. cf. 1 Sam. 15:33
    - As Agag was put to death “before the Lord” so Saul’s decedents will be executed in like fashion in Saul’s own hometown. cf. 1 Sam. 10:26

## **III. AN UNDERSTANDABLE RESOLVE v7-9**

### **A. THE RECONFIRMING PLACE OF COVENANT v7**

- David concedes to their request, but seeing that covenant-breaking is the cause for the famine, David exercises caution in dealing with the covenant he had made with Jonathan.
  - cf. 1 Sam. 18:3; 20:14-17, 42

### **B. THE RECONCILING POWER OF ATONEMENT v8-9**

- The seven descendants of Saul, two sons of Rizpah and five sons of Merab (?) are publicly executed and their dead bodies are left on display. cf. 1 Sam. 14:49-50; 2 Sam 3:7

## **IV. A SORROWFUL RESPONSE v10-14a**

### **A. REMORSEFUL VIGIL v10**

- The bereaved mother refuses to leave the exposed bodies of her sons until the drought ends, signifying that Saul’s crime has been completed expiated.

### **B. A RESPECTFUL BURIAL v11-14a**

- Rizpah’s devotion influences David to make the fifty-mile journey to Jabesh Gilead to retrieve the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and to along with the seven, provide a proper burial for each.
  - cf. 1 Sam. 31:8-13

## **V. A MERCIFUL REPLY 14b**

- With divine wrath propitiated, God answers prayer in behalf of the Land, and the three-year famine comes to an end.