

2 Samuel 21:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

Analysis

Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

This verse contributes to the narrative of Famine and Giants, emphasizing justice, covenant obligations. The three-year famine traced to Saul's treaty violation demonstrates God's demand for covenant faithfulness and justice. The execution of Saul's descendants and Rizpah's faithful vigil over their bodies presents complex ethical questions. The Philistine giant battles demonstrate ongoing threats. Theological themes include multi-generational covenant obligations, the high cost of treaty violations, God's demand for justice, and His provision of strength for continued battles.

Historical Context

The historical setting of 2 Samuel 21 occurs during David's reign (circa 1010-970 BCE) over Israel's united monarchy. Archaeological discoveries, including the Tel Dan inscription mentioning the 'House of David,' corroborate biblical historicity. Ancient Near Eastern customs regarding justice, covenant obligations provide crucial background. The geopolitical situation involved regional powers—

Philistines, Ammonites, Arameans, Moabites, Edomites—as David consolidated and expanded Israel's territory. Cultural practices concerning kingship, warfare, covenant relationships, family dynamics, and religious observance differed significantly from modern Western contexts, requiring careful attention to avoid anachronistic interpretation while extracting timeless theological principles applicable across cultures and eras.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen your understanding of justice, covenant obligations?
2. What does this verse reveal about God's character, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?
3. In what specific ways can you apply this truth to your current circumstances and relationships this week?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י'	רָעָב	בַּיָּמִי	דָּוִד	שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנָה	שָׁנָה	שָׁנָה
H1961	Then there was a famine	in the days	and David	three	year	year
	H7458	H3117	H1732	H7969	H8141	H8141
אֶחָד י'	שָׁנָה	וַיִּבְקַשׁ שׁ	דָּוִד	פָּנָי	יְהוָה	וַיֹּאמֶר
after	year	enquired	and David	H853 of	And the LORD	answered
H310	H8141	H1245	H1732	H6440	H3068	H559
יְהוָה	אֵל	שָׂאוֹל	וְאֵל	בֵּית	הַדָּמִים	עַל
And the LORD	H413	It is for Saul	H413	house	and for his bloody	H5921
H3068		H7586		H1004	H1818	H834
יְהִי יֵת	אֶת	הַגִּבְעֹנִים:				
because he slew	H853	the Gibeonites				
H4191		H1393				

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