



## A House Set in Order (Part 1): The King Returns to Israel (2 Sam 21-22)

*Notes: Week Eleven*

*\*\* Please note that Scripture Studies (SS) and the Sermon Focus aim to be similar, but the objective of our Scripture Studies is to lead you through the book of 2 Samuel **chapter by chapter** whereas the Sermon focus deals with various **themes** found in 2 Samuel.*

### 2 Samuel 21-22 (HCSB)

#### Justice for the Gibeonites

**21** 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."

<sup>2</sup> The Gibeonites were not Israelites but rather a remnant of the Amorites. The Israelites had taken an oath concerning them, but Saul had tried to kill them in his zeal for the Israelites and Judah. So David summoned the Gibeonites and spoke to them. <sup>3</sup> He asked the Gibeonites, "What should I do for you? How can I make atonement so that you will bring a blessing on <sup>[a]</sup> the LORD's inheritance?"

<sup>4</sup> The Gibeonites said to him, "We are not asking for money from <sup>[b]</sup> Saul or his family, and we cannot put anyone to death in Israel."

"Whatever you say, I will do for you," he said.

<sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> let seven of his male descendants be handed over to us so we may hang <sup>[c]</sup> them in the presence of the LORD at Gibeah of Saul, the LORD's chosen."

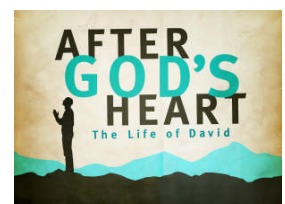
The king answered, "I will hand them over."

<sup>7</sup> David spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the LORD that was between David and Jonathan, Saul's son. <sup>8</sup> 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 <sup>[d]</sup> daughter of Saul had borne to Adriel son of Barzillai the Meholathite <sup>9</sup> and handed them over to the Gibeonites. They hanged <sup>[e]</sup> them on the hill in the presence of the LORD; the seven of them died together. They were executed in the first days of the harvest at the beginning of the barley harvest. <sup>[f]</sup>

#### The Burial of Saul's Family

<sup>10</sup> Rizpah, Aiah's daughter, took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on the rock from the beginning of the harvest <sup>[g]</sup> until the rain poured down from heaven on the bodies. She kept the birds of the sky from them by day and the wild animals by night.

<sup>11</sup> When it was reported to David what Saul's concubine Rizpah, daughter of Aiah, had done, <sup>12</sup> he went and got the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan from the leaders of Jabesh-gilead. They had stolen them from the public square of Beth-shan where the Philistines had hung the bodies the day the Philistines killed Saul at Gilboa. <sup>13</sup> David had the bones brought from there.



They gathered up the bones of Saul's family who had been hung<sup>[h]</sup> <sup>14</sup> and buried the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan at Zela in the land of Benjamin in the tomb of Saul's father Kish. They did everything the king commanded. After this, God answered prayer for the land.

### **The Philistine Giants**

<sup>15</sup> The Philistines again waged war against Israel. David went down with his soldiers, and they fought the Philistines, but David became exhausted. <sup>16</sup> Then Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giant,<sup>[i]</sup> whose bronze spear weighed about eight pounds<sup>[j]</sup> and who wore new armor, intended to kill David.<sup>17</sup> But Abishai son of Zeruiah came to his aid, struck the Philistine, and killed him. Then David's men swore to him: "You must never again go out with us to battle. You must not extinguish the lamp of Israel."

<sup>18</sup> After this, there was another battle with the Philistines at Gob. At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giant.<sup>[k]</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Once again there was a battle with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed<sup>[l]</sup> Goliath the Gittite. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam.

<sup>20</sup> At Gath there was still another battle. A huge man was there with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot—24 in all. He, too, was descended from the giant.<sup>[m]</sup> <sup>21</sup> When he taunted Israel, Jonathan, son of David's brother Shimei, killed him.

<sup>22</sup> These four were descended from the giant<sup>[n]</sup> in Gath and were killed by David and his soldiers.

### **David's Song of Thanksgiving**

**22** David spoke the words of this song to the LORD on the day the LORD rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. <sup>2</sup> He said:

The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,

<sup>3</sup> my God, my mountain<sup>[o]</sup> where I seek refuge.

My shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, my refuge,  
and my Savior, You save me from violence.

<sup>4</sup> I called to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,  
and I was saved from my enemies.

<sup>5</sup> For the waves of death engulfed me;  
the torrents of destruction terrified me.

<sup>6</sup> The ropes of Sheol entangled me;  
the snares of death confronted me.

<sup>7</sup> I called to the LORD in my distress;  
I called to my God.

From His temple He heard my voice,  
and my cry for help reached His ears.

<sup>8</sup> Then the earth shook and quaked;  
the foundations of the heavens<sup>[p]</sup> trembled;  
they shook because He burned with anger.

<sup>9</sup> Smoke rose from His nostrils,  
and consuming fire came from His mouth;  
coals were set ablaze by it.<sup>[q]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> He parted the heavens and came down,  
a dark cloud beneath His feet.

<sup>11</sup> He rode on a cherub and flew,

soaring<sup>[t]</sup> on the wings of the wind.

<sup>12</sup> He made darkness a canopy around Him,  
a gathering<sup>[s]</sup> of water and thick clouds.

<sup>13</sup> From the radiance of His presence,  
flaming coals were ignited.

<sup>14</sup> The LORD thundered from heaven;  
the Most High projected His voice.

<sup>15</sup> He shot arrows and scattered them;  
He hurled lightning bolts and routed them.

<sup>16</sup> The depths of the sea became visible,  
the foundations of the world were exposed  
at the rebuke of the LORD,  
at the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

<sup>17</sup> He reached down from heaven  
and took hold of me;  
He pulled me out of deep waters.

<sup>18</sup> He rescued me from my powerful enemy  
and from those who hated me,  
for they were too strong for me.

<sup>19</sup> They confronted me in the day of my distress,  
but the LORD was my support.

<sup>20</sup> He brought me out to a spacious place;  
He rescued me because He delighted in me.

<sup>21</sup> The LORD rewarded me  
according to my righteousness;  
He repaid me  
according to the cleanness of my hands.

<sup>22</sup> For I have kept the ways of the LORD  
and have not turned from my God to wickedness.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, I have kept all His ordinances in mind<sup>[t]</sup>  
and have not disregarded His statutes.

<sup>24</sup> I was blameless before Him  
and kept myself from sinning.

<sup>25</sup> So the LORD repaid me  
according to my righteousness,  
according to my cleanness<sup>[t]</sup> in His sight.

<sup>26</sup> With the faithful  
You prove Yourself faithful;  
with the blameless man  
You prove Yourself blameless;

<sup>27</sup> with the pure  
You prove Yourself pure,  
but with the crooked

You prove Yourself shrewd.

<sup>28</sup> You rescue an afflicted people,  
but Your eyes are set against the proud—  
You humble them.

<sup>29</sup> LORD, You are my lamp;  
the LORD illuminates my darkness.  
<sup>30</sup> With You I can attack a barrier,<sup>[v]</sup>  
and with my God I can leap over a wall.  
<sup>31</sup> God—His way is perfect;  
the word of the LORD is pure.  
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.

<sup>32</sup> For who is God besides the LORD?  
And who is a rock? Only our God.  
<sup>33</sup> God is my strong refuge;<sup>[w]</sup>  
He makes my way perfect.<sup>[x]</sup>  
<sup>34</sup> He makes my feet like the feet of a deer  
and sets me securely on the<sup>[y]</sup> heights.<sup>[z]</sup>  
<sup>35</sup> He trains my hands for war;  
my arms can bend a bow of bronze.  
<sup>36</sup> You have given me the shield of Your salvation;  
Your help<sup>[aa]</sup> exalts me.  
<sup>37</sup> You widen a place beneath me for my steps,  
and my ankles do not give way.  
<sup>38</sup> I pursue my enemies and destroy them;  
I do not turn back until they are wiped out.  
<sup>39</sup> I wipe them out and crush them,  
and they do not rise;  
they fall beneath my feet.  
<sup>40</sup> You have clothed me with strength for battle;  
You subdue my adversaries beneath me.  
<sup>41</sup> You have made my enemies retreat before me;<sup>[ab]</sup>  
I annihilate those who hate me.  
<sup>42</sup> They look, but there is no one to save them—  
they look to the LORD, but He does not answer them.  
<sup>43</sup> I pulverize them like dust of the earth;  
I crush them and trample them like mud in the streets.

<sup>44</sup> You have freed me from the feuds among my people;  
You have appointed me the head of nations;  
a people I had not known serve me.  
<sup>45</sup> Foreigners submit to me grudgingly;  
as soon as they hear, they obey me.  
<sup>46</sup> Foreigners lose heart  
and come trembling from their fortifications.

<sup>47</sup> The LORD lives—may my rock be praised!  
God, the rock of my salvation, is exalted.  
<sup>48</sup> God—He gives me vengeance  
and casts down peoples under me.  
<sup>49</sup> He frees me from my enemies.  
You exalt me above my adversaries;  
You rescue me from violent men.

<sup>50</sup> Therefore I will praise You, LORD, among the nations;  
I will sing about Your name.

<sup>51</sup> He is a tower of salvation for <sup>[ac]</sup> His king;  
He shows loyalty to His anointed,  
to David and his descendants forever.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [2 Samuel 21:3](#) Lit *will bless*
- b. [2 Samuel 21:4](#) Lit “*Not for us silver and gold with*
- c. [2 Samuel 21:6](#) Or *impale*, or *expose*
- d. [2 Samuel 21:8](#) Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr, Tg; other Hb mss read *Michal*
- e. [2 Samuel 21:9](#) Or *impaled*, or *exposed*
- f. [2 Samuel 21:9](#) = March–April
- g. [2 Samuel 21:10](#) = April to October
- h. [2 Samuel 21:13](#) Or *impaled*, or *exposed*
- i. [2 Samuel 21:16](#) Or *Raphah*
- j. [2 Samuel 21:16](#) Lit *300* (shekels)
- k. [2 Samuel 21:18](#) Or *Raphah*
- l. [2 Samuel 21:19](#) 1Ch 20:5 adds *the brother of*
- m. [2 Samuel 21:20](#) Or *Raphah*
- n. [2 Samuel 21:22](#) Or *Raphah*
- o. [2 Samuel 22:3](#) LXX; MT reads *God of my mountain*; Ps 18:2
- p. [2 Samuel 22:8](#) Some Hb mss, Syr, Vg read *mountains*; Ps 18:7
- q. [2 Samuel 22:9](#) Or *ablaze from Him*
- r. [2 Samuel 22:11](#) Some Hb mss; other Hb mss, Syr, Tg read *He was seen*
- s. [2 Samuel 22:12](#) Or *sieve*, or *mass*; Hb obscure
- t. [2 Samuel 22:23](#) Lit *Indeed, all His ordinances have been in front of me*
- u. [2 Samuel 22:25](#) LXX, Syr, Vg read *to the cleanness of my hands*; Ps 18:24
- v. [2 Samuel 22:30](#) Or *ridge*
- w. [2 Samuel 22:33](#) DSS, some LXX mss, Syr, Vg read *God clothes me with strength*; Ps 18:32
- x. [2 Samuel 22:33](#) Some LXX mss, Syr; MT reads *He sets free the blameless His way*; Hb obscure
- y. [2 Samuel 22:34](#) LXX; some Hb mss read *my*; other Hb mss read *His*
- z. [2 Samuel 22:34](#) Or *on my high places*
- aa. [2 Samuel 22:36](#) LXX reads *humility*; Ps 18:35
- bb. [2 Samuel 22:41](#) Lit *You gave me the neck of my enemies*
- cc. [2 Samuel 22:51](#) DSS read *He gives great victory to*

# Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

2 Samuel 21-22

## 2 Samuel 21

**21:1** During David's reign is literally "in David's days." The last four chapters of 2 Samuel contain six accounts of matters pertaining to David's life, though not tied chronologically to the rest of the book. It appears the author had additional information he wished to include about David, and he decided this was the best place to put it. In the first account, God used continuing famine to prompt David to seek the reason behind this calamity. The Lord revealed the answer: Saul and his family had killed the Gibeonites.

**21:2** The Gibeonites had remained in the land since the days of Joshua. The Israelites had taken an oath not to destroy them ([Jos 9:3-17](#)); Saul, however, had not honored that oath and had killed many of them.

**21:3** When David asked What should I do for you? it showed his humble attitude and his concern for justice.

**21:4** Israel probably did not allow their subject peoples to put anyone to death without Israelite sanction (cp. restrictions imposed on Israel by Roman authorities: [Jn 18:31](#)).

**21:6** The Gibeonites asked for the death of seven of Saul's male descendants. Saul had probably killed many more Gibeonites than this; no doubt the number requested was a symbolic representation of the Gibeonite dead. Gibeah was Saul's hometown; since Saul had killed their people at Gibeon, the Gibeonites probably wanted to reciprocate by hanging his descendants in his hometown.

**21:7** Even in complying with the Gibeonites request, David spared Mephibosheth in accord with his earlier oath regarding Jonathan ([9:1-10](#); [1Sam 18:3](#); [20:12-17](#); [23:18](#)).

**21:8** Rizpah was probably the same concubine with whom Abner had sexual relations ([3:7](#)).

**21:9** The beginning of the barley harvest was normally during Nisan (March-April), the beginning of the religious year.

**21:10** Rizpah performed a tragic act of love for her sons and Merab's sons, protecting their bodies from desecration by birds and wild animals. The rain mentioned normally fell in March and April between the barley and wheat harvest, so the exact length of Rizpah's vigil is unknown.

**21:12-13** David heard about what Rizpah had done, and he took action to provide the dead an honored burial. The bones of Saul and his son Jonathan (and presumably those of Abinadab and Malchishua; [1Sam 31:2,12-13](#)) were brought from Jabesh-gilead back to Benjamin. David also gathered up the bones of Saul's family.

**21:14** The remains were placed in the family tomb of Saul's father Kish (see [1Sam 9:1](#)). The exact location of Zela (other than in Benjamin) is unknown ([Jos 18:28](#)). God answered prayer means that the famine ceased (see [v. 1](#)).

---

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 21-22".

[21:16](#) Ishbi-benob is unknown outside this passage, but he may have been one of the descendants of the giant (Goliath; [1Sam 17:4](#)), though some scholars understand the Hebrew word translated "giant" (*rapha*) as a proper name ("one of the descendants of Rapha"). The man intended to kill David because killing him would deal Israel a serious blow.

[21:17](#) David's nephew Abishai saved the king's life and struck the Philistine. As they pondered how close David had come to death, they told him not to participate with them in any more battles, an admonition the king seems to have taken to heart ([11:1](#); [18:2](#); [20:4,6](#)). Through his leadership David, as the figurative lamp of Israel, provided political, military, and spiritual light to the nation.

[21:18](#) Gob ("cistern") may be either identified with or in the close vicinity of Gezer at the mouth of the Aijalon Valley near Philistine territory ([1Ch 20:4](#)). On the giant, see note at [verse 16](#).

[21:19](#) This verse raises the question of who killed Goliath the Gittite. [First Samuel 17:50-51](#) credits David, but this verse credits Elhanan. One interpretation suggests two different Goliaths, though the identical description of Goliath's spear being like a weaver's beam (cp. [1Sam 17:7](#)) makes this option doubtful. Another explanation is to understand Elhanan as David's original name and David as David's throne name, but this is not supported elsewhere in Scripture. By far the most likely explanation is that Elhanan killed not Goliath but Goliath's brother, as [1 Chronicles 20:5](#) states, and that an early scribe simply miscopied the present verse. Although this verse and [1Ch 20:5](#) read a bit differently in English, in the Hebrew text only a minor alteration is required to change from one reading to another.

## 2 Samuel 22

[22:1](#) On the day is not a reference to a single day, but the general time at which David realized the Lord had given him the kingship and helped him subdue all his enemies. The song is very similar to [Psalm 18](#), but has more emphasis on David's personal worship.

[22:2](#) Rock denotes an immovable, jutting cliff, not a mere stone. This word commonly occurs in the Bible to describe God's support and defense of His people ([1Sam 2:2](#); [Ps 18:2](#); [95:1](#); [Isa 44:8](#)).

[22:3](#) Mary also used the expression horn of my salvation to describe God's work on her behalf ([Lk 1:69](#)). The Bible often uses the image of an animal horn to symbolize strength ([1Sam 2:1](#)). Violence (Hb *chamas*) denotes unjust violence ([Gen 6:11](#); [Ob 10](#)).

[22:5](#) Waves designates huge breakers coming in to shore. Torrents refers to canyons filled with rushing water during the rainy season.

[22:6](#) The word Sheol often occurs in connection with death ([Num 16:33](#); [Ps 16:10](#)). David feared for his life as he fled from Saul.

[22:7](#) Temple signifies the place of God's dwelling—either His heavenly temple ([1Ki 8:27](#)) or the tent where the ark of God rested ([1Ch 16:1](#)).

[22:8-16](#) David described God's terrible fury. The imagery is intended to convey the awesomeness of His presence as He entered His world to intervene on behalf of His servant David.

[22:18](#) David's enemies were too strong for him, but not too strong for the Lord.

[22:19](#) The Lord was David's support, so David could lean on Him in times of trouble.



[22:20](#) From a spacious place David could see enemy threats while they were still far away.

[22:21](#) The Lord saw David's righteousness and blessed him for it. David's relationship with God made him want to please the Lord in the way he lived.

[22:22](#) Kept can also be translated as "guarded."

[22:23](#) Disregarded is literally "turned aside."

[22:24](#) Blameless does not mean sinless, but it reflects a deep moral character ([Gen 6:9](#); [Ps 119:1](#)).

[22:26](#) Qualities such as faithful and blameless are characteristic of both God and His children, who become more like Him as they grow in their relationship with Him ([Rm 8:29](#)).

[22:28](#) Humble is literally "bring low."

[22:29](#) Both the Lord and His Word function as a lamp for His people ([Ps 119:105](#)).

[22:30](#) David was quick to credit the Lord as the source of his power ([5:12,21](#); [1Sam 17:45-47](#)).

[22:32](#) David answered his two rhetorical questions; only Yahweh was God. The Lord is our rock.

[22:34](#) The deer David described are very sure-footed. They are a powerful picture of the firm footing on which believers stand.

[22:43](#) The words pulverize... crush, and trample describe the overwhelming victories David won with God's help ([Rm 8:37](#)).

[22:44](#) David's sovereignty extended to the nations around him ([5:17-25](#); [8:1-14](#); [10:1-19](#)).

[22:46](#) Reports of David's strength caused his enemies to lose heart before they ever battled him.

[22:47](#) On rock, see note at [verse 2](#).

[22:51](#) Loyalty can also be translated as "faithfulness" or "covenant love." It denotes all that comes to God's children from Him. Anointed (Hb *mashiach*) designated God's anointed king ([1:14,16](#); [1Sam 24:6](#)). David and his descendants would enjoy the blessings of God forever ([7:16](#)).



## English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

2 Samuel 21-22

### 2 Samuel 21

[21:1-24:25](#) *Epilogue.* These last four chapters form an epilogue. There are six sections arranged concentrically. The first section deals with a drought, the last with a plague. The second and fifth talk about David's heroes, and the middle two are psalms of David. They are not placed in chronological order with the rest of the book (note the vague expression "in the days of David" in [21:1](#)). The last section is climactic, describing the events leading to the purchase of the land on which Solomon would build the temple.

[21:1-14](#) *Famine and the Death of Saul's Sons.* When told by the Lord that a famine is the result of Saul's misdeed against the Gibeonites, David has Saul's sons slain to make atonement.

[21:1-2](#) [Joshua 9](#) tells how the **Gibeonites** tricked the Israelites into guaranteeing their safety with an oath ([Josh. 9:15](#)). Because of his **zeal**, Saul had broken that oath and killed some Gibeonites. This incident is not recorded elsewhere, but Saul's ability to act ruthlessly (though hardly out of zeal for Israel) is also shown in [1 Sam. 22:16-19](#).

[21:3-6](#) Asked how Saul's misdeeds against them could be atoned, the Gibeonites requested that **seven of his sons** be given to them to be put to death. This apparently ignores the command in [Deut. 24:16](#): "nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers." Various explanations have been offered as to why God allowed this to happen: (1) These seven were accomplices in Saul's acts. Yet the text in no way suggests this; furthermore, even Merab's oldest son could scarcely have been more than 10 when Saul died, because David must have been at least in his late teens when Merab married ([1 Sam. 18:19](#)) and was no more than 30 when Saul died ([2 Sam. 5:4](#)). See also note on [4:2-3](#). (2) A more plausible suggestion is that God still exacted punishment from Saul's house for some of the evil that Saul had done; this is consistent with a pattern elsewhere in which serious sins, especially of a king, result in punishment on the sinner's descendants as well (cf. [Ex. 20:5](#); [1 Sam. 2:33-34](#); [3:13-14](#); [1 Kings 14:10-11](#); [2 Kings 9:7-9](#)). (3) A third suggestion is that the execution of seven men was excessive punishment, because although the Lord told David that Saul's actions had caused the famine ([2 Sam. 21:1](#)), he did not tell David to put anyone to death. In that case, the solution proposed by the Gibeonites was excessively vindictive, while the text hints that a monetary payment (see [v. 4](#)) and the restoration of land (see [v. 5](#)) may have been sufficient. In any case, the narrator never tells readers that God approved of David's action here; thus David may simply be acting according to widespread beliefs or the Gibeonite demands rather than divine command (see notes on [13:21](#); [16:1-4](#)). The relief from the famine ([21:14](#)) does show that the payment was enough (and indeed more than enough), but it is also a response to David's decency with the bones of these victims, as well as those of Saul and Jonathan.

[21:7-8](#) The writer lists the sons of Saul who were handed over to the Gibeonites. **Mephibosheth** the son of **Rizpah** (Saul's concubine; see [3:7](#)) is different from **Mephibosheth** son of Jonathan, who was spared. Likewise Barzillai, grandfather of five of the hanged men, is not the Barzillai of [19:31-40](#). For Merab's marriage to Adriel, see [1 Sam. 18:19](#).

[21:9](#) The **beginning of barley harvest** was April.

---

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 21-22".

**21:10-14 Rizpah**, mother of two of the men hanged by the Gibeonites, sheltered their bodies from the birds and wild animals (cf. [1 Sam. 17:44, 46](#); [Ps. 79:2](#)). According to [Deut. 21:22-23](#), the bodies of those who are hanged should be buried that same day (see [Josh. 8:29](#)). **Until rain fell upon them** may mean “until the rain should have fallen upon them.” It may have been decided that the men would not be buried until the rains fell and the famine stopped. This suggests that, when David heard what Rizpah was doing, he buried them earlier than planned, and then God responded ([2 Sam. 21:14](#)), probably by sending rain. David also **took the bones of Saul and... his son Jonathan** (see [1 Sam. 31:12-13](#)) and, presumably, buried them alongside the seven others of Saul’s family who had just been killed. Saul was apparently from Gibeon ([1 Sam. 11:4](#)), but his family could have originally come from the Benjaminite town of **Zela** ([Josh. 18:28](#)).

**21:15-22 Philistine Wars.** This section recounts four fights of David’s men with Philistine giants. “There was war again” suggests that this is an excerpt from some writing about David’s wars.

**21:16** The **giants** (Hb. *raph*) are usually understood as referring to the Rephaim, the ancient, pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan (e.g., [Gen. 14:5](#); [15:20](#); [Deut. 2:10-11, 20-21](#); [3:11](#); [Josh. 12:4](#); [13:12](#); [17:15](#)).

**21:19 Elhanan... struck down Goliath the Gittite.** Since in [1 Samuel 17](#) David killed Goliath of Gath (“Gittite” means someone from Gath), this statement has caused endless controversy. (1) Some say that the deed of Elhanan was later attributed to David, or that the name “Goliath” only later became attached to David’s victim, but these interpretations would deny the truthfulness of [1 Samuel 17](#), and other solutions are preferable. (2) Based on the parallel passage in [1 Chron. 20:5](#), some think that “Lahmi the brother of” has been deleted from the text before “Goliath” in this verse, and given some of the challenges encountered in establishing the original text of 1-2 Samuel (see [Introduction to 1-2 Samuel: Text](#)), this is a distinct possibility. (3) Another suggestion is that the passages refer to two different men named Goliath. Because there are so many duplicate names in the OT, this is also a possibility. (4) A final suggestion, similar to the third solution, is that “Goliath” was a common noun for a giant, just as “Achish” ([1 Sam. 21:10](#); [27:2](#)) may have been a title or common noun for a Philistine ruler (just as “Pharaoh” is a title of the king of Egypt, not a name). There is therefore no conflict in saying that both David and Elhanan killed [a] “Goliath.” The name “Goliath” is traceable back to the non-Semitic Anatolian name *Walwatta*, and the name has been found in an early Philistine inscription.

**21:21 Jonathan** may be the Jonathan listed as one of David’s 30 mighty men ([23:32](#)). **Shimei** was David’s third eldest brother. His name is given in various forms in [1 Sam. 16:9](#); [17:13](#); [2 Sam. 13:3](#); and [1 Chron. 2:13](#).

## 2 Samuel 22

**22:1-51 Song of David.** David’s song is almost identical with [Psalm 18](#). There are many differences in spelling, etc., in the Hebrew text of the two passages, but few of the differences come across in a translation. Most of these differences can be understood when one realizes that, while the book of Psalms, regularly used in worship, uses “standard” Hebrew spelling, the spelling in the Samuel passage is much more phonetic in character because as a narrative it was written as it was meant to be heard. In other words, David’s personal song of [2 Samuel 22](#) has been adapted to serve as a public hymn in [Psalm 18](#) (see [note](#)). Such phonetic spelling is common throughout the books of Samuel (see [Introduction to 1-2 Samuel: Text](#)).

**22:1** The heading to David’s song does not refer to one particular incident, but to David’s deliverance from **the hand of all his enemies**. Similar elaborate descriptions, followed by “He said” ([v. 2](#)), can be found in the headings of second-millennium Egyptian songs.

[22:5-6](#) The name **Sheol** can refer to the place of the dead; here it is used as a synonym for “death.” All four lines say in prose, “I was facing death.”

[22:7](#) Having described his situation, David now describes the Lord’s response. **Heard** (Hb. *shama* ‘) does not simply mean a passive “hearing”; it implies an attentive listening and, usually, a positive response. **Temple** probably refers to the heavenly temple of God, from which he came down ([v. 10](#); see [Ps. 11:4](#); [Mic. 1:2-3](#)).

[22:8-16](#) The Lord’s sudden appearance to help David is described in vivid metaphor. The natural phenomenon that would cover most of the description is a volcano, which causes earthquake, **smoke**, **fire**, fiery **coals**, and ash clouds. Earthquake imagery is often associated with the Lord ([Ps. 77:18](#); [Isa. 5:25](#); [24:18](#)). Earthquakes, if not volcanoes, were well known in that region; see [Amos 1:1](#). [Judges 5:4-5](#) reads, “LORD, when you went out from Seir... the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before the LORD.” Many of the references can also be taken as storm images; describing battle in terms of a storm is common both in the Bible and in other ancient Near Eastern literature. In this song, the Lord is depicted as a mighty warrior riding in a chariot drawn by the wind or a cherub. David is probably thinking mainly of actual fighting, though he may have also been thinking of some instances of spiritual battle.

[22:10](#) The Lord **bowed** (or “spread open” or “parted”; Hb. *natah*) **the heavens**.

[22:15](#) **Them** refers to David’s enemies.

[22:17](#) **many waters**. Cf. [v. 5](#), where “waves” and “torrents” of trouble were overwhelming David.

[22:20](#) The Hebrew for **broad place** is the opposite of an expression for being “greatly distressed” (lit., “the matter is narrow for”) in [1 Sam. 30:6](#); [2 Sam. 13:2](#); etc.

[22:26-27](#) In Hebrew these are four lines, all of the form “With the X [person] you show yourself X.” To the **crooked**, i.e., to deceptive, dishonest people, God shows himself **tortuous**, i.e., he makes simple truths seem confusing and impossible to understand.

[22:28](#) This verse restates the theme of Hannah’s song at the beginning of Samuel ([1 Sam. 2:7-8](#)): God controls human destiny, humbling the proud but raising the humble.

[22:32-33](#) This also (cf. note on [v. 28](#)) is similar to [1 Sam. 2:2](#) (in Hannah’s song), extolling the Lord as a **rock** and the one and only God. It also reflects back to the beginning of David’s song ([2 Sam. 22:2-3](#)), calling God a **refuge**. The first part of the song ([vv. 2-31](#)) has described the fight in terms of the actions of the Lord; this next section ([vv. 32-49](#)) covers the fight with enemies in terms of what David did, thanks to the Lord, who equipped him for battle ([v. 40](#)).

[22:35](#) A **bow of bronze** is probably a bow reinforced with bronze, which would be difficult to draw but powerful. Note that “bronze” is a symbol of strength in [Job 6:12](#); [40:18](#); [Jer. 1:18](#); etc. God gave David skill and strength to conduct warfare and defeat his enemies.

[22:47-49](#) These verses end the second half of David’s song, summarizing what the Lord has done and repeating the key word **rock**.

[22:50-51](#) This is the conclusion of the whole of David’s song, with a reference to [ch. 7](#) and to the last verse of the Song of Hannah ([1 Sam. 2:10](#)).

# NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

2 Samuel 21-22

## Chapter 21

**21:1** Farmers relied heavily on spring and fall rains for their crops. If the rains stopped or came at the wrong time, or if the plants became insect infested, there would be drastic food shortages in the coming year. Agriculture at that time was completely dependent upon natural conditions. There were no irrigation sprinklers, fertilizers, or pesticides. Even moderate variations in rainfall or insect activity could destroy an entire harvest.

**21:1ff** The next four chapters are an appendix to the book. The events described are not presented in chronological order. They tell of David's exploits at various times during his reign.

**21:1-14** Although the Bible does not record Saul's act of vengeance against the Gibeonites, it was apparently a serious crime making him guilty of their blood. Still, why were Saul's sons killed for the murders their father committed? In many Near Eastern cultures, including Israel's, an entire family was held guilty for the crime of the father because the family was considered an indissoluble unit. Saul broke the vow that the Israelites made to the Gibeonites ([Joshua 9:16-20](#)). This was a serious offense against God's law ([Numbers 30:1, 2](#)). Either David was following the custom of treating the family as a unit, or Saul's sons were guilty of helping Saul kill the Gibeonites.

Most great leaders struggle with a few followers who try too hard. For David, Abishai was that kind of follower. His fierce loyalty to David had to be kept from becoming destructive—he was too willing to leap to his leader's defense. David never put down Abishai's eager loyalty. Instead, he patiently tried to direct its powerful energy. This approach, while not completely successful, saved David's life on at least one occasion. At three other times, however, Abishai would have killed for the king if David had not stopped him.

Abishai was an excellent soldier, but he was better at taking orders than giving them. When he wasn't carrying out David's orders, Abishai was usually under the command of his younger brother Joab. The two brothers helped each other accomplish great military feats as well as shameful acts of violence—Abishai helped Joab murder Abner and Amasa. When he was effective as a leader, he led mostly by example. But all too often he did not think before he acted.

### Abishai

We should be challenged by Abishai's admirable qualities of fearlessness and loyalty, but we should be warned by his tendency to act without thinking. It is not enough to be strong and effective; we must also have the self-control and wisdom that God can give us. We are to follow and obey with our hearts and our minds.

### Strengths and accomplishments

- Known as one of the heroes among David's fighting men
- A fearless and willing volunteer, fiercely loyal to David
- Saved David's life

---

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 498-502.

### **Weaknesses and mistakes**

- Tended to act without thinking
- Helped Joab murder Abner and Amasa

### **Lessons from his life**

- The most effective followers combine careful thought and action
- Blind loyalty can cause great evil

### **Vital statistics**

- Occupation: Soldier
- Relatives: Mother: Zeruah. Brothers: Joab, Asahel. Uncle: David.

### **Key verses**

"Abishai son of Zeruah, the brother of Joab, was the leader of the Thirty. He once used his spear to kill 300 enemy warriors in a single battle. It was by such feats that he became as famous as the Three. Abishai was the most famous of the Thirty and was their commander, though he was not one of the Three" ([2 Samuel 23:18, 19](#)).

Abishai's story is told in [2 Samuel 2:18-23:19](#). He is also mentioned in [1 Samuel 26:1-13](#); [1 Chronicles 2:16](#); [11:20](#); [18:12](#); [19:11, 15](#).

**[21:9,10](#)** The barley harvest was in late April and early May. Barley was similar to wheat but less suitable for breadmaking. Rizpah guarded the men's bodies during the entire harvest season, which lasted from April to October.

**[21:16-18](#)** For more information on giants, see [1 Samuel 17:4-7](#) and the note on [Genesis 6:4](#).