

**PLEASE NOTE** - The references below are taken from the 86-22 Index. Many verses have additional references that have not been included due to time & space. We are encouraged to do additional personal research.

(2 Samuel 21:7-9) 7 However, the king showed compassion for Me·phib'o·sheth, the son of Jon'a·than the son of Saul, because of the oath made before Jehovah between David and Jon'a·than, the son of Saul. 8 So the king took Ar·mo'ni and Me·phib'o·sheth, the two sons of Riz'pah the daughter of A'iah whom she bore to Saul, and the five sons of Mi'chal the daughter of Saul whom she bore to A'dri·el the son of Bar·zil'lai the Me·hol'ath·ite. 9 Then he handed them over to the Gib'e-on·ites, and they hung their dead bodies on the mountain before Jehovah. All seven of them died together; they were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the start of the barley harvest.

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Why does 2 Samuel 21:7-9 say that David “showed compassion for Mephibosheth” but then handed Mephibosheth over for execution?

Some who quickly read this account have wondered about that. But two different men named Mephibosheth were involved, and we can learn something by reviewing what happened.

King Saul of Israel had seven sons and two daughters. Saul's firstborn son was Jonathan. The king later had a son named Mephibosheth, born to Saul's concubine Rizpah. Interestingly, Jonathan also had a son named Mephibosheth. Thus, King Saul had both a son named Mephibosheth and a grandson with that same name.

At some point, King Saul turned against the Gibeonites living among the Israelites and attempted to wipe them out. Apparently, a number of them

were murdered. That clearly was wrong. Why? Because back in Joshua's day, the Israelite chiefs made a covenant of peace with the Gibeonites.—Josh. 9:3-27.

That covenant was still in force in King Saul's time. Contrary to the covenant, the king tried to wipe out the Gibeonites. That attempt resulted in “bloodguilt on Saul and on his house.” (2 Sam. 21:1) Finally, David became king. Surviving Gibeonites spoke to him about the grave wrong. David asked them how atonement should be made for Saul's horrible course and thus open the way for Jehovah to bless the land. Rather than ask for money, the Gibeonites asked that seven sons of the man who “schemed to annihilate” them be handed over and put to death. (Num. 35:30, 31) David granted their request.—2 Sam. 21:2-6.

By then, Saul and Jonathan had died in battle, but Jonathan's son Mephibosheth was alive. He was crippled as a child by an accident and was not party to his grandfather's attack on the Gibeonites. David had made a covenant of friendship with Jonathan, which would benefit his offspring, including Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. (1 Sam. 18:1; 20:42) The account says: “The king [David] showed compassion for Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the oath made before Jehovah.”—2 Sam. 21:7.

Still, David honored the Gibeonites' request. He handed over two of Saul's sons, one of whom was named Mephibosheth, and five of Saul's grandsons. (2 Sam. 21:8, 9) David's course of action ended the bloodguilt on the land.

This episode is more than history. God's law was clear. It stated: “Children should not be put to death for what their fathers do.” (Deut. 24:16) Jehovah would not have approved of what was done to Saul's two sons and five grandsons if they had been innocent. That law added: “A person should be put to death only for his own sin.” It seems that Saul's seven descendants who died had some share in Saul's attempted genocide of the Gibeonites. As a result, the seven paid for their wrongdoing.

This account illustrates that a person cannot excuse himself for doing wrong by thinking or saying that he was merely following directions. A wise proverb states: "Smooth out the course of your feet, and all your ways will be sure."—Prov. 4:24-27; Eph. 5:15.

(2 Samuel 21:22) 22 These four were descendants of the Reph'a'im in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

\*\*\* w89 1/1 p. 20 par. 8 "To Jehovah Belongs the Battle" \*\*\*

8 A great change took place in 1914. No longer could the Gentile nations rule without divine interference. But did "the kings" then ruling obey the prophetic command to "serve Jehovah with fear," acknowledging his newly installed King? No! Instead, they "massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one," Jesus. Pursuing their own ambitions, they came to be "in tumult" in the Great War of 1914-18. (Psalm 2:1-6, 10-12) To this day, world domination is a burning issue before mankind. Satan's world continues to produce political champions, comparable to Goliath's kinsmen, the Rephaim. These dictatorial rulerships taunt Jehovah and try to bully his witnesses into submission, but as always, the battle and the victory belong to Jehovah.—2 Samuel 21:15-22.