

BOOK OF 2 SAMUEL  
RIZPAH-A MOTHER'S LOVE ON DISPLAY  
2 SAMUEL 21:10-14

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Introduction

**WE'VE SEEN HOW DAVID ENQUIRED OF THE LORD REGARDING THE REASON FOR THIS THREE YEAR FAMINE. (21:1)**

God's answer was clear: **It was because of the sin of Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites thereby breaking a 400 year old Covenant that the Israelites had with the Gibeonites! (Cf. Joshua 9)**

**WE'VE ALSO SEEN HOW DAVID WENT ABOUT TO SET THINGS RIGHT WITH THE GIBEONITES. (21:2-9)**

**LASTLY, WE'VE SEEN THE IMPORTANCE OF COVENANTS! Our God is both a covenant making God and a covenant keeping God! Time does not weaken these covenants! Covenants are to be kept!**

**And even when men do not take their covenants seriously, God does! He keeps His covenants and He expects us to keep our covenants!**

**Even when a covenant is entered into foolishly, as the Israelites were taken in by the Gibeonites, God expects us to keep our covenants!**

**We understand from this story how that God takes covenants seriously! There is good news and bad news in this!**

**The good news is that God takes His covenants seriously—the covenants that He makes!**

**The bad news is that God takes man's covenants seriously—the covenants we make!**

**NOW TONIGHT WE COME TO VERSES 10-14**

**HERE WE SEE THE STORY OF A MOTHER'S LOVE!**

**WE SEE DAVID MAKE SOMETHING ELSE RIGHT (21:10-14)**

I think most of us would agree that **this is a very strange story**, even stranger than the one we have just read concerning the hanging of Saul's "sons."

**Why did God have this story recorded? What is the point?**

Note with me first of all that **this story is a continuation and completion of verses 1-9.**

In fact, **it is the execution of Saul's sons which brings forth the actions of Rizpah, the mother of two of the boys that were hung.** And we see here that her actions then caused David to act.

**Note how *verse 14* indicates that it was not until after the burial of Saul and his sons that the LORD allowed the famine to end.**

**So, we must therefore attempt to understand this story in the context of what we have just read and of the chapter as a whole.**

**Here is Rizpah, a concubine of Saul, whose two sons have been put to death by the Gibeonites.** Apparently these sons' bodies were not removed, as it would seem they should have been. They were just left hanging for the elements and animals to have their way with.

*Deuteronomy 21:22-23* "22 *And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:*  
23 *His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."*

Very possibly the reason that we see that this law was not honored in this case is because they were hung by a heathen nation, not by their own nation! The law of God was not given to the Gibeonites, it was given to the Israelites!

We are not told, but the Gibeonites most likely determined how long these bodies would hang there and why no one from Israel, including Rizpah, was allowed to take the bodies down initially and give them a proper burial.

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So, Rizpah, this grieving mother, **was not acting in an unusual fashion at all, though she may have appeared to others to have lost her mind!**

**What mother would want the beasts and the birds to devour the carcass of her sons?** Since the bodies of Saul's sons were just left to hang there, this mother determined to watch over them, stationing herself nearby so that she could drive off both birds and devouring beasts.

We see that somebody saw what she was doing and told David about it. When David got word of this, **he was moved by Rizpah's actions to take some actions of his own.**

David was reminded that **Saul and his three sons that previously died at the hands of the Philistines had not been properly buried either.** You may remember that **David did not have anything to do with the earlier hasty burial of Saul and his three sons, as described in 1 Samuel 31.**

David was in Ziklag when he learned of Saul's death. **The bodies of Saul and his sons were taken by the Philistines and hanged from the wall of Bethshan. Some brave men from Jabesh-gilead marched all night to steal the bodies, burning them and then burying their bones under a tree at Jabesh (31:11-13).**

All of this had been done by the men of Jabesh-gilead in David's absence. **Saul and his three sons had not yet been given a proper burial, though their bodies had been rescued from shameful display by the Philistines.**

On the surface at least one can see how David may have reasoned. These were seven more of Saul's sons hanging, who had not yet been given a proper burial prompting Rizpah to act as she had. It appears that David believed that this matter would not be *"laid to rest"* until Saul and all of his sons had a proper burial.

So, David arranged for the bones of Saul and his three sons to be taken to the tomb of Saul's father, along with the bones of these seven sons who were just executed. Once they were buried, the matter would be closed, once and for all.

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But there could possibly have been a little more than this going on. There is a clear link between the execution of Saul's seven sons by the Gibeonites, the actions of Rizpah, and the action taken by David. I think the link is more than just the common element of being related to Saul and not yet having a proper burial.

What did these seven men have in common with Saul and his three sons? They were all Saul's sons. But they were also all *"hung"* out for display!

Maybe David saw this connection between Saul and his three sons, killed and then hung earlier, and now Saul's other seven sons, who have been publicly hung for the attempted annihilation of the Gibeonites.

It is possible that the earlier deaths and hangings had some ties for this same sin! So, when David buries all of these "sons" in Saul's father's tomb, he not only gives them a decent burial, he seems to link them in the same sin and the same judgment.

This is the only way I can see the author making so much of Rizpah's actions and David's response. At least we can say that this matter now seems to have had closure at this point.

The final words of *verse 14* are significant: ***"And after that God was entreated for the land."***

We would have expected to read something like: *"And so God removed the famine that had plagued the land for three years."* Instead, we are informed that God, with things having been made right with the Gibeonites now, once again heard the prayers of His people beseeching Him to cease His judgment on the land.

In other words, **the people must have been praying for God to remove the famine for the entire three years, but God would not heed their petitions because of the sin of Saul and his bloody house.**

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**Now that things had been made right with the Gibeonites, God heard the prayers of the people. God is sovereign, but He often acts in response to the means He has appointed. The means here is the prayer of His people.**

Note what Solomon will say in only a few years in *2 Chronicles 6:26-31*.

**God answers prayer.** In this case, the author of our text in 2 Samuel underscores the fact that **God removed the famine because He took heed of the prayers of His people.**

**And He took heed of their prayers because the sin which hindered their prayers had been dealt with and made right with the Gibeonites.**

**Let us not miss the point that sin hinders our prayers, but when that sin has been dealt with, God then heeds our prayers.**

**Let us not underestimate the importance of prayer and the importance of the conditions of prayer!**