



A House Set in Order (Part 2): David's Legacy (2 Sam 23-24)

Notes: Week Twelve

*** 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 23-24 (HCSB)

David's Last Words

23 These are the last words of David:

The declaration of David son of Jesse,
the declaration of the man raised on high,^[a]
the one anointed by the God of Jacob,
the favorite singer of Israel:

² The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me,
His word was on my tongue.

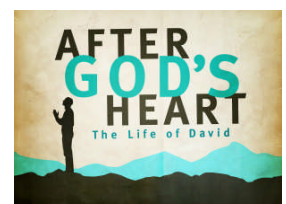
³ The God of Israel spoke;
the Rock of Israel said to me,
“The one who rules the people with justice,
who rules in the fear of God,
⁴ is like the morning light when the sun rises
on a cloudless morning,
the glisten of rain on sprouting grass.”

⁵ Is it not true my house is with God?
For He has established an everlasting covenant with me,
ordered and secured in every detail.

Will He not bring about
my whole salvation and my every desire?

⁶ But all the wicked are like thorns raked aside;
they can never be picked up by hand.

⁷ The man who touches them
must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear.
They will be completely burned up on the spot.



Exploits of David's Warriors

⁸ These are the names of David's warriors:

Josheb-basshebeth the Tahchemonite was chief of the officers.^[b] He wielded his spear^[c] against 800 men that he killed at one time.

⁹ After him, Eleazar son of Dodo son of an Ahohite was among the three warriors with David when they defied the Philistines. The men of Israel retreated in the place they had gathered for battle,¹⁰ but Eleazar stood his ground and attacked the Philistines until his hand was tired and stuck to his sword.

The LORD brought about a great victory that day. Then the troops came back to him, but only to plunder the dead.

¹¹ After him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had assembled in formation where there was a field full of lentils. The troops fled from the Philistines,¹² but Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field, defended it, and struck down the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

¹³ Three of the 30 leading warriors went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam, while a company of Philistines was camping in the Valley of Rephaim.¹⁴ At that time David was in the stronghold, and a Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem.¹⁵ David was extremely thirsty^[d] and said, "If only someone would bring me water to drink from the well at the city gate of Bethlehem!"¹⁶ So three of the warriors broke through the Philistine camp and drew water from the well at the gate of Bethlehem. They brought it back to David, but he refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out to the LORD.¹⁷ David said, "LORD, I would never do such a thing! Is this not the blood of men who risked their lives?" So he refused to drink it. Such were the exploits of the three warriors.

¹⁸ Abishai, Joab's brother and son of Zeruiah, was leader of the Three.^[e] He raised his spear against 300 men and killed them, gaining a reputation among the Three.¹⁹ Was he not more honored than the Three? He became their commander even though he did not become one of the Three.

²⁰ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was the son of a brave man from Kabzeel, a man of many exploits. Benaiah killed two sons^[f] of Ariel^[g] of Moab, and he went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion.²¹ He also killed an Egyptian, a huge man. Even though the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went down to him with a club, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and then killed him with his own spear.²² These were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada, who had a reputation among the three warriors.²³ He was the most honored of the Thirty, but he did not become one of the Three. David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

²⁴ Among the Thirty were:

Joab's brother Asahel,

Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

²⁵ Shammah the Harodite,

Elika the Harodite,

²⁶ Helez the Paltite,
 Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,
²⁷ Abiezer the Anathothite,
 Mebunnai the Hushathite,
²⁸ Zalmon the Ahohite,
 Maharai the Netophathite,
²⁹ Heleb son of Baanah the Netophahite,
 Ittai son of Ribai from Gibeah of the Benjaminites,
³⁰ Benaiah the Pirathonite,
 Hiddai from the wadis of Gaash, ^[h]
³¹ Abi-albon the Arbathite,
 Azmaveth the Barhumite,
³² Eliahba the Shaalbonite,
 the sons of Jashen,
 Jonathan son of ^[i] ³³ Shammah the Hararite,
 Ahiam son of Sharar the Hararite,
³⁴ Eliphelet son of Ahasbai son of the Maacathite,
 Eliam son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,
³⁵ Hezro the Carmelite,
 Paarai the Arbite,
³⁶ Igal son of Nathan from Zobah,
 Bani the Gadite,
³⁷ Zelek the Ammonite,
 Naharai the Beerothite, the armor-bearer for Joab son of Zeruiah,
³⁸ Ira the Ithrite,
 Gareb the Ithrite,
³⁹ and Uriah the Hittite.

There were 37 in all.

David's Military Census

24 The LORD's anger burned against Israel again, and He stirred up David against them to say: "Go, count the people of Israel and Judah."

² So the king said to Joab, the commander of his army, "Go through all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba and register the troops so I can know their number."

³ Joab replied to the king, "May the LORD your God multiply the troops 100 times more than they are—while my lord the king looks on! But why does my lord the king want to do this?"

⁴ Yet the king's order prevailed over Joab and the commanders of the army. So Joab and the commanders of the army left the king's presence to register the troops of Israel.

⁵ They crossed the Jordan and camped in Aroer, south of the town in the middle of the valley, and then proceeded toward Gad and Jazer. ⁶ They went to Gilead and to the land of the Hittites^[i] and continued on to Dan-jaan and around to Sidon. ⁷ They went to the fortress of Tyre and all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites. Afterward, they went to the Negev of Judah at Beer-sheba.

⁸ When they had gone through the whole land, they returned to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and 20 days. ⁹ Joab gave the king the total of the registration of the troops. There were 800,000 fighting men from Israel and 500,000 men from Judah.

¹⁰ David's conscience troubled him after he had taken a census of the troops. He said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I've done. Now, LORD, because I've been very foolish, please take away Your servant's guilt."

David's Punishment

¹¹ When David got up in the morning, a revelation from the LORD had come to the prophet Gad, David's seer: ¹² "Go and say to David, 'This is what the LORD says: I am offering you three choices. Choose one of them, and I will do it to you.'"

¹³ So Gad went to David, told him the choices, and asked him, "Do you want three^[k] years of famine to come on your land, to flee from your foes three months while they pursue you, or to have a plague in your land three days? Now, think it over and decide what answer I should take back to the One who sent me."

¹⁴ David answered Gad, "I have great anxiety. Please, let us fall into the LORD's hands because His mercies are great, but don't let me fall into human hands."

¹⁵ So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the appointed time, and from Dan to Beer-sheba 70,000 men died. ¹⁶ Then the angel extended his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, but the LORD relented concerning the destruction and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough, withdraw your hand now!" The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah^[l] the Jebusite.

¹⁷ When David saw the angel striking the people, he said to the LORD, "Look, I am the one who has sinned; I am the one^[m] who has done wrong. But these sheep, what have they done? Please, let Your hand be against me and my father's family."

David's Altar

¹⁸ Gad came to David that day and said to him, "Go up and set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹ David went up in obedience to Gad's command, just as the LORD had commanded. ²⁰ Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants coming toward him, so he went out and bowed to the king with his face to the ground.

²¹ Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?"

David replied, “To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the LORD, so the plague on the people may be halted.”

²² Araunah said to David, “My lord the king may take whatever he wants^[n] and offer it. Here are the oxen for a burnt offering and the threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. ²³ My king, Araunah gives everything here to the king.” Then he said to the king, “May the LORD your God accept you.”

²⁴ The king answered Araunah, “No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for 20 ounces^[o] of silver. ²⁵ He built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer on behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel ended.

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Samuel 23:1](#) Or *raised up by the high [God]*
- b. [2 Samuel 23:8](#) Some Hb mss, LXX read *Three*
- c. [2 Samuel 23:8](#) Some Hb mss; other Hb mss, LXX read *He was Adino the Eznite*
- d. [2 Samuel 23:15](#) Lit *And David craved*
- e. [2 Samuel 23:18](#) Some Hb mss, Syr read *the Thirty*
- f. [2 Samuel 23:20](#) LXX; MT omits *sons*
- g. [2 Samuel 23:20](#) Or *two warriors*
- h. [2 Samuel 23:30](#) Or *from Nahale-gaash*
- i. [2 Samuel 23:32](#) Some LXX mss; MT omits *son of*; 1Ch 11:34
- j. [2 Samuel 24:6](#) LXX; MT reads *of Tahtim-hodshi*; Hb obscure
- k. [2 Samuel 24:13](#) LXX; MT reads *seven*; 1Ch 21:12
- l. [2 Samuel 24:16](#) = Ornan in 1Ch 21:15-28; 2Ch 3:1
- m. [2 Samuel 24:17](#) LXX reads *shepherd*
- n. [2 Samuel 24:22](#) Lit *take what is good in his eyes*
- o. [2 Samuel 24:24](#) Lit *50 shekels*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹

2 Samuel 23-24

2 Samuel 23

23:1 The heading for this chapter, These are the last words of David, is not intended chronologically; other words of David appear after this section and even in 1 Kings ([1Ki 1:28-35](#); [2:1-9](#)). Perhaps the section contains David's last recorded public statement or testimony to God's work through his life. Anointed (Hb *mashiach*) emphasizes David's dedication to God's service. God of Jacob ties David to the history of the patriarchs; God's work in David was the continuation of a work that began with Abraham ([Gen 12:1-3](#)).

23:2 David's words should be understood not as boastful, but as portraying a sense of wonder that God would use him to convey His words.

23:3 On Rock, see note at [22:2](#). Fear of God denotes a healthy reverence for His power and majesty; the book of Proverbs associates such an attitude with wisdom and knowledge ([Pr 1:7](#); [9:10](#)).

23:5 My house denotes David's family. God's everlasting covenant with David's house was ordered and secured in every detail. David was confident the Lord would bring its every aspect to fruition.

23:6-7 David's experience had taught him that the wicked had no future in God's plan. Since they were neither useful nor usable, the day of their judgment would surely come.

23:8-39 These are the names and accounts of some of David's warriors—his most valiant soldiers. God blessed David with exceptional military men. The list includes the three famous heroes who turned the tide of events in single combat and the thirty warriors who served in a special detachment. There were men from many different tribes of Israel and even a few foreigners among the men who rallied to David.

23:9 Defied is the same word used of Goliath's words against Israel ([1Sam 17:10,26,36](#)).

23:10 Eleazar displayed tenacity as he attacked the Philistines, yet the Lord brought the victory. The troops returned later to plunder the dead, a means of securing "extra payment" for their military service.

23:11 Lentils were a common food source.

23:12 The Philistines and other enemies often came up Judah's valleys to raid food supplies.

23:13 The cave of Adullam was in the Valley of Elah ([1Sam 17:2](#)) below Bethlehem. The Valley of Rephaim lay southwest of Jerusalem.

23:14 The stronghold probably designates the cave in which David was stationed. A Philistine garrison occupied Bethlehem—perhaps a move designed to draw David out of hiding.

23:15 Probably David's vocalized wish came not only from his thirst, but from his desire that his hometown would once again know the peace that allowed people to drink from the well at the city gate freely.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 23-24".

[23:16-17](#) Three of the warriors under David's command took their leader's wish as a challenge and made the 25-mile round-trip journey at the risk of their lives to secure water from...Bethlehem. David's response revealed the depth to which he was moved by his men's loyalty and bravery. The water from Bethlehem's well was a very precious gift because of the sacrifice the men made to get it. Consequently, it was a fitting sacrifice to David's God.

[23:18](#) Abishai, Joab's brother, played a leading role in David's rise to power and kingship ([v. 18](#); [10:10](#); [18:2-3](#)).

[23:20](#) Benaiah was a well-known warrior ([8:18](#); [20:23](#)). Despite his position in a pit and severe weather that hampered both his dexterity and his mobility, he killed a lion.

[23:24](#) Asahel was a soldier who was killed by Abner during Israel's civil war following Saul's death ([2:18-23](#)).

[23:25](#) Harodite may designate a person from the Harod Valley that leads from the Jezreel Valley down to Beth-shan ([1Sam 31:10](#)) in the Jordan Valley.

[23:26](#) A Tekoite was a person from Tekoa, seven miles south of Jerusalem ([Am 1:1](#)).

[23:27](#) Anathoth, located in Benjamin, was later the prophet Jeremiah's hometown ([Jer 1:1](#)).

[23:29](#) Gibeah of the Benjaminites was Saul's hometown and capital, a fact that shows David had some following even there.

[23:34](#) According to [11:3](#), Eliam was Bathsheba's father. If this is the same Eliam, then Ahithophel, counselor to David and Absalom ([15:31](#); [16:20-23](#); [17:1-3,23](#)), would be Bathsheba's grandfather.

[23:36](#) Zobah may have been the Aramean city-state that David conquered ([8:3-6](#)). Gadite probably designates someone from Gad's territory east of the Jordan River.

[23:37](#) David subdued Ammon on his eastern border; at some point Zelek, another foreigner, joined David's forces.

[23:39](#) The text intentionally ends with the mention of Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was another foreigner among David's mighty men. He gave his life for David under the most evil of circumstances ([11:14-17](#)). The fact that there were 37 members of the Thirty may be explained in one of two ways: either Thirty was a title rather than a specific figure, or the extra men were brought in to replace those who fell in battle.

2 Samuel 24

[24:1](#) The particular sin that brought about God's wrath is not given. [First Chronicles 21:1](#) credits Satan with enticing David, but no contradiction exists. Both verses are correct; God is able to use even Satan to accomplish His purposes ([Job 1:12](#); [2:6](#)). Here, God allowed Satan to entice David to count the people, an act that, while acceptable under certain circumstances ([Ex 30:12](#)), here probably revealed that David was putting trust in his military power rather than in the Lord's protection and guidance. Another possibility is that David failed to instruct his commanders to collect the half-shekel poll tax, bringing on the plague ([Ex 30:12-13](#)). In either case, God did not force David to make the wrong decision.

[24:2](#) On from Dan to Beer-sheba, see note at [17:11](#).

24:3 Joab appears to have been concerned about his king's motives, though he veiled his concern with words of blessing.

24:4 The king's order prevailed is probably a reference to David telling Joab he wanted the census conducted—period.

24:5 Aroer was the southernmost part of Israel's territory east of the Jordan River. Gad and Jazer lay between the Jordan Valley and Ammon.

24:6 Some manuscripts read "Dan, Ijon" instead of Dan-jaan, referring to a second city near Dan at Israel's northern border. Sidon, a Phoenician city, nonetheless may have had an Israelite garrison there ([5:11](#)).

24:7 Tyre was also a Phoenician city. The expression cities of the Hivites and Canaanites probably designates areas that David had controlled. Joab may have counted the foreign population as well, or merely the Israelite soldiers maintaining order in those regions. The Negev of Judah at Beer-sheba completed their counter clockwise loop through the land, and Joab's delegation probably headed up the patriarchal highway through Hebron and back to Jerusalem with its census numbers.

24:9 On men from Israel... men from Judah, see note at [19:41](#). The numbers given in the parallel passage in [1Ch 21:5](#) differ significantly, but both authors appear to have rounded their numbers, and the Chronicler may have included Judah's number in Israel's number as well.

24:10 David's conscience troubled him, revealing again the work of God in his heart was not in vain. He confessed his sin and waited on the Lord's response.

24:11 The Lord's response came in the morning. The prophet Gad ministered during David's reign and committed certain events of David's life to writing ([1Ch 29:29](#)), though these writings have not been discovered.

24:13 David received three choices from the Lord through Gad—famine, military defeat, or plague. The seriousness of these punishments revealed the gravity of David's sin.

24:14 Again, David revealed his heart. He knew mercies might come from the Lord, but not from the human hands of his enemies. Who knew whether God's grace might avert disaster (see note at [12:22](#))?

24:16 When the angel whom God had sent to bring the plague extended his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, David's thinking proved correct. The Lord relented and spared the city. The Jebusites, part of the original Canaanite population during the days of Joshua ([Jos 24:11](#)), held Jerusalem until David conquered them ([2Sam 5:6-8](#)). Araunah apparently had continued to live in the area following David's conquest.

24:17 David asked the Lord, these sheep, what have they done? He pleaded with God to strike only him and his family, but sin often has consequences that affect others besides the person who has sinned.

24:18 This altar to the Lord would mark the point where the plague had stopped.

24:20 Araunah's threshing floor sat above Jerusalem to the north, in the area where Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice and where Solomon would later build the temple ([2Ch 3:1](#)). Since threshing utilized the wind, threshing floors probably were often in high parts of cities.

[24:22](#) Araunah made David a generous offer: My lord the king may take whatever he wants. Probably his offer was sincere; besides, especially as a foreigner, he was not in a position to bargain with Israel's king. Or Araunah may have anticipated the king would respond with a price ([Gen 23:7-16](#)).

[24:24](#) David, however, knew that all genuine sacrifice came at a price. To offer to the Lord burnt offerings that cost... nothing would have been to David a sign of the deepest ingratitude. In light of this, 20 ounces of silver was probably more than a fair price.

[24:25](#) Burnt offerings typically signified the general dedication of the worshiper ([Lv 1](#)). Fellowship offerings involved a meal shared by priest and worshiper, and they could be offered to express thankfulness—in this case thankfulness that the plague on Israel, while severe, had not destroyed Jerusalem.

English Standard Version - *Study Bible*²

2 Samuel 23-24

2 Samuel 23

[23:1-7](#) **Last Words of David.** The “last words of David” are a song praising God for establishing his house as the ruler; the song reflects back to God’s promise in [7:8-19](#). Like the wisdom psalms, it also contrasts the just ruler and worthless men. This psalm uses two different metaphors. One compares the righteous ruler to the morning light at sunrise and the shafts of sunshine on the grass after rain; the other compares worthless men to uprooted thorns.

[23:1](#) This long title section is similar to some Egyptian poems with a title. The formula **the oracle of... the oracle of the man** also appears in [Num. 24:3](#), [15](#) (see also [Prov. 30:1](#)). The man **who was raised on high** refers to David’s kingly position. **the sweet psalmist of Israel**. Many psalms declare David as their author; cf. David’s musical gifts in [1 Sam. 16:18](#); [2 Sam. 1:17-18](#); [Amos 6:5](#).

[23:2](#) **The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me** shows that David represents himself as a prophet, whose songs and wise sayings come from God (cf. [Matt. 22:43](#); [Acts 1:16](#); [2:30](#); [4:25](#); [Heb. 4:7](#)).

[23:3](#) The king who **rules justly over men** is one who rules **in the fear of God**, according to the divine statutes.

[23:4](#) **Like the morning light, like the sun... like rain** are images for bringing health and life. **He** in this verse is the just ruler of the previous verse, not God.

[23:5](#) This verse refers to the covenant God made with David in [ch. 7](#) (see also [Ps. 89:29](#); [132:12](#)). **Ordered in all things and secure** is probably legal terminology, stressing the validity of the covenant.

[23:7](#) The Hebrew for **consumed with fire** may be rendered “consumed with fire in the sitting” (see ESV footnote), which perhaps suggests “consumed with fire on the spot.” For fire as an instrument of God’s judgment, cf. [Isa. 9:18](#); [10:17](#).

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Samuel 23-24".

23:8-39 David's Heroes. This list of David's mighty men begins formally with "These are the names of" and ends with the total number, "thirty-seven in all" ([v. 39](#)). (For lists, see note on [1 Sam. 6:17-18](#).) The list is divided into two groups: "the three," i.e., Josheb-basshebeth, Eleazar, and Shammah ([2 Sam. 23:8-12](#)), and "the thirty" ([23:18-39](#)). Thirty-four names are listed among "the thirty": this could mean that (1) "thirty" is a round number, or (2) the group began with 30 members and continued to be called "the thirty" when others were added; or (3) the group remained at 30, but when some died they were replaced by other names on this list (the parallel list in [1 Chron. 11:10-47](#) has 16 additional names in [1 Chron. 11:41-47](#), probably for this reason). These 34 names plus "the three" make up the "thirty-seven" of [2 Sam. 23:39](#).

23:11-12 Shammah was defending the **plot**, or rather the **lentils** in it, against theft. Compare the Philistines' robbing the threshing floors in [1 Sam. 23:1](#).

23:13-17 These **three** men were apparently not the above "three," but rather members of the "thirty." This episode may have occurred while David was fleeing Saul, or possibly during one of the Philistine attacks in [5:17-25](#). **Oh, that someone would give me water... from the well of Bethlehem.** The taste of the water differs from place to place, and of course the water that one grew up drinking tastes best. David's words are not a command; it probably did not occur to him that someone might actually act on his words. This episode shows the love that his men had for their leader and his regard for them.

23:16-17 He poured it out to the LORD. This may at first seem wasteful of David, and ungrateful, but it is a gesture showing great value. He likens the water to the **blood** of his men, and for David to drink the water obtained at the risk of their lives would have been to take their blood lightly. But to pour it out before the Lord was a way of saying that he was not worthy of it, and he was offering it to the Lord instead. Such "drink offerings" were often poured out before the Lord: see [Gen. 35:14](#); [Num. 15:7-10](#); [28:7-15](#); etc.

23:18-39 This is the list of David's "thirty men." They are **Abishai, Benaiah**, and the men listed in [vv. 24-39](#). Most of the first dozen and a large part of the remainder are Judahites, so the group was probably formed early in David's career. The list has 34 names, probably representing 35 men (see note on [v. 32](#)). Probably those of "the thirty" who died in battle, such as Asahel ([v. 24](#); [2:18-23](#)) and Uriah ([11:17](#); [23:39](#)), were replaced by others. Some of the names appear as officers in [1 Chronicles 27](#), and most appear in the list in [1 Chron. 11:20-47](#), which is an expansion of this but is not labeled as being a list of "the thirty" (cf. [2 Sam. 23:24](#) and [1 Chron. 11:26](#)).

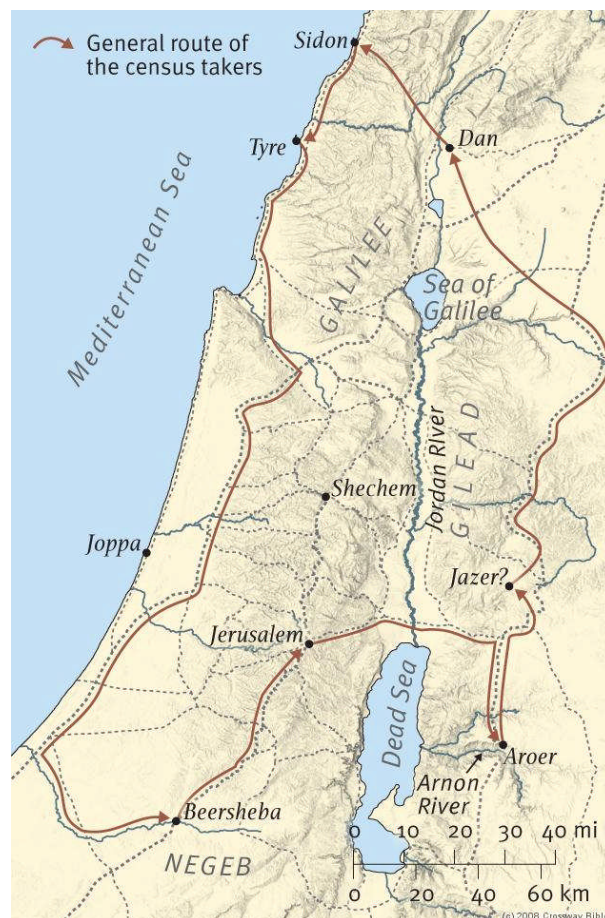
23:32 The sons of Jashen probably refers to two men, possibly twins. In the list of names, however, they seem to be counted as one item. The translation of [vv. 32-33](#) given here is the most natural, but it should be noted that those verses have been translated a number of ways (see also [1 Chron. 11:34-35](#)).

2 Samuel 24

24:1-25 *The Census and the Threshing Floor.* The Lord's anger and David's sin lead to a plague, but also to purchase of a site in Jerusalem to offer burnt offerings to the Lord.

David's Census *c. 975 B.C.*

David ordered his commander Joab to take a census of all the people in the regions in which he exercised direct control. The reason for this census was probably to assess David's military capacity (see [2 Sam. 24:9](#); [1 Chron. 21:5](#)). Joab's men left Jerusalem and began the census at Aroer, on the edge of the Arnon River. They progressed to Jazer near Rabbah, to Gilead, and on to Dan. After turning toward Sidon and the fortress of Tyre, they headed to Beersheba in the Negeb of Judah, and then they returned to Jerusalem.



24:1 Here the text says, **the LORD... incited David**, while [1 Chron. 21:1](#) reads, “Satan... incited David.” The Lord allowed Satan to incite David. God himself never does evil, but sometimes he uses evil moral agents (demons and sinful human beings) to accomplish his purposes. For more on how to reconcile the two accounts, see note on [1 Chron. 21:1](#); see also notes on [Gen. 50:18-21](#); [1 Sam. 16:14](#); [Mark 14:21](#); [Acts 2:23](#); [4:28](#); [18:9-11](#); [27:30](#); [2 Tim. 2:10](#).

24:3 By numbering the people for military purposes ([v. 9](#)), David apparently showed lack of trust in the Lord to supply the necessary men when needed, and wrongful pride in the hundreds of thousands of forces at his command (see [v. 10](#)). **Joab** knew it was wrong. [Exodus 30:12](#) has a reference to the need for a “ransom” after the counting. Cf. note on [1 Chron. 21:5-6](#).

24:5-8 The details of the census trip are not certain, but it seems that the men began at **Aroer**, a city on the Arnon River on the border with Moab, went north through **Gilead** and Bashan, and then went north-northwest to **Dan**. From there they went to the coast (the **fortress of Tyre** is probably not the city of Tyre, but an Israelite fortress), then south to **Beersheba**, and then back to **Jerusalem**.

24:9 The numbering yields **800,000 valiant men** in Israel and **500,000** in Judah. For the discrepancy in these numbers and those cited in [1 Chron. 21:5-6](#), see [note there](#).

24:10 David's heart struck him. His conscience convicted him that his census was sin (see [v. 17](#); and note on [v. 3](#)). **I have sinned.** The text does not specify why it was sin, but such an action could have been motivated by pride, trust in self, and lack of trust in the Lord.

24:13 Although the Hebrew reads “seven years of famine”(see ESV footnote), the text here follows the Septuagint and [1 Chron. 21:12](#), **three years of famine**, which makes good sense. If the Masoretic text is original, then “seven” is possibly used symbolically, since that time frame was a common theme in the ancient Near East (see [Gen. 41:30](#); [2 Kings 8:1](#)). Chronicles, then, would give the nonfigurative period. Famine, sword, and pestilence is a well-known trio of disasters ([Jer. 14:12](#); [18:21](#); [Ezek. 5:17](#); etc.). Probably the number of people who would die in each of these disasters would be approximately equal; pestilence kills faster (**three days**) than famine (“three years”).

24:17 Behold, I have sinned.... But these sheep, what have they done? David pleads that the people may not suffer for his sin, but he is the representative of God's people, and thus they bear the consequences of his behavior, whether good or evil. **Please let your hand be against me.** David offers personally to bear the punishment for this sin, but God does not accept the offer. This is, however, a worthy gesture on David's part, and sets the pattern for his ultimate descendant, the Messiah, who will bear the punishment due his people.

24:18 Go up. From David's home there was a yet higher place, the **threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite**. The Jebusites were the previous inhabitants of Jerusalem (see [5:6](#)), some of whom still lived there.

24:20 Araunah looked down. Threshing floors were usually on a high place so that the wind could blow the chaff away. This location would later become the site of the temple (see note on [v. 25](#)). It is on the top of the hill to the north of the city of David, about 450 yards (412 m) from it. (See [illustration](#).)

24:23-24 David feels that because he is the one who sinned, and because it is for the sake of the nation, he should pay for the sacrifice. He pays **fifty shekels of silver** for the **threshing floor and the oxen**. [First Chronicles 21:25](#) says that he paid “600 shekels of gold by weight for the site”; probably the “site” mentioned there is the larger piece of land on Mount Moriah.

24:25 God accepted David's **burnt offerings**, and through the **peace offerings** David enjoyed the presence of the Lord. Thus God **responded to the plea for the land**. But this site will become much more significant in the future, for as the parallel account (in [1 Chron. 22:1](#)) states, this threshing floor is the site on which Solomon would build the temple to the Lord—making this a fitting end to the story of David.

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

2 Samuel 23-24

Chapter 23

23:3 In the style of a prophet, David spoke of a righteous ruler. This will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ when he returns to rule in perfect justice and peace. For similar prophecies, see [Isaiah 11:1-10](#); [Jeremiah 23:5, 6](#); [33:15-18](#); [Zechariah 9:9, 10](#). For the fulfillment of some of these prophecies, see [Matthew 4:14-16](#); [Luke 24:25-27, 44-49](#); [John 5:45-47](#); [8:28, 29](#).

23:8-39 These verses tell of some of the exploits that the special corps of David's army carried out. There were two elite groups of men: "the Thirty" and "the Three" ([23:18, 23](#); [1 Chronicles 11:11-25](#)). To become a member of such a group a man had to show unparalleled courage in battle as well as wisdom in leadership. "The Three" was the most elite group. The list of "the Thirty" actually contains 37 names, but it mentions some warriors known to be dead (Uriah, for example, in [23:39](#)). Apparently, new members were appointed to replace those who had fallen in battle.

23:16 David poured out the water as an offering to God because he was so moved by the sacrifice it represented. When Hebrews offered sacrifices, they never consumed the blood. It represented life, and they poured it out before God. David would not drink this water that represented the lives of his soldiers. Instead, he offered it to God.

Chapter 24

24:1 Did God cause David to sin? God does not cause people to sin, but he does allow sinners to reveal the sinfulness of their hearts by their actions. God presented the opportunity to David in order to deal with a disastrous national tendency, and he wanted this desire to show itself. [First Chronicles 21:1](#) says Satan incited David to do it. Hebrew writers do not always distinguish between primary and secondary causes. So if God allowed Satan to tempt David, to them it is as if God did it.

One way to understand David's success is to notice the kind of men who followed him. During the time he was being hunted by Saul, David gradually built a fighting force of several hundred men. Some were relatives, others were outcasts of society, many were in trouble with the law. They all had at least one trait in common—complete devotion to David. Their achievements made them famous. Among these men were elite military groups like "the Three" and "the Thirty." They were true heroes.

David's Mighty Men

Scripture gives the impression that these men were motivated to greatness by the personal qualities of their leader. David inspired them to achieve beyond their goals and meet their true potential. Likewise, the leaders we follow and the causes to which we commit ourselves will affect our lives. David's effectiveness was clearly connected with his awareness of God's leading. He was a good leader when he was following *his* Leader. Do you know whom the people you respect most are following? Your answer should help you decide whether they deserve your loyalty. Do you also recognize God's leading in your life? No one can lead you to excellence as your Creator can.

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 503-506.

Strengths and accomplishments

- Able soldiers and military leaders
- Shared many special skills
- Though frequently outnumbered, were consistently victorious
- Loyal to David

Weakness and mistake

- Often had little in common beyond their loyalty to David and their military expertise

Lessons from their lives

- Greatness is often inspired by the quality and character of the leadership
- Even a small force of able and loyal men can accomplish great feats

Vital statistics

- Where: They came from all over Israel (primarily Judah and Benjamin) and from some of the other surrounding nations as well
- Occupations: Various backgrounds—almost all were fugitives

Key verses

"So David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. Soon his brothers and all his other relatives joined him there. Then others began coming—men who were in trouble or in debt or who were just discontented—until David was the captain of about 400 men" ([1 Samuel 22:1, 2](#)).

Their stories are told in [1 Samuel 22-2 Samuel 23:39](#). They are also mentioned in [1 Chronicles 11-12](#).

[24:1-3](#) What was wrong with taking a census? A census was commanded in Numbers to prepare an army for conquering the Promised Land ([Numbers 1:2; 26:2](#)). A census amounted to a draft or conscription for the army. The land was now at peace, so there was no need to enlist troops. Israel had extended its borders and become a recognized power. David's sin was pride and ambition in counting the people so that he could glory in the size of his army, its power and defenses. By doing this, he put his faith in the size of his army rather than in God's ability to protect them regardless of their number. Even Joab knew a census was wrong, but David did not heed his advice. We sin in a similar way when we place our security in money, possessions, or the might of our nation.

[24:12-14](#) Both David and the Israelites were guilty of sin ([24:1](#)). David's sin was pride, but the Bible does not say why God was angry with the people of Israel. Perhaps it was due to their support of the rebellions of Absalom ([chapters 15-18](#)) and Sheba ([chapter 20](#)), or perhaps they put their security in military and financial prosperity rather than in God, as David did. God dealt with the whole nation through David, who exemplified the national sin of pride.

God gave David three choices. Each was a form of punishment God had told the people they could expect if they disobeyed his laws (plague—[Deuteronomy 28:20-22](#); famine—[28:23, 24](#); war—[28:25, 26](#)). David wisely chose the form of punishment that came most directly from God. He knew how brutal and harsh men in war could be, and he also knew God's great mercy. When you sin greatly, turn back to God. To be punished by him is far better than to take your chances without him.

24:18 Many believe that this threshing floor where David built the altar is the location where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Isaac ([Genesis 22:1-18](#)). After David's death, Solomon built the Temple on this spot. Centuries later, Jesus would teach and preach here.

24:25 The book of 2 Samuel describes David's reign. Since the Israelites first entered the Promised Land under Joshua, they had been struggling to unite the nation and drive out the wicked inhabitants. Now, after more than 400 years, Israel was finally at peace. David had accomplished what no leader before him, judge or king, had done. His administration was run on the principle of dedication to God and to the well-being of the people. Yet David also sinned. Despite his sins, however, the Bible calls David a man after God's own heart ([1 Samuel 13:14](#); [Acts 13:22](#)) because when he sinned, he recognized it and confessed his sins to God. David committed his life to God and remained loyal to him throughout his lifetime. Psalms gives an even deeper insight into David's love for God.