

## 20. Summary and Reflection (2 Samuel 21—24)

### 8 Summary of David's "Secrets" of Success

(2 Samuel 21-24)

“ The final four chapters contain a carefully arranged set of six accounts and lists that are **chronologically detached** from the previous narratives. Although they all relate to David's life in some way, they are collected from different periods in his career. . . . Because of the evident organization of the materials as well as their lack of strong association with the previous narrative, these chapters are often termed an “appendix” or “epilogue.” Because I believe 1 Samuel-2 Kings is a literary unity, I prefer to think of this section as an “aside.” [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 44].

“ The events described in 2 Sam 21–24 are not placed within the main narrative of events in Saul's and David's reigns. Yet **they are not afterthoughts**, leftovers for which no place could be found in the main narrative. They are reserved for this position not because of their lesser importance, but because their best function is to serve **to summarize the message of the book(s) and offer its authoritative hermeneutical [interpretational] key.**

The structure of chaps. 21–24 is **chiastic**, with its central point and focus on 2 Sam 22:51, which affirms Yahweh's commitment to David and his descendants. The arrangement is undeniably artistic, but not art for art's sake (*ars gratia artis*). Rather, it is art with a hermeneutical purpose.”

[Harry A. Hoffner Jr., 1 & 2 Samuel, 770]

- **The Chiastic Pattern of 21-24**

A 21:1-14 **Famine:** David as Royal Judge

B 21:15-22 **Warfare:** David's Faithful Men

C 22:1-51 **Poetry:** Song of Thanksgiving

C' 23:1-7 **Poetry:** David's last words

B' 23:8-39 **Warfare:** David's Faithful Men

A' 24:1-25 **Pestilence:** David as Royal Priest

“...the structure of this section isn't exhausted by the chiasmus, . . . there is a threefold structure corresponding to the well-known trio of **Yahweh's judgments or disciplines of his king and his people: famine** (2 Sam 21:1–14), **sword** (2 Sam 21:15–22; 23:8–39), and **pestilence** (chap. 24).” [Harry A. Hoffner Jr., 1 & 2 Samuel, 778]

8.1 **David Halts a Famine** (2 Sam 21:1–14)

- **The Gibeonites:**

In Joshua 9, the Gibeonites deceive Joshua and the leaders that they are travelers in the land and not part of those groups that were devoted to destruction. The Leaders make a covenant with the Gibeonites “**without asking counsel from the LORD**” (Josh 9:14–15). Though the deception is uncovered, the oath is upheld because it was sworn in the name of the LORD (9:18–20), revealing both the seriousness of covenantal speech and the cost of spiritual negligence. The narrative ultimately warns that failure to seek the LORD’s guidance can entangle God’s people in long-term consequences, even when their intentions are otherwise aligned with His purposes. This current chapter reveals that Saul had broken this covenant and so brought judgment on Israel.

- 21:3 - “**atonement**” (Hebrew: *kāpar*) - At its core, *kāpar* carries the sense of “to cover,” “to wipe,” or even “to smear”—a physical action that becomes a theological metaphor. The clearest starting point is Book of Genesis 6:14, where Noah is instructed to “cover” the ark with pitch.” Here the idea is unmistakably coating or sealing—a protective layer that shields from judgment waters. This same root then develops into the sacrificial language of Book of Leviticus, where blood is applied to the altar (Lev 17:11) to “make *kāpar* for your souls.” Better renderings—depending on context—might include: “to cover” (highlighting protection from judgment), “to purge/wipe away” (emphasizing removal of defilement), “to cleanse” (a more technical term for cleansing sin), or even conceptually, “to apply a covering that averts consequences.” **The main resultant sense of the word, generally speaking, is taking action to make things right and restore relationship.**

- This episode may also be part of the explanation why the Benjamites - Saul’s tribe - opposed David later in his reign typified by **Shemei** (16:5–14) and **Sheba** (20:1–2)

8.2 **David Protected by His Men Against the Giants** (2 Sam 21:15–22)

- Although David was a great warrior and leader (see 1 Kgs 5:3; 1 Chr 22:8–10) *his success was tied to the faithful men under his command!*
- 21:16 - One of the descendants of the **giants**...
- 21:19 - **Who Killed Goliath?** - In the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 20:5 we have different names saying that Goliath’s brother was killed. *This is most likely a scribal corruption of the text or this is a different Goliath from the giant killed by David.*