

**Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 26,  
2 Sam. 21 – Blood Vengeance for Gibeonites,  
David's Mighty Men  
Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

**1. Abstract of Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 26, 2 Sam. 21 –  
Blood Vengeance for Gibeonites, David's Mighty Men,  
Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Robert Chisholm's course on 1 and 2 Samuel analyzes the epilogue (2 Samuel 21-24), focusing on its chiasmic structure. **The main sections discuss Saul's sin and its atonement through David's actions as a royal judge, the exploits of David's mighty men, and David's songs of thanksgiving.** Chisholm explores the consequences of Saul's treaty violation with the Gibeonites, highlighting the justice rendered and its impact on Saul's descendants. **He also details the heroic actions of David's warriors, clarifying textual discrepancies regarding the slaying of Goliath.** Finally, the lecture sets the stage for further exploration of David's poems.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Chisholm, Session 26 – Double click icon to play in  
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]  
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →  
Historical Books → 1 Samuel).**



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ession26.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 26, 2 Sam. 21 – Blood Vengeance for Gibeonites, David’s Mighty Men

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Robert Chisholm's lecture on 2 Samuel 21-23:

#### Briefing Document: 2 Samuel 21-23

**Overview:** This document provides an analysis of the epilogue of 2 Samuel (chapters 21-24), focusing specifically on chapters 21 and 23 as discussed in Dr. Chisholm's lecture. The epilogue is not in chronological order but is arranged in a chiastic (concentric or mirror) structure. It functions as a microcosm of David's entire career. This briefing covers the first half of the chiastic structure (A-B-C) and includes the return to (B)

#### I. The Chiastic Structure of 2 Samuel Epilogue (Chapters 21-24)

- **General Structure:** Dr. Chisholm highlights the non-chronological, chiastic (A-B-C-C-B-A) structure of the epilogue. This structure reveals a carefully crafted message rather than random insertions.
- **Outline:A:** Saul's sin and its atonement, David as a royal judge (2 Samuel 21:1-14)
- **B:** Mighty deeds of David's men (2 Samuel 21:15-22)
- **C:** David's song of thanksgiving (2 Samuel 22)
- **C:** David's final words (2 Samuel 23:1-7)
- **B:** Mighty deeds of David's men (2 Samuel 23:8-39)
- **A:** David's sin and its atonement, David as a royal priest (2 Samuel 24)

#### II. Saul's Sin and its Atonement (2 Samuel 21:1-14) - "Bludgeon Vengeance in Gibeah"

- **Famine as Divine Displeasure:** A three-year famine strikes Israel during David's reign, indicating a broken relationship with God. The Israelites understood that blessings were tied to obedience to the covenant.
- *"This would be understood by the Israelites as something's wrong in our relationship with God. Why is there a famine? Why is God not blessing us? Because they know from the way the covenant is set up that if Israel is obedient, the Lord will provide what they need. If they are disobedient, then the Lord will bring famine."*

- **Divine Revelation:** David seeks God and learns the famine is due to Saul's sin against the Gibeonites. This sin was not mentioned previously in Samuel.
- *"It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house, interestingly enough... It is because he put the Gibeonites to death. We did not read about this earlier in the books of Samuel. So, this is an indication that lots of things happened that we were not told about earlier in the story."*
- **The Treaty with the Gibeonites:** The Gibeonites, originally Canaanites, had made a treaty with Israel during the time of Joshua. This treaty was ratified by oaths, and the Lord was seen as its protector.
- *"The Israelites vowed, they made an oath that they would not harm the Gibeonites... These treaties would have curses. Typically in a treaty, you would say, if I break this treaty, may I be punished by the God or the gods."*
- **Saul's Violation:** Saul, in his zeal, tried to annihilate the Gibeonites, violating this treaty, even though he had failed in his mission to wipe out the Amalekites. God is on the side of the Gibeonites due to the oath.
- *"Saul came along and decided, I am going to wipe out the Gibeonites. We have already seen Saul failed to wipe out the Amalekites as he should have, but he is quick to try to wipe out the Gibeonites even though they have a treaty with Israel."*
- **Justice and Restitution:** The Gibeonites demand justice. They request the execution of seven of Saul's male descendants (a symbolic number representing completeness) to atone for Saul's actions. They want this done before the Lord at Gibeah.
- *"Let seven of his male descendants, now I'm sure Saul killed more than seven Gibeonites, but in the Old Testament world and in the Old Testament, seven is often a number that is used to indicate symbolically, it indicates fullness and completion, and perfection."*
- **David's Role:** As royal judge, David mediates, fulfilling the Gibeonites' demand by handing over seven of Saul's descendants to be executed. He spares Mephibosheth due to his covenant with Jonathan.
- **Rizpah's Vigil:** Rizpah, a concubine of Saul and mother of two of the executed, mourns her sons by protecting their exposed bodies from scavengers until the rain ends the famine, possibly months later.

- **Proper Burial:** Rizpah's actions prompt David to give Saul and Jonathan a proper burial in their ancestral tomb. This leads to the restoration of God's blessing on the land.
- *"Rizpah's actions were the catalyst for this... After that, God answered prayer on behalf of the land."*
- **God's Justice:** While the law forbids punishing children for a parent's sin, God, as the author of life, can take away blessings of children as a consequence of sin. The story of the Gibeonites illustrates that God does not look favorably on those who break covenants made in his name. The sins of the father have repercussions for subsequent generations.

### III. The Mighty Deeds of David's Men (2 Samuel 21:15-22 & 23:8-39)

- **David's Exhaustion:** David becomes exhausted in battle with the Philistines, highlighting his aging and the need for his mighty warriors.
- *"David goes down with his men to fight against the Philistines, and he becomes exhausted."*
- **Abishai's Heroism:** Abishai saves David from a giant Philistine warrior.
- **David's Men's Protection:** David's men prevent him from fighting in hand-to-hand combat, emphasizing his importance as the "lamp of Israel".
- **Other Mighty Deeds:** Other warriors, such as Sibbecai and Ehanan, also slay giants. There's textual uncertainty in verse 19 concerning who killed Goliath, with the parallel passage in Chronicles suggesting Ehanan killed Goliath's brother instead. This demonstrates the nature of textual criticism and the goal of finding the original meaning of the texts.
- *"The Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 21:19 actually says Ehanan killed Goliath... I think the simplest solution is to use the Chronicles parallel passage... the original text said that Ehanan killed, and then I think there was a proper name. I don't think it was Lahmi. There was a proper name, and then it said the brother of Goliath."*
- **Giants of Gath:** A family of giants in Gath is noted, including a man with six fingers and six toes, further emphasizing the challenges faced by David and his men. David's nephew Jonathan kills this giant.
- **David's Team:** David had a group of elite warriors, called the Thirty. They were loyal and courageous. One story recounts how three warriors risked their lives to

get water for David. David, overwhelmed by their dedication, pours out the water as a drink offering to the Lord.

- *“David said, you know, I would love to have a drink of water from the well or the cistern near the gate of Bethlehem back home... three of his mighty warriors break through the Philistine lines, and they brought back water for David... David is so overcome by their bravery and their commitment to him that he pours it out before the Lord as a drink offering.”*
- **Benaiah's exploits:** Benaiah is described as a very valiant fighter, who killed a lion in a cistern and an Egyptian.
- **The Thirty:** The group known as the Thirty was probably a fluid unit, not necessarily consisting of the same thirty men at any given time. The final tally given in the text is thirty-seven.
- *“It may be that these individuals were not among the Thirty at the same time... the Thirty grew... it says there were 37 in all.”*
- **Significance:** These passages show David's dependence on God and his warriors, proving that God's chosen servants need the support of others.
- *“It takes a team to accomplish God's purposes”*

#### IV. Key Themes:

- **Consequences of Sin:** Sin, particularly breaking covenants, has severe and far-reaching consequences, impacting not only the sinner but also their descendants and the wider community.
- **Divine Justice:** God's justice is a recurring theme, with God punishing sin while also providing avenues for atonement and restoration.
- **Covenant Loyalty:** The importance of keeping oaths and honoring treaties is emphasized. God acts as the guarantor of such agreements.
- **Leadership and Dependence:** David is presented as a strong leader, but also as someone dependent on God and on the support of his loyal followers. This highlights the necessity of teamwork in accomplishing God's purposes.
- **Textual Criticism:** The textual issues found in the story of Ehanan are discussed, emphasizing that the concept of Biblical inerrancy refers to the original texts, not later copies.

**V. Conclusion:**

The excerpts from Dr. Chisholm's lecture reveal that 2 Samuel chapters 21-23 are not random additions to the story of David. They are carefully structured within a chiastic framework to show a complete picture of David's life and to reveal important theological truths. The epilogue highlights the consequences of sin, the importance of divine justice, and the need for covenant faithfulness. It demonstrates the importance of teamwork in God's purposes, and it shows that even great leaders depend on others.

## 4. Study Guide: Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 26, 2 Sam. 21 – Blood Vengeance for Gibeonites, David’s Mighty Men

### 2 Samuel 21-23 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the overarching structure of the epilogue (2 Samuel 21-24) and why is it significant?
2. What was the cause of the famine in Israel during David's reign, as explained in the text?
3. Explain the treaty between the Israelites and the Gibeonites and why it was significant for the events in 2 Samuel 21.
4. Why were seven of Saul's descendants executed, and why was this considered a just act?
5. How did Rizpah, Aiah’s daughter, show her grief and concern for her executed sons?
6. What action did David take after learning of Rizpah's actions, and why?
7. Why did David's men ask him not to go into battle anymore, and what did they call him?
8. Explain the conflict and resolution regarding who killed Goliath in 2 Samuel 21:19?
9. Describe the actions of David's mighty men and their dedication to him as shown in 2 Samuel 23.
10. What is the significance of the number thirty and the "Thirty" in the text, and what is a possible reason for the number 37?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The epilogue has a chiastic or concentric structure (A-B-C-C-B-A), mirroring the themes. This structure shows a purposeful arrangement and highlights the cyclical nature of David's career, with its ups and downs.

2. The famine in Israel was a consequence of Saul's sin against the Gibeonites. He had broken the treaty that the Israelites had made, and God was punishing Israel because of this violation.
3. The Israelites made a treaty with the Gibeonites, promising not to harm them. This treaty was made under oath, with the Lord acting as the guarantor and protector. Breaking the treaty brought God's judgment upon Israel.
4. Seven of Saul's descendants were executed to atone for Saul's sin of trying to wipe out the Gibeonites and to satisfy the Gibeonites' demand for justice. This was a way to restore the broken covenant and bring God's favor back to the land.
5. Rizpah mourned her sons by spreading out sackcloth and protecting their bodies from scavengers for a long period of time. Her actions displayed a mother's love and grief, and her insistence on proper burial acted as a catalyst for David to do the same for Saul and Jonathan.
6. After learning of Rizpah's actions, David had the bones of Saul and Jonathan properly buried. This was in response to Rizpah's actions and was meant to show respect and to give them a proper ancestral burial.
7. David's men asked him not to go into battle anymore because he had grown tired, and they feared the lamp of Israel would be extinguished. They saw David as their light and leader, and they valued his life and role as king.
8. The text in 2 Samuel 21:19 initially says that Ehanan killed Goliath, which conflicts with the story of David. Textual analysis and comparison with 1 Chronicles show that Ehanan likely killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath, due to textual corruption.
9. David's mighty men were exceptionally loyal and brave, risking their lives for him. Examples of their devotion include obtaining water from Bethlehem and one individual killing a lion in a cistern on a snowy day.
10. The number thirty represents an elite group of David's warriors and the group was called "The Thirty," a traditional name. The fact that there were 37 total may be a result of additions to the group over time, a changing number, but traditional name.



## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each of the following questions in a well-organized essay format. Be sure to provide textual evidence to support your claims.

1. Analyze the theme of justice in 2 Samuel 21, exploring both the divine and human perspectives. How does the story present the complexities of justice and the consequences of sin?
2. Discuss the chiasmic structure of the epilogue (2 Samuel 21-24) and how it contributes to the overall message of the books of Samuel. How does this structure tie the various sections together?
3. Compare and contrast the roles of David as a "royal judge" and a "royal priest" as they are presented in the epilogue. How do these roles shape his leadership and relationship with both the people and God?
4. Evaluate the significance of the mighty men of David, as depicted in both 2 Samuel 21 and 23. How do their exploits contribute to the overall understanding of David's kingship?
5. Explore the concept of collective responsibility as it appears in the punishment of Saul's descendants and the broader implications of this idea. What does this teach about God's justice and the repercussions of sin in the Old Testament?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Chiastic/Concentric/Mirror Structure:** A literary structure where the beginning and ending points of a text mirror each other, with a central point or theme in the middle (A-B-C-C-B-A).
- **Epilogue:** A concluding section added to the end of a literary work, often offering additional information or reflection.
- **Royal Judge:** A function of a king where he mediates disputes, makes legal decisions, and ensures justice within his kingdom.
- **Royal Priest:** A role where a king acts as a mediator between the people and God, often involved in religious duties and atonement.
- **Atonement:** The act of making amends or reparations for a wrong or sin, often involving a sacrifice or penalty.
- **Covenant:** A solemn agreement or treaty between two parties, often involving oaths and obligations, as between God and the Israelites.
- **Gibeonites:** A group of Canaanite people who tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them in the book of Joshua.
- **The Thirty:** An elite group of warriors under David's command, known for their bravery and military skills.
- **Rephaim:** A group of giants or large warriors of great power, often encountered as enemies in the Old Testament stories.
- **Sackcloth:** A coarse, rough cloth often worn as a sign of mourning or repentance.

## 5. FAQs on Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 26, 2 Sam. 21 – Blood Vengeance for Gibeonites, David's Mighty Men, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Key Themes in 2 Samuel 21-23

- Why did a famine strike Israel during David's reign, and what did it reveal about Saul's actions?** A severe, three-year famine struck Israel, which was understood as a sign of God's displeasure. David inquired of the Lord and was told the famine was punishment for Saul's unmentioned massacre of the Gibeonites, a people with whom Israel had a treaty (Joshua 9). Saul's actions violated the oath made to the Gibeonites and was thus a violation of a covenant with God, who was the guarantor of the treaty.
- What was the nature of the treaty between Israel and the Gibeonites, and why was it important?** During the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the Gibeonites tricked the Israelites into making a treaty with them, promising to be their servants in exchange for protection. This treaty, solidified with oaths and curses invoking divine judgment, was considered binding in the ancient world and the Lord was understood to be a protector of the treaty. By violating the treaty Saul had sinned against God.
- How did the Gibeonites seek atonement for Saul's actions, and what was David's role in this?** The Gibeonites, having been decimated by Saul, did not seek financial compensation. Instead, they requested the execution of seven of Saul's male descendants, which would be done symbolically before the Lord, at Gibeah, Saul's hometown. David, acting as a royal judge, agreed to this demand, recognizing the need for justice to be served to appease the Lord and end the famine, though he spared Mephibosheth out of covenant fidelity.
- What is the significance of the execution of Saul's descendants, considering the Old Testament law?** The execution of Saul's descendants seems to violate the Old Testament law that prohibits punishing children for their parents' sins. However, God is portrayed as being in a different category from the court, as he is the author and giver of life. The account is meant to show that God can punish sinners, including by taking away his blessing, such as children. The Lord has declared his justice will be done and this account is meant to illustrate his prerogative in fulfilling his justice.

- **What was Rizpah's role in the aftermath of the executions and what was the consequence of her actions?** Rizpah, a concubine of Saul and the mother of two of the executed men, displayed great grief and resolve. She guarded the bodies of her sons from scavengers for a lengthy period of time, possibly months, until the rains came, showing her dedication and honoring their memory. Her actions moved David to properly bury Saul and Jonathan as well and brought an end to the famine.
- **What was the role and importance of David's mighty men as portrayed in this text?** The passages about David's mighty men highlight their valor and essential role in his military victories and securing the nation of Israel. These warriors, including a group known as "The Three," demonstrated immense bravery, loyalty, and combat prowess, often risking their lives for David and protecting him in battle. They were not simply a team, they were also individuals with unique abilities and characteristics that contributed to the success of Israel. Their actions are a strong reminder that the success of leaders is dependent upon their supporters and that teamwork is needed to fulfill God's will.
- **Why are there two accounts of David's mighty men, and how does the structure of the text reflect a deliberate composition?** The two accounts of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 21:15-22 and 23:8-39) are part of the epilogue of 2 Samuel, which uses a chiastic or concentric structure (A-B-C-C-B-A). This structure begins with the account of Saul's sin and its atonement (A), then the mighty deeds of David's men (B), followed by David's song of thanksgiving (C). The structure then mirrors this backwards by ending with David's sin and atonement (A) preceded by the mighty deeds of David's men (B), and ending with David's final words, a short poem, (C). This deliberate arrangement highlights key themes of sin, atonement, divine favor, and human effort.
- **What textual challenges arise in the accounts of the mighty men, and how do scholars address them?** There are textual challenges in these passages, such as the contradiction regarding who killed Goliath (2 Samuel 21:19). Textual scholars note that the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles indicates that Ehanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath. Textual analysis is used to determine what the original manuscripts likely said. The difference in these accounts may be a result of scribe error. The important message is that David had many mighty men that helped secure the victory.