

# 1 Chronicles 21 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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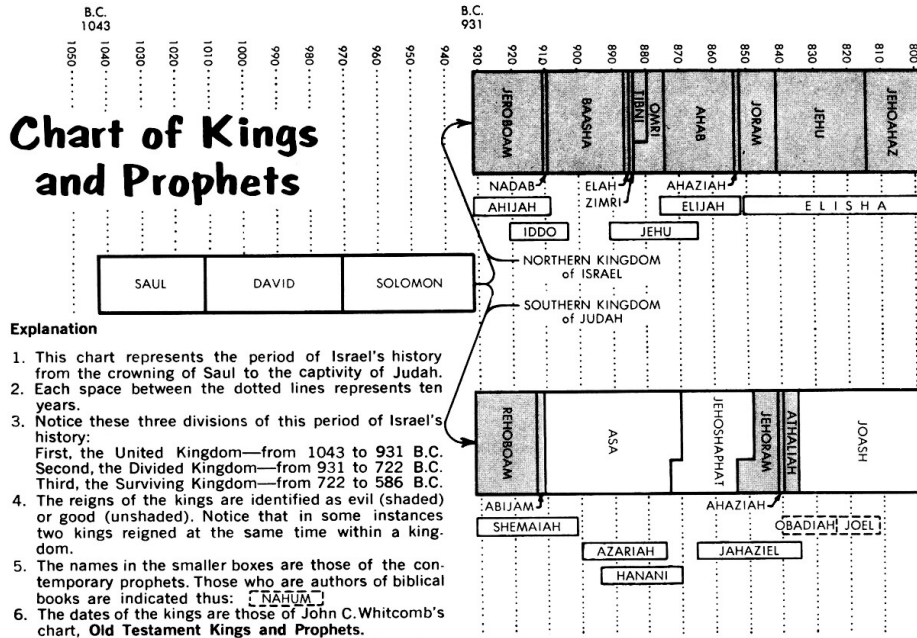
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## TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES

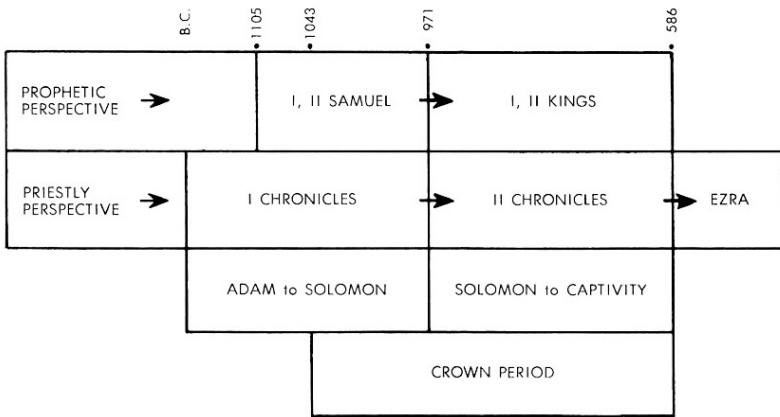
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1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1 Chronicles 10		1Chr 11-19		1Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		

**Legend:** B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931 BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931 BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.

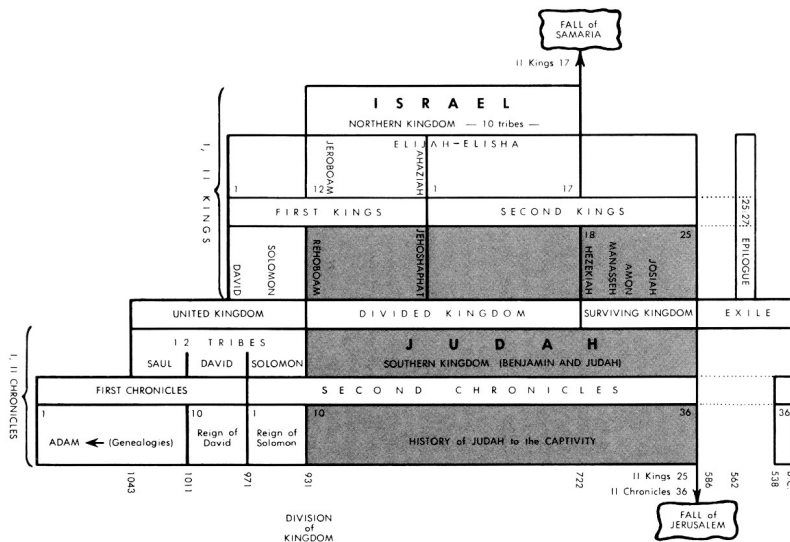
THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL



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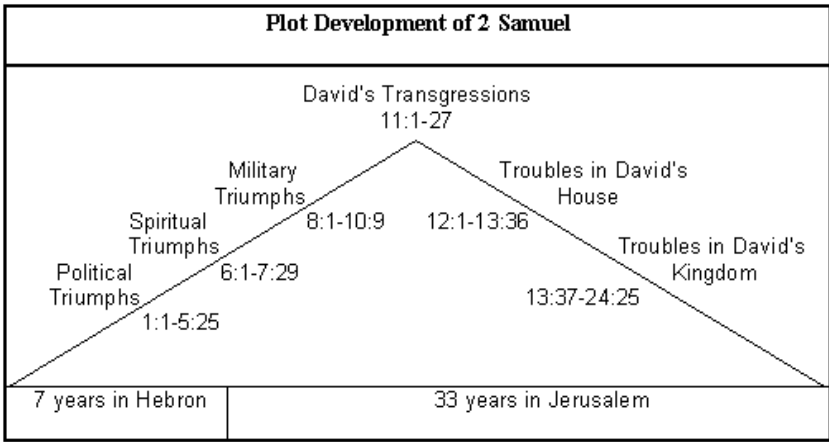


Comparison of 1 Samuel thru 2 Chronicles



FIRST CHRONICLES SUMMARY CHART	
1 Chronicles 1-9:44	1 Chronicles 10:1-39:30
Royal Line of David	Reign of David

12 Tribes of David's Reign	Highlights of David's Reign
Genealogies	History
Ancestry	Activity
1000's of Years	Circa 33 Years



[Map of David's Kingdom-ESV Global](#)

[Map of Cities in 2 Samuel](#)

**1 Chronicles 21:1 Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.**

- Satan: 2Sa 24:1 1Ki 22:20-22 Job 1:6-12 2:1,4-6 Zec 3:1 Mt 4:3 Lu 22:31 Joh 13:2 Ac 5:3 Jas 1:13 Rev 12:10
- provoked David: Lu 11:53 Heb 10:24

**Related Passage:**

2 Samuel 24:1 Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

1 Chronicles 17:9-12+ (**YAHWEH'S PROMISE TO DAVID**) "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and not be moved again; and the wicked will not waste them anymore as formerly, 10 even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover, I tell you that **the LORD will build a house** for you. 11 "When your days (DAVID) are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you (SOLOMON), who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 "**He shall build for Me a house**, and I will establish his throne forever.

## DAVID INTERESTED IN NOSE COUNT

**John Sailhamer** gives an interesting background for chapter 21 - Having demonstrated the fulfillment of God's promise to David that He would cut off his enemies from before him, the chronicler recounts the fulfillment of the second portion of God's promise to David: **"I will appoint a place for My people Israel"** (1Ch 17:9). Certainly the Lord meant that He would make Israel's land secure and that the people would live in peace. However, the words of God are referring not merely to a place to dwell, but the place where God Himself would dwell, namely the Temple whose site was chosen by the Lord Himself (1Ch 21). That the Temple is preeminently in view in God's promise in 1 Chronicles 17:9 can be seen in the verses that follow. The central task of the promised descendant is that he should build a Temple ("a house") for the Lord (1Ch 17:10-12). God's choice of the Temple site, however, was carried out through the instrumentality of His servant David. The occasion of the selection of the Temple site is recorded in great detail, because the events point out in remarkable clarity the ultimate purpose for the Temple: God's salvation for His people. God's choice of the Temple site, however, was carried out through the instrumentality of His servant David. The occasion of the selection of the Temple site is recorded in great detail, because the events point out in remarkable clarity the ultimate purpose for the Temple: God's salvation for His people. David had angered God by numbering his army (1Ch 21:1-7). That was apparently a reflection of David's lack of trust in God to save His people. Although David confessed his sin, he was required to bear the consequences of that sin (1Ch 21:8-12). David's reply to the prophet Gad provides the thematic statement of the narrative: "Let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great" (1Ch 21:13). After thousands fell by the plague that the Lord had sent upon His people, He was grieved and called His messenger of destruction to a halt (1Ch 21:15). At the site where the messenger halted, the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, David fell down before the Lord and pled to let the punishment fall upon him and his house rather than the people (1Ch 21:16-17). But God commanded David to build an altar on that site and offer up the sacrifice He had provided in His law. That site was where God had chosen to build His house (1Ch 21:18-22:1). **In a very dramatic and climactic way, the purpose of the building of the Temple was given. It was not to be a religious shrine, but the place where sinful man would meet with a righteous and holy God—where God would genuinely show that His mercies were great.** [Everyman's Bible Commentary - Chronicles](#)

**Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel** - 2Sa 24:1 in several translations say "He (God) "incited David..." Note that what David did by numbering was referred to as a sin. We know that God does not tempt us to sin, James 1:13-14+ says "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." So comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is clear that God did not tempt David but Satan tempted David. He could not force David to sin but could shoot fiery missiles at his mind (Eph 6:16+) which energized his fallen flesh to volitionally (his own will) carry out the sin of numbering Israel and Judah. Most likely Satan appealed to his pride, with thoughts like "Look how big your army is!" or "Why don't you count your army, as this will help you feel secure if it returns a big number?" In other words the Tempter could appeal to the "boastful pride of life" (1Jn 2:16+)

**Warren Wiersbe** - 2 Samuel 24:1 states that God incited David to number the people, while 1 Chronicles 21:1 names Satan as the culprit. Both are true: God permitted Satan to tempt David in order to accomplish the purposes He had in mind. Satan certainly opposed God's people throughout all of Old Testament history, but this is one of four instances in the Old Testament where Satan is named specifically and seen openly at work. The other three are when he tempted Eve (Gen. 3), when he attacked Job (Job 1-2) and when he accused Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3). (See Wiersbe's book [The strategy of Satan : how to detect and defeat him](#) for discussion of all of these OT appearances of Satan) (Borrow [Be restored : 2 Samuel & 1 Chronicles](#))

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**Gleason Archer** - page in [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - **Who moved David to number his people, God or Satan?**

In 2 Samuel 24:1 we read, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." In the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21:1-2 it is stated: "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it." The wording of 1 Chronicles 21:2 is very similar to that of 2 Samuel 24:2; there is no significant difference. But so far as the first verse of each chapter is concerned, it appears in 2 Samuel 24 that God Himself incited David to conduct the census, whereas in 1 Chronicles 21 it was Satan, the adversary of God. This would seem to be a serious discrepancy—unless both statements are true.

In neither book are we given a definite context for this census taking, and we have no way of knowing whether it took place before or after Absalom's revolt. But since it led indirectly to the acquisition of the hill (Mt. Moriah) that became the location of the temple and of the royal palaces, it must have occurred several years before the end of David's career. Only thus could he have had opportunity to amass the large amount of costly ornamentation and material that Solomon was later to use in fashioning that temple

(1 Chron. 29:3–5).

Without being fully aware of what was going on in his heart, David had apparently been building up an attitude of pride and self-admiration for what he had achieved in the way of military success and economic expansion of his people. He began to think more in terms of armaments and troops than in terms of the faithful mercies of God. In his youth he had put his entire trust in God alone, whether he was facing Goliath with a slingshot or an army of Amalekites with a band of four hundred men. But in later years he had come to rely more and more on material resources, like any hardheaded realist, and he learned to measure his strength by the yardstick of numbers and wealth.

The Lord therefore decided that it was time for David to be brought to his knees once more and to be cast on the grace of God through a time of soul-searching trial. He therefore encouraged David to carry out the plan he had long cherished, that of counting up his manpower resources in order to plan his future military strategy with a view to the most effective deployment of his armies. Quite possibly this would also afford him a better base for assessment of taxes. And so God in effect said to him: “All right, go ahead and do it. Then you will find out how much good it will do you.”

Though he was a hard-bitten and ambitious commander, General Joab felt a definite uneasiness about this whole project. He sensed that David and his advisors were becoming increasingly puffed up over their brilliant conquests, which had brought the Palestinian, Syrian, and Phoenician kingdoms into a state of vassalage and dependency on Israel. Joab was fearful that the Lord was displeased with this new attitude of self-confidence and self-esteem, and he tried to dissuade David from his purpose. 1 Chronicles 21:3 records Joab as saying, “The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord’s servants? Why then doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?” There is a definite sense in which Yahweh gave David a final warning through the lips of Joab, before David finally committed himself to the census.

It was not that census taking was inherently evil. The Lord was not displeased with the two censuses taken in the time of Moses; in fact, He gave Moses positive directions to number all his military effectives (Num. 1:2–3; 26:2), both at the beginning of the forty years’ wandering in the desert and at the end of that period, as they were on the threshold of the conquest. The second census was designed to show that the total of Israel’s armed forces was actually a bit less than it had been forty years earlier. And yet with that smaller force they would sweep all their enemies before them, rather than cowering in fear at the prospect of war as their fathers had done at Kadesh-Barnea. The second census would also serve a useful purpose as a basis for the distribution of the conquered territory among the Twelve Tribes. The more numerous tribes should be awarded the larger tracts in the apportionment of land. But this census on which David had set his heart could serve no other purpose than to inflate the national ego. As soon as the numbering was complete, God meant to chasten the nation by a disastrous plague that would cause a considerable loss of life and a decrease in the numbers of their citizens.

But as we turn back to the opening verse in 1 Chronicles 21, we are faced with the statement that it was Satan who moved David to conduct the census even over Joab’s warning and protest. The verb for “incited” is identical in both accounts (*wayyāset*). Why would Satan get himself involved in this affair if God had already prompted David to commit the folly he had in mind? It was because Satan found it in his own interest to do so. The situation here somewhat resembles the first and second chapters of Job, in which it was really a challenge to Satan from God that led to Job’s calamities. God’s purpose was to purify Job’s faith and ennoble his character through the discipline of adversity. Satan’s purpose was purely malicious; he wished to do Job as much harm as he possibly could, and if possible drive him to curse God for his misfortunes. Thus it came about that both God and Satan were involved in Job’s downfall and disaster.

Similarly we find both God and Satan involved in the sufferings of persecuted Christians according to 1 Peter 4:19 and 5:8. God’s purpose is to strengthen their faith and to enable them to share in the sufferings of Christ in this life, that they may rejoice with Him in the glories of heaven to come (1 Peter 4:13–14). But Satan’s purpose is to “devour” them (1 Peter 5:8), that is, to draw them into bitterness or self-pity, and thus drag them down to his level and his baneful destiny. Even in the case of Christ Himself, it was Satan’s purpose to deflect the Savior from His messianic mission by the three temptations he offered Him; but it was the Father’s purpose for the Second Adam to triumph completely over the very tempter who had lured the first Adam to his fall.

Also, at the Crucifixion it was Satan’s purpose to have Jesus betrayed by Judas (whose heart he filled with treachery and hate [John 13:27]); but it was the Father’s purpose that the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world should give His life as a ransom for many—and this was symbolized by the cup that Christ was forced to accept at Gethsemane. And in the case of Peter, Jesus informed him before his triple denial in the court of the high priest: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31–32, NIV).

Here, then, we have five other examples of incidents or situations in which both Satan and God were involved in soul-searching testings and trials—God with a basically benevolent motive and a view to eventual victory and increasing usefulness for the person so tested, but Satan with an altogether malicious motive, hoping to so as much damage as he possibly can. Therefore we can say

without hesitation that both accounts of David's incitement were correct. God incited him in order to teach him and his people a lesson they needed to learn and to humble them in a way that would promote their spiritual growth. Satan incited him in order to deal a severe blow to Israel and to mar David's prestige before his subjects. As it turned out (and this is true of virtually all the other examples as well), Satan's success was limited and transient; but in the end God's purpose was well served and His cause was substantially furthered.

In the aftermath of the plague, which cost the lives of seventy thousand Israelites (2 Sam. 24:15), the angel of the Lord designated the exact spot on Mount Moriah where the plague was stopped as the chosen spot for the future temple of the Lord (v.18). This structure was destined to bring much blessing into the lives of God's people for many generations to come. Once again Satan's malice was surpassed by the overruling grace of God.

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**Norman Geisler - borrow [When critics ask : a popular handbook on Bible difficulties](#) -**

**2 SAMUEL 24:1—How can this passage claim that God moved David to number Israel when 1 Chronicles 21:1 claims that it was Satan?**

**PROBLEM:** This passage reports the sin of David in numbering the people of Israel and Judah. Verse one affirms that God moved David to number the people. However, according to 1 Chronicles 21:1, it was Satan who moved David to number the people. Who was responsible for prompting David to act?

**SOLUTION:** Both statements are true. Although it was Satan who immediately incited David, ultimately it was God who permitted Satan to carry out this provocation. Although it was Satan's design to destroy David and the people of God, it was God's purpose to humble David and the people and teach them a valuable spiritual lesson. This situation is quite similar to the first two chapters of Job in which both God and Satan are involved in the suffering of Job. Similarly, both God and Satan are involved in the crucifixion. Satan's purpose was to destroy the Son of God (John 13:2; 1 Cor 2:8). God's purpose was to redeem humankind by the death of His Son (Acts 2:14–39).

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**Walter Kaiser - p 213 in [Hard Sayings in the Bible](#) - Why Was the Census a Sin?**

God had commanded Moses twice to take a census in Numbers 1 and 26, yet in 2 Samuel David numbers Israel because God, angry with Israel, incites him to it; 1 Chronicles attributes the result to the influence of Satan on David. Are these contradictory passages an instance where error has crept into Scripture?

Let us first establish why census-taking could be sinful. In effect, the census acted as a draft notice or a mustering of the troops. Some conclude, based on 1 Chronicles 27:23–24, that David sinned by numbering those people under twenty years of age—an illegal act. Others see the numbering as doubting God's promise that David's descendants would be as measureless as the sand and stars. The best solution is that it was motivated by presumption. God had given David no objective or reason to go out to battle. Only David's pride and ambition could have brought on such an act.

The and at the beginning of 1 Chronicles 21:1 in some translations seems to invite us to look at the conclusion of the previous chapter. First Chronicles 20:8 mentions that the giant's descendants were among those whom David and his men vanquished. The connection could be that David, flushed with his successes, grew too big in his own eyes and opened the door for Satan to successfully tempt him.

This brings us to the second difficulty of this hard saying: Was it God or Satan who tempted David to sin? Satan is mentioned infrequently in the Old Testament. He was introduced in Job 1–2 and in the postexilic period in Zechariah 3:1. However, in both of these latter cases, the definite article is used; 1 Chronicles 21:1 does not use it. Even though the doctrine of the supernatural being named Satan was not well developed in the Old Testament, the appearance of Satan cannot be reduced to Persian dualism or one's adversary in general. Even in the Garden of Eden there exists a hostile presence called "the serpent." What is new in this passage is the formalizing of his name as "the adversary" or "opposer." But the activities of the serpent and Satan make it clear that they are the same person.

How then does this relatively unidentified but never-absent personage play a key role in one version of David's sin when God receives the dubious credit in another?

The thought that God instigates or impels sinners to do evil is incorrect. In no sense could God author what he disapproves of and makes his whole kingdom stand against. How then shall we understand 2 Samuel 24:1, where God seems to instigate something which he will immediately label as sin?

God may and does occasionally impel sinners to reveal the wickedness of their hearts in deeds. God merely presents the



opportunity and occasion for letting the evil desires of the heart manifest themselves outwardly. In this manner, sinners may see more quickly the evil which lies dormant in their hearts and motivates them to act counter to God's will.

It is also true, according to Hebrew thinking, that whatever God permits he commits. By allowing this census-taking, God is viewed as having brought about the act. The Hebrews were not very concerned with determining secondary causes and properly attributing them to the exact cause. Under the idea of divine providence everything ultimately was attributed to God; why not say he did it in the first place?

Since the number of variations here between Samuel and Chronicles are greater than usual and point to no clear rationale for emphasizing one set of facts over another, scholars suggest that Chronicles may represent the better and more dependable text tradition of the original Hebrew rather than that reflected in English versions of Samuel.

Although we should not overestimate the textual variants between Samuel and Chronicles in this chapter, some of the texts from Qumran's Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that some of its Samuel readings agree with readings previously found only in Chronicles. This would bring more harmony to the differences among texts.

Almost all students of Scripture judge that Chronicles was composed during the exile or just after it. Therefore it likely was based on an earlier form of the Samuel narrative no doubt well known and widely used. Note the way that the writer of Chronicles linked his materials; it reflects a linkage explicitly made in 2 Samuel 24:1. There the writer of 2 Samuel 24:1 noted, "Again the anger of the LORD burned," a reference to 2 Samuel 21:1–14, which also had to do with atonement for guilt. Accordingly, even though the chronicler omitted the material in 2 Samuel 23–24, he had a literary precedent for linking the materials in 2 Samuel 21 and 24. The selection of a site for the temple in Jerusalem marked a fitting climax to this phase of David's activity.

Having shown that David did indeed sin and that Satan, not God, was to blame, that still leaves all Israel the victims of the plague God sent to punish the sin. But David's subjects were as guilty as their king, according to 2 Samuel 24:1. Thus God dealt with all Israel through the act of the king who exemplified the national spirit of pride.

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**QUESTION - [Why was God so angry at David for taking the census?](#)** See the [accompanying video discussion](#).

**ANSWER** - 2 Samuel 24:1 says, "Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.'" The parallel account of the incident surrounding the census, however, reveals it was Satan who incited David to take the census: "Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel" (1Ch 21:1). This discrepancy is often explained by the understanding that, in order to achieve His purposes, sometimes God sovereignly permits Satan to act. God can use Satan in various ways, with the result being the refining, disciplining, and purification of disobedient believers (Lk 22:31–32; 1Co 5:1–5; 2Co 12:7–10). Such might have been the case with David. God allowed Satan to tempt him, and David sinned, revealing his pride, and God then dealt with David accordingly.

There are other considerations concerning the passages relating David's sinful census. Here is 2 Samuel 24:1 in four translations:

"Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and he incited David against them . . ." (NIV).

"Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them . . ." (ESV).

"And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them . . ." (KJV).

"Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them . . ." (NASB).

Note that the New American Standard Bible says "it" (the anger of the Lord) is what caused David to take the census. The other translations say "he" (the Lord) did the inciting. The reason for the differences in translation is that, in the original language, there is no subject for the verb *incited*. The fact is we aren't told who exactly moved David to take the census. To translate the verse literally, we would say, "There was who moved David against them" or "For one moved David against them." The translations above have taken this to mean it was either God or His anger that caused David to take the census. But there are other options:

- The unstated thing that moved David to conduct the census could have been David's own evil imagination.
- The "one" who moved David could be Satan, as 1 Chronicles 21:1 says.
- The "adversary" (the meaning of the word *Satan*) mentioned in 1 Chronicles could be someone other than the devil; it could have been an unnamed counselor to David who prompted him into a foolish (or sinful) action.

As to why God was angry at David, in those times, a man only had the right to count or number what belonged to him. Israel did not belong to David; Israel belonged to God. In Exodus 30:12 God told Moses, "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them." It was up to God to command a census, and if David counted he should only have done it at God's command, receiving a ransom to "atone" for the counting. This is why God was angry again with Israel and is also why David was "conscience-stricken" after he counted Israel. David knew it was wrong and begged God to take away the guilt of his sin (2 Samuel 24:10).

God gave David a choice of three punishments for his sin—three years of famine, three months of fleeing before his enemies, or three days of plague. David chose the third, and the Lord then punished Israel with a plague that killed 70,000 men from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. As for why God punished the whole nation for the sin of the king, that is exactly the question David asks in 2 Samuel 24:17. Why, when he was the one who had sinned, did the people have to suffer? He even requested that God's hand be against him and his family only, and that God would spare the people. But, as with the account of Job, God chose not to give a reason for His actions. Perhaps it was because of Israel's multiplied sins and rebellion against God throughout the centuries. Perhaps it was a lesson to the people (and to us as well) that the people suffer when their leaders go astray. The reality is that God didn't justify His actions with a reason, nor does He have to.

Of the three choices presented to David, the first two would have involved some level of dependency upon the mercy of man: the warfare, of course, would be as severe as the enemy wanted it to be; the famine would require Israel to seek food from other nations, relying on the pity of their neighbors. Instead of relying on the mercy of any human, David chose to rely on the mercy of God—the [pestilence](#) was, after all, the most direct form of punishment from God, and in the plague they could only look to God for relief.

The psalmist tells us, "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). If God's ways are "perfect," then we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. Our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him, and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

As we see in 2 Samuel 24:16, God was grieved because of the things that were happening to His people, and He called off the punishment. Even in His rebuke God still shows His love and mercy. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resource:

- [Why did God order a census in the book of Numbers? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Chronicles 21:2 So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me word that I may know their number."**

- Joab: 2Sa 24:2-4
- Beersheba: Jdg 20:1 1Sa 3:20 2Sa 3:10 17:11 24:15 1Ki 4:25 2Ch 30:5
- bring: 1Ch 27:23,24
- that I may: De 8:13-17 2Ch 32:25,26 Pr 29:23 2Co 12:7

### GO AND NUMBER THE TROOPS

**2 Samuel 24:1+** has these two commands as coming from Satan **Go, number** Israel and Judah."

**So David said to Joab and to the princes of the people, 'Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring me word that I may know their number.'** Two flaming missiles entered David's mind in the form of commands, like "You must do this to satisfy your flesh!" In 2Sa 24:2 David yields to the temptation and in turn commands his commander(s) to number the people. The command to "**Number**" in the Septuagint is in the active voice indicating David made a choice of his will (he was not forced as passive voice might indicate) to issue this command. David is not interested in a population census, but a military force census. How many able bodied soldiers did he have access to?

**1 Chronicles 21:3 Joab said, "May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why does my lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?"**



φθαλμο κυρ ου μου το βασιλ ως βλ ποντες π ντες τ κυρ μου πα δες να τ ζητε κ ρι ς μου το το να μ  
γ νηται ε ς μαρτ αν τ Ισραηλ

LXE 1 Chronicles 21:3 And Joab said, May the Lord add to his people, a hundred-fold as many as they are, and let the eyes of my lord the king see it: all are the servants of my lord. Why does my lord seek this thing? do it not, lest it become a sin to Israel.

KJV 1 Chronicles 21:3 And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they be: but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?

NET 1 Chronicles 21:3 Joab replied, "May the LORD make his army a hundred times larger! My master, O king, do not all of them serve my master? Why does my master want to do this? Why bring judgment on Israel?"

CSB 1 Chronicles 21:3 Joab replied, "May the LORD multiply the number of His people a hundred times over! My lord the king, aren't they all my lord's servants? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"

ESV 1 Chronicles 21:3 But Joab said, "May the LORD add to his people a hundred times as many as they are! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?"

NIV 1 Chronicles 21:3 But Joab replied, "May the LORD multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord's subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"

NLT 1 Chronicles 21:3 But Joab replied, "May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundred times over! But why, my lord the king, do you want to do this? Are they not all your servants? Why must you cause Israel to sin?"

NRS 1 Chronicles 21:3 But Joab said, "May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundredfold! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?"

NJB 1 Chronicles 21:3 Joab replied, 'May Yahweh multiply his people to a hundred times what they are today! But my lord king, are they not all my lord's servants in any case? Why should my lord insist on this? Why should he involve Israel in guilt?'

NAB 1 Chronicles 21:3 But Joab replied: "May the LORD increase his people a hundredfold! My lord king, are not all of them my lord's subjects? Why does my lord seek to do this thing? Why will he bring guilt upon Israel?"

- The Lord: 1Ch 19:13 Ps 115:14 Pr 14:28 Isa 26:15 48:19
- why will: Ge 20:9 Ex 32:21 Nu 32:9,10 1Sa 2:24 1Ki 14:16

## JOAB WARNS DAVID "NOT NECESSARY"

**Joab said, "May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants?"** Joab's reply is like a prayer and his exhortation is for David to stand and watch what God would do. Joab, although often impetuous and rash, once again gives reasonable counsel to David, which David should have seen as a warning. David is a man after God's own heart, but as we have seen is not perfect and sometimes acts more like a man after a man's (fallen) heart! Can't we all identify? (Rhetorical!)

**Why does my lord seek this thing?** Joab presses the point home asking why David would even want to do this? Clearly, as commander over David's armies, Joab of all people, should have known whether Israel's army was lacking adequate numbers to carry out war. And yet he sees no need for numbering.

**Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?**- On this point Joab is more righteous than David! **NLT** paraphrases it as a blunt, clear warning from Joab "Why must you cause Israel to sin?"

**1 Chronicles 21:4 Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.**

- the king's: Ec 8:4
- Wherefore: Ex 1:17 Da 3:18 Ac 5:29
- and went: 2Sa 24:3-8

### **DAVID STICKS TO HIS GUNS...UNFORTUNATELY!**

"Stick to your guns means" to hold fast to a statement, opinion, or course of action.

**Nevertheless, the king's word prevailed against Joab** - A sad term of contrast. David ignores Joab's wise words and clear warning! One is reminded of when David told his servants to go bring Bathsheba, they warned him that this was a married woman! He failed to heed their warning, just as he failed to heed Joab's warning and paid a heavy price both times!

**THOUGHT** - If you are warned by someone that what you are thinking about doing is clearly a sin, you would be wise to stop in your tracks and re-consider what you are thinking about doing or saying! And then after thinking soberly about it, you make the righteous, godly choice to not carry out the sin lest you too suffer painful consequences! In fact Paul says "make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." (Ro 13:14b) David made provision for the flesh in regard to his lusts and it cost him 70,000 souls!

**Therefore, Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.**- There 9 month 20 day journey is described in detail in 2Sa 24:5-8+. Joab and commanders disagreed but do not disobey.

**1 Chronicles 21:5 Joab gave the number of the census of all the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword.**

BGT 1 Chronicles 21:5 καὶ ὤκεν Ἰωάβ τὸν ριθμὸν τῶν πικρῶν τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ Δαυὶδ καὶ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ χίλιαι χίλιαι καὶ κατὰ χίλιαι ἑξήκοντα ἑπτὰ σπασμῶν μίαι καὶ ἑξήκοντα χίλιαι ἑξήκοντα ἑπτὰ σπασμῶν μίαι

LXE 1 Chronicles 21:5 And Joab gave the number of the mustering of the people to David: and all Israel was a million and a hundred thousand men that drew sword: and the sons of Juda were four hundred and seventy thousand men that drew sword.

KJV 1 Chronicles 21:5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.

NET 1 Chronicles 21:5 Joab reported to David the number of warriors. In all Israel there were 1,100,000 sword-wielding soldiers; Judah alone had 470,000 sword-wielding soldiers.

CSB 1 Chronicles 21:5 Joab gave the total troop registration to David. In all Israel there were 1,100,000 swordsmen and in Judah itself 470,000 swordsmen.

ESV 1 Chronicles 21:5 And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to David. In all Israel there were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword, and in Judah 470,000 who drew the sword.

NIV 1 Chronicles 21:5 Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David: In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah.

NLT 1 Chronicles 21:5 and reported the number of people to David. There were 1,100,000 warriors in all Israel who could handle a sword, and 470,000 in Judah.

- **a thousand:** The Syriac has 800,000 as in the parallel passage of Samuel. 1Ch 27:23 2Sa 24:9

**Related Passage:**

2 Samuel 24:9 And Joab gave the number of the registration of the people to the king; and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

**Joab gave the number of the census of all the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and Judah was 470,000 men who drew the sword** - Clearly these numbers are not the same as the parallel passage above. See Archer's explanation below.

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**Gleason Archer - page in [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - 2 Samuel 24:9 gives the total population for Israel as 800,000, which is 300,000 less than the corresponding figure in 1 Chronicles 21:5. On the other hand, 2 Samuel 24 gives 500,000 for Judah, as over against a mere 470,000 in 1 Chronicles 21. How can these apparent discrepancies be reconciled?**

A possible solution may be found along these lines. So far as Israel (i.e., the tribes north of Judah) is concerned, the 1 Chronicles figure includes all the available men of fighting age, whether battle seasoned or not. But from 2 Samuel 24 we learn that Joab's report gave a subtotal of "mighty men" ('iš ḥayil), i.e., battle-seasoned troops, consisting of 800,000 veterans. But in addition there may have been 300,000 more men of military age who served in the reserves but had not yet been involved in field combat. These two contingents would make up a total of 1,100,000—as 1 Chronicles 21 reports them, without employing the term 'iš ḥayil.

So far as Judah was concerned, 2 Samuel 24 gives the round figure of 500,000, which was 30,000 more than the corresponding item in 1 Chronicles 21. Now it should be observed that 1 Chronicles 21:6 makes it clear that Joab did not complete the numbering, for he did not get around to a census of the tribe of Benjamin (nor that of Levi, either) before David came under conviction about completing the census at all. Joab was glad to desist when he saw the king's change of heart. The procedure for conducting the census had been to start with the Transjordanian tribes (2 Sam. 24:5) and then shift to the northernmost tribe of Dan and work southward back toward Jerusalem (v.7). This meant that the numbering of Benjamin would have come last. Hence Benjamin was not included with the total for Israel or that for Judah, either. But in the case of 2 Samuel 24, the figure for Judah included the already known figure of 30,000 troops mustered by Benjamin (which lay immediately adjacent to Jerusalem itself). Hence the total of 500,000 included the Benjamite contingent.

Observe that after the division of the united kingdom into North and South following the death of Solomon in 930 B.C., most of the Benjamites remained loyal to the dynasty of David and constituted (along with Simeon to the south) the kingdom of Judah. Hence it was reasonable to include Benjamin with Judah and Simeon in the subtotal figure of 500,000—even though Joab may not have itemized it in the first report he gave to David (1 Chron. 21:5). It would seem then that the completed grand total of the fighting forces available to David for military service was 1,600,000 (1,100,000 of Israel, 470,000 of Judah-Simeon, and 30,000 of Benjamin).

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**Norman Geisler - borrow [When critics ask : a popular handbook on Bible difficulties](#) - 2 SAMUEL 24:9—Why do the numbers of men recorded in 2 Samuel 24:9 and in 1 Chronicles 21:5–6 disagree?**

**PROBLEM:** When David was moved to number the people of Israel and Judah, he sent Joab to carry out the task. According to the report in 2 Samuel 24:9, the number of the men of valor in Israel was 800,000, and the number of the men of valor in Judah was 500,000. However, according to 1 Chronicles 21:5–6, the number of the men who drew the sword in Israel was 1,100,000, and the number of the men who drew the sword in Judah was 470,000. Which of these calculations is correct?

**SOLUTION:** This discrepancy involves the difference in who was included in each report. In the report in 2 Samuel, the number of men of valor who drew the sword was 800,000, but did not include the standing army of 288,000 described in 1 Chronicles 27:1–15, or the 12,000 specifically attached to Jerusalem described in 2 Chronicles 1:14. Including these figures gives the grand total of 1,100,000 men of valor who composed the entire army of the men of Israel. The figure of 470,000 in 1 Chronicles 21 did not include the 30,000 men of the standing army of Judah mentioned in 2 Samuel 6:1. This is evident from the fact that the Chronicler points out that Joab did not complete the counting of the men of Judah (1 Chron. 21:6). Both calculations are correct according to the groups which were included and excluded from each report.

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**1 Chronicles 21:6 But he did not number Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.**

- Levi: Nu 1:47-49
- Joab: 2Sa 3:27 11:15-21 20:9,10

**But he did not number Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab-** In effect Joab partially disobeyed David's command for David had commanded "**Go about now through all the tribes of Israel.**" (2Sa 24:2) Levites were excluded from military duty. Why bypass the tribe of Benjamin is unclear.

**1 Chronicles 21:7 God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.**

- **God was displeased with this thing:** Heb. And it was evil in the eyes of God concerning this thing, 2Sa 11:27 1Ki 15:5
- **He struck Israel.:** 1Ch 21:14 Jos 7:1,5,13 22:16-26 2Sa 21:1,14 24:1

## **GOD'S DISPLEASURE DISPENSES "PAIN"**

**God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel-** Compare 2Sa 24:10+ which says "**Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."** This passage suggests that even before God struck Israel, David's heart was convicted of sinning against God.

**Warren Wiersbe** sums up the problem with the census - There was nothing illegal about a national census, if it was done according to the rules laid down in Exodus 30:11-16 (and see Num. 3:40-51). The half shekel received at the census was used to pay the bills for the sanctuary of God (Ex. 38:25-28). As a good Jewish citizen, Jesus paid his temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27), even though He knew that much of the ministry at the temple in that day was corrupt and had been rejected by His Father (Matt. 23:37-24:1). The phrase "the people" used in 2 Samuel 24:2, 4, 9, 10 refers to the Jewish military forces and is used this way in the Authorized Version of 1 Samuel 4:3, 4, 17. But the census that David ordered wasn't to collect the annual temple tax; it was a military census to see how big his army was, as verse 9 makes clear. But there had been military censuses in Israel in the past and the Lord hadn't judged the nation (Num. 1 and 26). What was there about this census that was wrong?

Joab and his captains were against the project (v. 4) and Joab's speech in verse 3 suggests that David's command was motivated by pride. The king wanted to magnify his own achievements rather than glorify the Lord. David may have rationalized this desire by arguing that his son Solomon was a man of peace who had no military experience. David wanted to be certain that, after his death, Israel would have the forces needed to preserve the peace. Another factor may have been David's plan to organize the army, the government, and the priests and Levites so that Solomon could manage things more easily and be able to build the temple (1 Chron. 22-27).

Whatever the cause, the Lord was displeased (1 Chron. 21:7), but He permitted Joab and his captains to spend the next nine months and twenty days counting the Israelites twenty years old and upward who were fit for military service. Sometimes God's greatest judgment is simply to let us have our own way. The census takers left Jerusalem, traveled east across the Jordan, and started counting at Aror in the vicinity of the Dead Sea. Then they moved north through Gad and Gilead to Israel's northernmost border, where David had conquered the territory and expanded his kingdom (2 Sam. 8). The men then went west to Tyre and Sidon and then south to Beersheba in Judah, Israel's farthest border city. (Borrow [Be restored : 2 Samuel & 1 Chronicles](#))

**1 Chronicles 21:8 David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."**

- **I have sinned:** 2Sa 12:13 24:10 Ps 25:11 32:5 Jer 3:13 Lu 15:18,19 1Jn 1:9
- **away:** Ps 51:1-3 Ho 14:2 Joh 1:29
- **I have done:** Ge 34:7 1Sa 13:13 26:21 2Sa 13:13 2Ch 10:9

### **Related Passages:**

Psalms 51:1-3 For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

## DAVID'S CRY OF CONFESSION

**David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing-** Note that two uses of the personal pronoun "I." As discussed more below David "owned" (or [owned up to](#)) his own sin. That's a lesson for all of us which is worth filing away! Notice that this time (and 1Ch 21:8) David adds to his confession the adjective **GREATLY!** Here 70,000 people have died!

**Wiersbe adds on sinned greatly** - Most of us would consider his sins relating to Bathsheba far worse than the sin of numbering the people, and far more foolish, but David saw the enormity of what he had done. David's sins with Bathsheba took the lives of four of David's sons (the baby, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah) plus the life of Uriah; but after the census, God sent a plague that took the lives of seventy thousand people. The Lord must have agreed with David that he had indeed sinned greatly. (Borrow [Be restored : 2 Samuel & 1 Chronicles](#))

**But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly** David asks for forgiveness. He does not ask for God to take away the consequences, as surely by this time of his life, he is fully aware that sin ALWAYS calls forth consequences of one degree or another. Notice the nature of sin -- it is utterly foolish! In short, sin is stupid! When we sin we are acting like fools!

**THOUGHT** - Regarding consequences of every sin, at the very least, every time we sin and fail to confess and repent, we disturb our fellowship with the Father as well as grieving and/or quenching the flame (and power) of the Holy Spirit, thus short circuiting His flow of supernatural power we need to this this Christian life. Are you failing and falling in your Christian life, unable to fend off temptations? One thought is to ask God to do a David-like heart checkup (pray Psalm 139:23-24+). If the Spirit reveals unconfessed sin, do not cover it up, but put it under the blood of Jesus (1Jn 1:7, 9+).

It is worth recalling another king named Saul who made a similar declaration and request - "Then Saul said to Samuel, **I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words**, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. "Now therefore, **please pardon my sin** and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." (1Sa 15:24-26+) Notice that Saul's confession had a caveat or disclaimer, in essence saying the people made me do it! He did not "own it" for himself, by himself! We don't see that "half-confession" in David's declaration neither here are when confronted by the prophet Nathan resulting in his confession "Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die." (2Sa 12:13+) Notice the clear distinction between the two confessions! To reiterate, genuine confession is "I sinned!" not "I sinned...but!"

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, let us all learn from this powerful lesson to own our own sin, not looking for scapegoats, not making excuses, not deceiving ourselves that simply saying the words "I have sinned" mean that we truly mean it! God grant us all the Spirit given grace to personally, fully "own" (or [own up to](#)) our own sin so that the blood of Jesus might cover and cleanse us (1Jn 1:7+). And then we must be cognizant of the consequences, understanding that confession wipes out the sin before our Father, but does not wipe out the consequences related to that sin. These hard truths should drive us all to Paul's words in Romans 8:13+ so we are ever ready and willing by the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the flesh (aka sins) so that we might live!

**1 Chronicles 21:9 The LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying,**

- **Gad:** 1Ch 29:29 1Sa 9:9 2Sa 24:11

## GOD SPEAKS TO HIS MOUTHPIECE GAD

**The LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying** - The parallel passage in 2 Samuel 24:11 says " When David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying."

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**Seer** ([02374](#))(**chozeh** from **chazah** = to see, behold) is an authoritative person who receives and communicates a message from God, possibly with an emphasis on the visual nature of the message. This is a prophet, who sees or perceives. In Isaiah a rebellious people sought to curb the functions of these seers (Isa. 30:10). In 1 Samuel 9:9, the author parenthetically states that the word for prophet in his day, nāḇiy' (5030), was formerly called a seer. However, for seer, he did not use ḥōzeh but a present participle of the

verb *rā'āh* (7200), meaning to see, to perceive. It appears that the participles of *hōzeh* and of *rā'āh* function synonymously. But, terminology aside, a seer functioned the same as a prophet, who was moved by God and had divinely given insight. This Hebrew word is also used in parallel with the word prophet (2 Kgs. 17:13; Amos 7:12, 14); hence, its meaning overlaps with that term as well (cf. 2 Chr. 33:18; Isa. 29:10). Seers sometimes served a specific person: Gad served as King David's seer and did not hesitate to declare the words the Lord gave him for the king (2 Sam. 24:11). David had more than one seer (cf. 1 Chr. 25:5; 2 Chr. 29:25). The functions of a seer as indicated by this term included, besides receiving and reporting the word of the Lord, writing about David's reign (1 Chr. 29:29); receiving and writing down visions (2 Chr. 9:29); writing genealogical records under Reho-boam's reign (2 Chr. 12:15). In general, the Lord forewarned His people through His prophets and seers (2 Kgs. 17:13; 2 Chr. 33:18). In many cases, these warnings were recorded in writing (2 Chr. 33:19).

**Chozeh - 17v - pact(1), prophets(1), seer(12), seers(3).** 2 Sam. 24:11; 2 Ki. 17:13; 1 Chr. 21:9; 1 Chr. 25:5; 1 Chr. 29:29; 2 Chr. 9:29; 2 Chr. 12:15; 2 Chr. 19:2; 2 Chr. 29:25; 2 Chr. 29:30; 2 Chr. 33:18; 2 Chr. 35:15; Isa. 28:15; Isa. 29:10; Isa. 30:10; Amos 7:12; Mic. 3:7

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Gad the seer?](#)

**ANSWER** - Gad the [seer](#) (or prophet) is first mentioned in 1 Samuel 22:5. Before the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers at Pentecost (Acts 2), God communicated to His people primarily through His chosen prophets. In the Old Testament, those prophets are sometimes called seers (1 Samuel 9:9). Seers were sought by kings and others in authority when they needed direction from the Lord (2 Kings 17:13; 1 Chronicles 25:5).

Gad appears suddenly in the book of 1 Samuel as a consultant to [David](#) while he was on the run from Saul. At that time, Gad counsels David to leave Moab and return to Judah (1 Samuel 22:5). Gad is not mentioned again until David took the throne as the king of Israel and Gad is named as his seer (2 Samuel 24:11). At that time, kings had specific prophets whose counsel they sought, much as an American President has an advisory council. The difference is that these seers were to represent the Lord's counsel and not merely present good advice. However, seers were not always trustworthy, and the Lord brought judgment on those who spoke from their own authority (Jeremiah 14:14–15).

Gad, it appears, was an honorable man and faithfully spoke the Lord's words to David. After David had sinned by numbering the troops, the Lord sent Gad to rebuke him and give three options of punishment (2 Samuel 24:11–14). Gad later went back to David to give him the Lord's command about making his sin right through offering a sacrifice (2 Samuel 24:18). Gad remained loyal to David throughout his reign and is later listed as a compiler of the king's chronicles (1 Chronicles 29:29). Gad must have been a young man when he first joined David's band, since he outlived David and wrote a history of his life.

Though rarely mentioned by name, Gad the seer may have played a crucial role in David's success as king. His initial advice while David was on the run from Saul not only kept David safe, but it allowed David to build a reputation as a mighty warrior, making him popular with the people (1 Chronicles 12:1–22). From that, we learn that leaders need to surround themselves with wise people who understand God's Word and can communicate God's message accurately (see Isaiah 6:8–9; 1 Corinthians 14:1–4). For every great leader, there are nameless supporters who advise, rebuke, encourage, and warn, using their gifts for the betterment of another. Though his name is rarely mentioned, Gad's influence is seen throughout the incredible life and successes of King David. Where David excelled, Gad's counsel was right behind him. When David failed, Gad's rebukes and advice quickly followed. Gad worked in harmony with God's other influential prophet, Nathan, to keep David's heart and life pleasing to God and worthy of the throne (2 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Samuel 12:1). Because Gad was faithful to his calling, David had the godly insights he needed to fulfill the role God called him to play. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Chronicles 21:10 "Go and speak to David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, 'I offer you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you.'"**

- **choose:** Jos 24:15 Pr 1:29-31
- **that I may:** Nu 20:12 2Sa 12:10-12 1Ki 13:21,22 Pr 3:12 Rev 3:19

### **GOD COMMANDS GAD TO OFFER DAVID A "MULTIPLE CHOICE"!**

**Go and speak to David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, 'I offer you three things; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you** - God gives David a "divine multiple choice" and will carry out the one he chooses. This is a most unusual occurrence that David will be allowed to select the consequence he desires.



Notice that last phrase "**which I will do TO YOU!**" David would personally experience the "doing" by God. While he himself did not die, clearly he knew that it was his sin of counting numbers ironically resulted in smaller numbers in Israel, almost like it was divine "poetic justice." (Poetic justice is defined in the secular world as an occasion when something bad happens to a person who seems to deserve it, usually because of bad things that person has done. Another definition says it refers to a punishment or unfavorable outcome that is particularly appropriate or ironic.)

**1 Chronicles 21:11 So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take for yourself**

- **Take for yourself** Pr 19:20

### TAKE YOUR CHOICE PAY THE PRICE

**So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take for yourself** - Three deadly choices are presented to David and he must choose one.

**1 Chronicles 21:12 either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the LORD, even pestilence in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now, therefore, consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me."**

- **three years' famine:** Lev 26:26-29 2Sa 21:1 24:13 1Ki 17:1 2Ki 8:1 La 4:9 Lu 4:25
- **to be destroyed:** Lev 26:17,36,37 De 28:15,25,51,52 Jer 42:16
- **the sword:** 1Ch 21:16 Isa 66:16 Jer 12:12 47:6
- **pestilence:** Lev 26:10,25 De 28:22,27,35 Ps 91:6 Eze 14:19-21
- **the angel:** 1Ch 21:15,16 Ex 12:23 2Ki 19:35 Mt 13:49,50 Ac 12:23 Rev 7:1-3
- **Now therefore:** 2Sa 24:13,14

### CHOOSE FAMINE, FOES OR PESTILENCE

**either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the LORD, even pestilence** ([deber](#); Lxx - [thanatos](#) = death) **in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now, therefore, consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me.** - Gad presents the consequences as (1) a 3 year famine (he had already experienced a 3 year famine in 2Sa 21:1 but note the parallel passage in 2Sa 24:13 says 7 years - see [Archer's comment](#) below), (2) 3 months of fleeing foes ("swept away") or (3) 3 days' of pestilence.

**NET Note on three days...** - Heb "or three days of the sword of the LORD and plague in the land, and the messenger [or "angel"] of the LORD destroying in all the territory of Israel."

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**Pestilence** ([01698](#)) [deber](#) from **dabar** = to speak) refers to plague. In the first 3 uses in Exodus [deber](#) speaks of divinely induced pestilence on Egypt (Ex 5:3, 9:3, 15). In Lev 26:25 as punishment for Israel's sin God promises "I will send **pestilence** among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands." (Compare Nu 14:12, Dt 28:21) In 2Sa 24:13, 15 we see the **pestilence** was sent on Israel because of King David's sin and as a result 70,000 men died! King Solomon referred to **pestilence** as one of the judgments that should stimulate the people to pray asking God to hear their cries (1Ki 8:37, 2Chr 6:28). God delivers from pestilence (Ps 91:3). **Pestilence** is clearly a [key word](#) in the book of Jeremiah (17/48 uses in the OT) which is summed up well in Jeremiah 21:6 where God promises "I will also strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they will die of a great **pestilence**."

**Pestilence** in the English dictionary = a deadly or highly infectious epidemic outbreak usually of an infectious disease but figuratively can be an evil influence.

**ISBE on [deber](#)** - Any sudden fatal epidemic is designated by this word, and in its Biblical use it generally indicates that these are divine visitations. The word is most frequently used in the prophetic books, and it occurs 25 times in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, always

associated with the sword and famine. In 4 other passages it is combined with noisome or evil beasts, or war. In Amos 4:10 this judgment is compared with the plagues of Egypt, and in Habakkuk 3:5 it is a concomitant of the march of God from the Arabian mountain. There is the same judicial character associated with pestilence in Exodus 5:3; Exodus 9:15; Leviticus 26:25; Numbers 14:12; Deuteronomy 28:21; 2 Samuel 24:21; 1 Chronicles 21:12; Ezekiel 14:19, Ezekiel 14:21. In the dedication prayer of Solomon, a special value is besought for such petitions against pestilence as may be presented toward the temple (2 Chronicles 6:28). Such a deliverance is promised to those who put their trust in God (Psalm 91:6). Here the pestilence is called noisome, a shortened form of "annoysome," used in the sense of "hateful" or that which causes trouble or distress. In modern English it has acquired the sense of loathsome. "Noisome" is used by Tyndale where the King James Version and the Revised Version (British and American) have "hurtful" in 1 Timothy 6:9. The Latin word pestilentia is connected with pestis, "the plague," but pestilence is used of any visitation and is not the name of any special disease; debher is applied to diseases of cattle and is translated "murrain."

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**Gleason Archer - page 193 in [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - Why is there a discrepancy in the number of years of famine mentioned in 2 Samuel 24:13 and in 1 Chronicles 21:11–12?**

2 Samuel 24:13 relates the visit of the prophet Gad to King David after he had finished the census of his kingdom in a spirit of pride. Gad relays God's message to him in the following terms: "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land?" (NASB). To this David replies in a spirit of humble repentance, "Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man" (v.14, NASB).

In 1 Chronicles 21:11–12, Gad comes to David and says to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take for yourself either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your foes ..., or else three days of the sword of the LORD, even pestilence in the land.'" (NASB). Note that the wording here is significantly different from that of 2 Samuel 24:13 (i.e., "Shall seven years of famine come to you?"). Rather than that simple question in 2 Samuel, we have it given here in 1 Chronicles as an alternative imperative ("Take for yourself either three years of famine ...").

From this we may reasonably conclude that 2 Samuel records the first approach of Gad to David, in which the alternative prospect was seven years; the Chronicles account gives us the second and final approach of Nathan to the king, in which the Lord (doubtless in response to David's earnest entreaty in private prayer) reduced the severity of that grim alternative to three years rather than an entire span of seven. As it turned out, however, David finally opted for God's own preference (whether famine or pestilence); and God sent three days of severe pestilence, which carried off the lives of seventy thousand men of Israel.

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**Norman Geisler - borrow [When critics ask : a popular handbook on Bible difficulties](#) - 2 SAMUEL 24:13—Why are the numbers of the years of the famine different from those in 1 Chronicles 21?**

**PROBLEM:** God spoke to Gad and instructed him to offer David three alternative punishments for his sin. According to 2 Samuel 24:13, the famine was to be seven years. However, according to 1 Chronicles 21:12, the famine was to be three years. Which one of these is correct?

**SOLUTION:** There are two possible ways to reconcile these accounts. Some commentators propose that the prophet Gad actually confronted David on two occasions. This proposal is based on the difference in language used to present the alternatives to David. In the 2 Samuel passage, Gad presents the alternatives as a question, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land" (2Sa 24:13). In the 1 Chronicles passage the alternatives are presented more along the lines of a command, "Choose for yourself, either three years of famine, or three months to be defeated" (1Ch 21:11–12). Those who offer this solution assume that perhaps the 2 Samuel passage records the first encounter of Gad and David in which the alternatives are presented for David's consideration, and that after some fasting and prayer, Gad returned for David's decision by which time God had reduced the duration of the famine from seven to three years in response to David's supplication.

**Another group of commentators suggests that the record in 2 Samuel is a copyist error.** They point out that there are more reliable manuscripts which preserve the number "three" for the duration of the famine and that the NIV has employed this manuscript reading in its translation.

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**1 Chronicles 21:13 David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into the hand of man."**

- **I am in:** 2Ki 6:15 7:4 Es 4:11,16 Joh 12:27 Php 1:23
- **let me fall:** Heb 10:31

- **great:** or, many, Ex 34:6,7 Ps 5:7 51:1,2 69:13,16 86:5,15 103:8 106:7 130:7 Isa 55:7 63:7,15 La 3:32 Jon 3:9 4:2 Mic 7:18 Hab 3:2
- **but let me:** 2Ch 28:9 Pr 12:10 Isa 46:7 47:6

## DAVID CHOOSES TO FALL INTO YAHWEH'S HAND

**David said to Gad, "I am in great distress;** Why is David so upset? He grasps the consequences of his sin and how it will impact his entire nation. One cannot imagine how heavily this weighed on his heart!

**Please let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are very great. But do not let me fall into the hand of man.**" In one sense all 3 choices were under the sovereign control of Yahweh, but David sees the best option as throwing himself and his nation into the hands of the LORD, because he knows the heart of God is filled with **great mercies** (plural not singular)!

**TSK note** - David here acted nobly: had he chosen war, his personal safety was in no danger, as there was an ordinance preventing him from going to battle; and in famine, his wealth would have secured his and his family's support; but all were equally exposed to the pestilence.

**1 Chronicles 21:14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell.**

- **So the LORD sent** Nu 16:46-49 2Sa 24:15
- **seventy:** Ex 12:30 Nu 25:9 1Sa 6:19 2Ki 19:35

## THE REVERBERATING CONSEQUENCES OF PERSONAL SIN!

**So the LORD sent a pestilence** ([deber](#); Lxx - [thanatos](#) = death) **on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell** - 2 Samuel 24:15 says "**So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.**" - True to His promise, Yahweh sent the plague on all the land, from the north to the south with a death toll of 70,000, all because of David's sin! The consequences to a nation can be horrible when the leader sins against God. America are you listening? (see [mentions of God in the Democratic Party Platform](#))

### QUESTION - [What is the meaning of pestilence in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - **Pestilence** is a deadly disaster, usually a disease, that affects an entire community. Pestilence is contagious, virulent, and devastating. For example, the Black Plague in Europe that killed over thirty percent of the population during the late Middle Ages was a pestilence. In the Bible, pestilence is usually a sign of God's judgment on a nation or people group (Deuteronomy 32:24; 1 Chronicles 21:12; Ezekiel 7:14-15). The God who protects and blesses is also the God who sends disaster and pestilence when it accomplishes His righteous purposes on earth (Isaiah 45:7; Ezekiel 5:16-17; Amos 4:10). Pestilence is promised as part of God's final judgment on the world in Revelation 18:8.

The word translated "pestilence" is often translated as "plague" or "disaster" in new versions of the English Bible. However, because the word is often paired with both of those, it may imply a greater devastation than mere physical disease. Pestilence incorporates any and all forms of public and mass destruction and often accompanies famine (Ezekiel 7:15) or war (Jeremiah 21:9). Jesus forewarned of pestilence when He described the end times (Luke 21:11).

After David's sinful census, the Lord brought judgment upon Israel in the form of pestilence: "The Lord sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men" (2 Samuel 24:15, ESV). God had also sent pestilence in the aftermath of [Korah's rebellion](#) (Numbers 16:49) and as a judgment for Israel's immorality at [Baal Peor](#) (Numbers 25:9), but the epidemic recorded in 2 Samuel 24 was the most deadly ever to hit the Israelites. Then God had mercy and halted the judgment: "When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, 'Enough! Withdraw your hand'" (verse 16).

Our sovereign God is Lord of any pestilence (Habakkuk 3:5). Knowing that God is in control, we do not need to fear, whatever happens (see Psalm 91:5-6). Believers are not immune from the effects of living in a fallen world, but we are assured that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). God may test our faith through a time of pestilence, but Christians know such an ordeal is not God's judgment on them (see 1 Corinthians 11:32; James 1:3; 1 Peter 1:7).

Among the various forms of judgment that God brings upon the unrighteous and rebellious is pestilence. Not every epidemic is the direct judgment of God, but the Bible indicates that some instances of pestilence in history have been a punishment for sin. God sent pestilence to punish the Israelites for their ongoing idolatry and disobedience (Deuteronomy 32:24; Jeremiah 42:22), and during the [tribulation](#) He will send pestilence to punish the unrepentant: "The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image" (Revelation 16:2; cf. Revelation 18:8; Matthew 24:7).

**1 Chronicles 21:15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.**

- **to Jerusalem:** 2Sa 24:16 Jer 7:12 26:9,18 Mt 23:37,38
- **was sorry:** Ge 6:6 Ex 32:14 Jdg 2:18 10:16 Ps 78:38 Jer 18:7-10 Jon 4:2
- **It is enough:** Ex 9:28 1Ki 19:4 Ps 90:13 Mk 14:41
- **Ornan:** 2Sa 24:18, Araunah, 2Ch 3:1

### ANGEL OF THE LORD'S HAND TOWARD JERUSALEM

**And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand."** - David had appealed to the mercy of the LORD, and now he was a beneficiary of it as God called a halt to His wrath just as the Angel of the LORD was about to strike David's City.

**And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite** This is a parenthetical statement introducing a geographic site what would have great import in the history of Israel (even to this day for the [Dome of the Rock](#) is located there). This site was destined to become the most valuable piece of property in the world.

**MacArthur** - The **threshing floor of Ornan** is today believed to be the very flat rock under the Moslem mosque, the Dome of the Rock, inside the temple ground in Jerusalem. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Araunah \(AKA Ornan\) the Jebusite?](#)

**ANSWER** - Araunah the Jebusite was a [Canaanite](#) who sold King David a site and supplies to make a sacrifice to the Lord, even though he himself does not appear to have been a believer in the God of Israel. The land purchased from Araunah was eventually used as the site of the temple in Jerusalem.

The story of Araunah and his threshing floor is linked to that of David's [sinful census](#) in 2 Samuel 24. King David ordered a census of the fighting men of Israel; this census was contrary to God's will. (Perhaps the census was a source of pride or a sign that David was relying upon the strength of his men rather than the strength of the Lord.) As a result of David's sin, God gave David a choice: three years of famine, three months of fleeing before his enemies, or three days of pestilence. David picked the last one as he explains in verse 14: "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of the Lord for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man." Therefore, God sent a plague upon the people, and 70,000 men of Israel died (thus significantly weakening the fighting force that had just been counted). Toward the end of the third day, the Angel of the Lord is about to destroy Jerusalem but relents. At the time the plague stops, the Angel of the Lord was standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (verse 16).

2 Samuel 5 gives the account of David's capture of Jerusalem, which originally belonged to the Jebusites. For the first seven years of his kingship, David reigned in Hebron over Judah and Benjamin. But after all the tribes united under him, he wanted to found a new capital. He chose Jerusalem, a stronghold of the Jebusites, some of the original Canaanite inhabitants of the area. David defeated them and took the city. Although God had commanded that all the Canaanites be exterminated because of their great sin (Leviticus 18:24–25), this had never happened, even in David's day. Throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament, we read of Canaanites interacting with and even living among the Israelites. It appears that Araunah may have been one of the remaining Jebusites who lived there, or at least had a threshing floor near Jerusalem.

A threshing floor like that sold by Araunah would have been a large, open, elevated area to facilitate threshing and winnowing. First, the outer husk over the grain would have to be cracked so that the grain could be separated. This could be done by beating the

grain or by using a threshing sledge, an arrangement of heavy boards with abrasive material (e.g., sharp rocks) on the bottom side. The sledge was pulled by draft animals back and forth across the grain to separate the tough outer husk from the kernel. Then the grain would be tossed into the air and the wind would blow away the outer husk (the [chaff](#)—see Psalm 1:4) and the heavier grain kernel would fall back to the ground.

The prophet Gad, who had been communicating God's will to David during this whole ordeal, told David to build an altar to the Lord on Araunah's threshing floor. David went to Araunah and told him what he intended and offered to buy the threshing floor. Araunah instead offered to donate the site as well as oxen for the offering and the threshing sledges for wood. This offer is significant because these articles represent the whole of Araunah's livelihood. He is very respectful of David, but speaks of "the LORD *your* God" (2 Samuel 24:23, emphasis added), perhaps indicating that Araunah was not a believer in the God of Israel himself. David refuses his offer and explains in verse 24: "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." [David](#) has it right—a sacrifice that costs us nothing is not a real sacrifice. Araunah sells the site to David as well as the supplies for the offering, and the plague is stopped (verse 25).

1 Chronicles 21 is the parallel passage to 2 Samuel 24, but we learn nothing new about Araunah there except that he was also called Ornan the Jebusite. There are a number of reasons why this might be. If Araunah was a Canaanite, not a Hebrew, his name would have to be translated or transliterated into Hebrew, and this can result in some variation of spelling, especially since 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles were written several hundred years apart. It is also possible that *Araunah* is a title rather than a proper name. There are quite a number of instances in Scripture where a person has two names or variations in spelling of the same name. This does not indicate any error in the text but the normal variation for that age and type of literature. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Chronicles 21:16 Then David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces.**

- **saw the angel:** Ge 3:24 Ex 14:19,20 Nu 22:31 Jos 5:13,14 2Ki 6:17
- **covered:** 1Ki 21:27 2Ki 19:1 Ps 35:13,14 Jon 3:6-8
- **fell upon:** Nu 14:5 Nu 16:22

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron **fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation** of the sons of Israel.

Numbers 16:22 (**MOSES AND AARON**) But they **fell on their faces** and said, "O God, God of the spirits of all flesh, when one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?"

David & Elders in Sackcloth

### **SIGN OF IMPENDING DISASTER STIMULATES MOURNING, REPENTANCE**

**Then David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD** (see [Angel of the LORD](#)) **standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.**

**Eugene Merrill** - The [Angel of the LORD](#), elsewhere identified with God Himself, was probably the preincarnate Christ (cf. Ge 16:13; 18:1-2; 22:11-12; 48:16; Jdg 6:16, 22; 13:22-23; Zech. 3:1; see comments on Ge 16:7). He appeared to David near the threshing floor of Araunah (cf. 2Sa 24:16; the Heb. in 1Ch 21:15 has the variant spelling Ornan) **with a... sword in His hand**. David and the elders repented publicly and David pleaded that the rest of the people might be spared and that further punishment be meted only to him and his family. (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Then** - Marks progression, and in this case functions more like a term of conclusion. They saw the angel and concluded they needed to fall on their faces in mourning and despair.

**David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces-** "**Sackcloth** and ashes were used in Old Testament times as a symbol of debasement, mourning, and/or [repentance](#). Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. **Sackcloth** was a coarse material usually made of black goat's hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear....Sackcloth and ashes were also used as a public sign of repentance and humility before God."



(Gotquestions)

**Eugene Merrill** - David and the elders repented publicly and David pleaded that the rest of the people might be spared and that further punishment be meted only to him and his family (1Ch 21:17). (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

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**Sackcloth** ([08242](#)) [saq](#) means sack or sackcloth refers to a thick, coarse cloth, dark in color and typically woven from goat's hair and sometimes camel's hair. Sackcloth was worn traditionally to demonstrate mourning or despair; to convey the message dramatically. Sackcloth was used as a garment by mourners and those who wished to express contrition. It was worn in such a way as to leave the breast free for beating. As a garment of grief and self-abasement, sackcloth was sometimes the dress of the prophet who preached a message of repentance (cf. Rev. 11:3). Such a sight would be a call to trembling and repentance. Both Elijah and John, preachers of repentance, wore garments of camel's skin (2 Kings 1:8; Matthew 3:4). Persons might tear their clothes as well, especially at the death of a son. The word is also used of sacks used to transport various items of merchandise (Gen. 42:25, 27, 35)

**Gilbrant** - Sackcloth was worn by mourners who lamented either because of a national catastrophe (2 Ki. 6:30ff; Lam. 2:10) or a personal tragedy (Gen. 37:34; Job 16:15; Joel 1:8). For example, the elders of Jerusalem "cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth" because of God's wrath which had come upon their nation (Lam. 2:10). Also, when Jacob was told that his beloved son Joseph had been mauled by a wild animal, he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days" (Gen. 37:34). The wearing of sackcloth symbolized a person's passionate desire for mercy from God (Dan. 9:3). The shape of the saq was possibly similar to a loincloth or a beanbag, while its dark color signified lamentation, grief and sorrow. Isaiah compared metaphorically the dark color of a sackcloth with the darkness of Israel's sky on account of their sin (Isa. 50:3). The darkness of the sackcloth contrasted the colorful garments worn at festive times and celebrations. Therefore, the absence of color signified sadness, while the presence of color signified joy. A saq could also be used as a holder of items such as food (Gen. 42:25, 27, 35; Lev. 11:32; Josh. 9:4) or as a blanket for covering (2 Sam. 21:10; Joel 1:13). (Ibid)

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#### **QUESTION - [Who is the destroying angel?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The destroying angel is also commonly referred to as the [angel of death](#). On numerous occasions, God used angelic beings— [heavenly messengers](#) of some kind—to bring judgment to sinners on earth. Various Bible translations refer to this being as a "destroying angel." There is no clear biblical evidence that any one particular angel was given the title "destroying angel" or "angel of death." The most we can say is that the Bible's mentions of a "destroying angel" are references to a heavenly being or beings that came to destroy those under God's judgment.

The most famous visitation of a destroying angel was on the first [Passover](#). Egypt was about to experience the tenth and final plague, the death of the firstborn. Moses' instructions to the Hebrews contained this warning: "When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down" (Exodus 12:23). Some other translations have "Angel of Death" (GNT) or "death angel" (NLT) instead of "destroyer." This being is called "the destroyer of the firstborn" in Hebrews 11:28.

Interestingly, the original Hebrew text of Exodus 12:23 does not mention an "angel" at all. It simply says that "the destroyer" or "the spoiler" or "the one who causes damage" would slay the firstborn of Egypt. It could have been the Lord Himself who was the destroyer, although the possibility exists that God sent an angel to do the deed. Psalm 78 recounts the [plagues in Egypt](#) and sums them up as God's unleashing of "a band of destroying angels" (verse 49). The Hebrew word for "angel" is used here, but it is not limited to one particular angel.

A destroying angel—a heavenly messenger who brought destruction—was also sent by God to judge the Israelites because of David's sin in [numbering the people](#): "The Lord sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, 'Enough! Withdraw your hand.' The angel of the Lord was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, 'I have sinned'" (2 Samuel 24:15–17).

The [Assyrians](#) who attacked Jerusalem during King Hezekiah's reign also met what could be called an angel of death or a destroying angel: "That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies!" (2 Kings 19:32–35). In this passage and in 2 Samuel 24, the destroying angel is actually called "the angel of the Lord," which many scholars take to be a reference to Christ in a pre-incarnate appearance.

Another angel who brought death and destruction is mentioned in the judgment of King Herod (Acts 12:23). An angel with lethal intent, identified as "the angel of the Lord," bearing a sword gives a warning to Balaam (Numbers 22:31–33). And Jesus mentions



that angels will be involved in the end-times judgment of the wicked (Matthew 13:49–50). In none of these cases are the angels called “the angel of destruction” or “the angel of death.” We might refer to an angel who metes out God’s judgment as an “angel of destruction,” but it is not an explicitly biblical term. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**QUESTION - [Who is the angel of the Lord? See video.](#)**

**ANSWER** - The precise identity of the “angel of the Lord” is not given in the Bible. However, there are many important “clues” to his identity. There are Old and New Testament references to “angels of the Lord,” “an angel of the Lord,” and “the angel of the Lord.” It seems when the definite article “the” is used, it is specifying a unique being, separate from the other angels. The angel of the Lord speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and exercises the responsibilities of God (Genesis 16:7-12; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zechariah 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). In several of these appearances, those who saw the angel of the Lord feared for their lives because they had “seen the Lord.” Therefore, it is clear that in at least some instances, the angel of the Lord is a theophany, an appearance of God in physical form. The appearances of the angel of the Lord cease after the incarnation of Christ. Angels are mentioned numerous times in the New Testament, but “*the* angel of the Lord” is never mentioned in the New Testament after the birth of Christ. One possible difficulty is that the angel who appears to Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:24 is called “the” angel of the Lord. However, this angel is clearly the same one appearing in verse 20, which calls him “an angel.” Matthew is simply referencing the same angel he had just mentioned. There is also some confusion regarding Matthew 28:2, where the KJV says “the angel of the Lord” descended from heaven and rolled the stone away from Jesus’ tomb. It is important to note that the original Greek has no article in front of *angel*; it could be “the angel” or “an angel,” but the article must be supplied by the translators. Other translations besides the KJV say it was “an angel,” which is the better wording.

It is possible that appearances of the angel of the Lord were manifestations of Jesus before His incarnation. Jesus declared Himself to be existent “before Abraham” (John 8:58), so it is logical that He would be active and manifest in the world. Whatever the case, whether the angel of the Lord was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (Christophany) or an appearance of God the Father (theophany), it is highly likely that the phrase “the angel of the Lord” usually identifies a physical appearance of God. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**QUESTION - [What is the meaning of sackcloth and ashes?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Sackcloth and ashes were used in Old Testament times as a symbol of debasement, mourning, and/or [repentance](#). Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat’s hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear. The ashes signified desolation and ruin.

When someone died, the act of putting on sackcloth showed heartfelt sorrow for the loss of that person. We see an example of this when David mourned the death of Abner, the commander of Saul’s army (2 Samuel 3:31). Jacob also demonstrated his grief by wearing sackcloth when he thought his son Joseph had been killed (Genesis 37:34). These instances of mourning for the dead mention sackcloth but not ashes.

Ashes accompanied sackcloth in times of national disaster or repenting from sin. Esther 4:1, for instance, describes Mordecai tearing his clothes, putting on sackcloth and ashes, and walking out into the city “wailing loudly and bitterly.” This was Mordecai’s reaction to King Xerxes’ declaration giving the wicked Haman authority to destroy the Jews (see Esther 3:8–15). Mordecai was not the only one who grieved. “In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes” (Esther 4:3). The Jews responded to the devastating news concerning their race with sackcloth and ashes, showing their intense grief and distress.

Sackcloth and ashes were also used as a public sign of repentance and humility before God. When Jonah declared to the people of Nineveh that God was going to destroy them for their wickedness, everyone from the king on down responded with repentance, fasting, and sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:5–7). They even put sackcloth on their animals (verse 8). Their reasoning was, “Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish” (verse 9). This is interesting because the Bible never says that Jonah’s message included any mention of God’s mercy; but mercy is what they received. It’s clear that the Ninevites’ donning of sackcloth and ashes was not a meaningless show. God saw genuine change—a humble change of heart represented by the sackcloth and ashes—and it caused Him to “relent” and not bring about His plan to destroy them (Jonah 3:10).

Other people the Bible mentions wearing sackcloth include King Hezekiah (Isaiah 37:1), Eliakim (2 Kings 19:2), King Ahab (1 Kings 21:27), the elders of Jerusalem (Lamentations 2:10), Daniel (Daniel 9:3), and the two witness in Revelation 11:3.

Very simply, sackcloth and ashes were used as an outward sign of one’s inward condition. Such a symbol made one’s change of

heart visible and demonstrated the sincerity of one's grief and/or repentance. It was not the act of putting on sackcloth and ashes itself that moved God to intervene, but the humility that such an action demonstrated (see 1 Samuel 16:7). God's forgiveness in response to genuine repentance is celebrated by David's words: "You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy" (Psalm 30:11). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Chronicles 21:17 David said to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Your hand be against me and my father's household, but not against Your people that they should be plagued."**

- **Is it not I:** 1Ch 21:8 2Sa 24:17 Ps 51:4 Eze 16:63
- **these sheep:** 1Ki 22:17 Ps 44:11
- **what have:** 2Sa 24:1
- **let thine:** Ge 44:33 Ex 32:32,33 Joh 10:11,12 Ro 9:3 1Jn 3:16
- **on my father's:** Ex 20:5 2Sa 12:10 Ps 51:14 Isa 39:7,8
- **that they should:** Jos 22:18

### DAVID CONTINUES CONFESSING AND INTERCEDING FOR PEOPLE

**David said to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done?"** For the second time David confesses **"I...have sinned."** David accepts the blame for the sin and the loss of lives, much like he accepted the blame for the killing of the priests at Nob, declaring to the escaped priest Abiathar "I have brought about the death of every person in your father's household." (1Sa 22:19, 22+).

**I have sinned** 18x in 18v - Exod. 9:27; Exod. 10:16; Num. 22:34; Jos. 7:20; 1 Sam. 15:24; 1 Sam. 15:30; 1 Sam. 26:21; 2 Sam. 12:13; 2 Sam. 19:20; 2 Sam. 24:10; 1 Chr. 21:8; Job 33:27; Ps. 41:4; Ps. 51:4; Mic. 7:9; Matt. 27:4; Lk. 15:18; Lk. 15:21

Sin is really a selfish act. It's all about bringing ourselves pleasure, caring little about the toll it will take on someone else.

-- Alan Redpath

**O LORD my God, please let Your hand be against me and my father's household, but not against Your people that they should be plagued** - David is willing to die in place of his people, a faint picture of the willingness of the Son of David to die for the sins of the world.

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**Alan Redpath** in his online book [The Making of a Man of God \(Life of David\)](#) writes - Though the sword was back in its sheath, there were still 70,000 fresh graves in Israel, 70,000 grieving families whose lives were marked by David's compromise with pride. Every spiritual leader would do well to read this story once a year!

David's experience offers us three warnings.

1. To live an unaccountable life is to flirt with danger. Accountability is one of the things God uses to keep His people pure. We all need to be held accountable by someone. Had David listened to Joab he would never have numbered the people . . . or been the cause of such devastation. To ignore accountability is to flirt with danger.
2. To ignore sin's consequences is to reject God's truth. The Bible is filled with the reality of the consequences of sin. Sin is really a selfish act. It's all about bringing ourselves pleasure, caring little about the toll it will take on someone else.
3. To fail to take God seriously is to deny His lordship. In the midst of the fun and the delight of living—and no one believes in that more than I do—it is tempting to go too far and take the edge off His holiness. No need to take ourselves all that seriously . . . but when it comes to God, we need to take Him very seriously, not play games with Him. And when we do take Him seriously, He gives us the delight and satisfaction of a full life.

I believe if somehow we could bring David back from beyond and interview him today, one of his strongest pieces of advice would be directed toward those who are spiritual leaders . . . who have earned the respect of people . . . whom others follow and trust. If asked what one thing he would want us to remember, I think he would mention this segment from his own experience and warn against falling under the subtle spell of pride.

If a man as great and godly as David could foul up his life so near the end of his days, so can anyone else.  
That includes you. That includes me.  
God help us all.

1 Chronicles 21:18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

- **the angel:** 1Ch 21:11 Ac 8:26-40
- **that David:** 1Ch 21:15 2Sa 24:18 2Ch 3:1

Foundation Stone in Center of Dome of Rock  
Possibly Ornan's Threshing Floor

## ANGEL OF THE LORD COMMANDED AN ALTAR BE BUILT

Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite - The threshing floors were round, level plats of ground in the open air, usually in elevated places, as they are to this day in the East, where the corn was trodden out by oxen.

Who is the [Angel of the LORD](#) in this last section of chapter 21 (and in the parallel section in 2 Samuel 24)? Let's compare 2Ch 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on **Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David**, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." So when did the LORD appear to David on Mount Moriah. It would seem very logical that it was when the Angel of the LORD was standing at the threshing floor of Ornan (1Ch 21:16 - the Lxx has the "definite article" the before angel so it was not just "an" angel but was "the" angel!), so that David saw what must have been a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ or a Christophany (See [Angel of the LORD](#))

**MacArthur** - The **threshing floor of Ornan** is today believed to be the very flat rock under the Muslim mosque, the Dome of the Rock, inside the temple ground in Jerusalem. (SEE PICTURE ABOVE - Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

### Related Resources:

[What is the Dome of the Rock?](#) - Except from [Gotquestions.org](#) - The Dome of the Rock is a [Muslim](#) shrine that was built on the [Temple Mount](#) in Jerusalem in AD 691. The Dome of the Rock is part of a larger Muslim holy area that takes up a significant portion of what is also known as Mount Moriah in the heart of Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock gets its name from the fact that it is built over the highest part (the dome) of Mount Moriah which is where Jews and Christians believe Abraham was prepared to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22:1-14). **It is also considered to be the location of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, where David built an altar to the Lord (2 Samuel 24:18). It is also on or very near the site that Herod's Temple stood before it was destroyed in AD 70 by the Roman army. Some even believe the rock might have been the location of the Holy of Holies that was a part of the Jewish Temple where the Jewish High Priest would enter once a year to make atonement for Israel's sins.**

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### QUESTION - [What is a threshing floor?](#)

**ANSWER** - There are dozens of references to a "threshing floor" in the Bible, some literal and some symbolic. In biblical days there was no machinery, so after the harvest, the grain was separated from the straw and husks by beating it manually. First there had to be a flat surface that was smooth and hard, and this was known as the threshing floor. The process of threshing was performed generally by spreading the sheaves on the threshing floor and causing oxen and cattle to tread repeatedly over them, loosening the edible part of cereal grain (or other crop) from the scaly, inedible [chaff](#) that surrounds it (Deuteronomy 25:4; Isaiah 28:28). On occasion, flails or sticks were used for this purpose (Ruth 2:17; Isaiah 28:27). Then winnowing forks were used to throw the mixture into the air so the wind could blow away the chaff, leaving only the good grain on the floor.

Both the Old and New Testaments refer to the threshing floor as a symbol of judgment. Hosea prophesied that, because Israel has repeatedly turned from God to false idols, His judgment upon them would scatter them to the winds as the chaff from the threshing floor. "Therefore they will be like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears, like chaff swirling from a threshing floor, like smoke escaping through a window" (Hosea 13:3). Jeremiah pronounces a similar fate on the Babylonians who persecuted Israel,

likening their fate to the trampled sheaves on the threshing floor (Jeremiah 51:33).

John the Baptist uses the imagery of the threshing floor to describe the coming Messiah who would separate the true believers from the false. The true followers of Christ will be gathered into the kingdom of God just as grain is gathered into barns, while those who reject Christ will be burned up "with unquenchable fire," just as the worthless chaff is burned (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17). The wicked are often described as chaff that the wind drives away (Psalm 1:4; Isaiah 17:13). Similar imagery of the good grain being separated from the worthless weeds appears in the [parable of the wheat and the tares](#) (Matthew 13:36–43). [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Chronicles 21:19 So David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD.**

- **went up:** 2Ki 5:10-14 Joh 2:5 Ac 9:6

### DAVID OBEYS GOD'S COMMAND THROUGH GAD

**So** - For this reason. What reason?

**David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD**- David **went up** because the threshing floor was at an elevated height. Note this is an excellent definition of a prophet, as one who speaks in the Name of the LORD.

**1 Chronicles 21:20 Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons who were with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat.**

- **Ornan:** Jdg 6:11

### ORNAN SAW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

**Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons who were with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat** - That last sentence is like a parenthetical understatement in light of the writer just describing the sighting of and reaction to the angel of the LORD. Clearly the sight of the [Angel of the LORD](#) was a fearful site to finite men.

**1 Chronicles 21:21 As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor and prostrated himself before David with his face to the ground.**

- **bowed himself:** 1Sa 25:23 2Sa 24:18-20

**As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor and prostrated himself before David with his face to the ground** - Remember that Ornan is a Jebusite, but he is likely now a believer in Yahweh.

**1 Chronicles 21:22 Then David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of this threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; for the full price you shall give it to me, that the plague may be restrained from the people."**

- **Give,** 1Ki 21:2
- thou shalt grant: 2Sa 24:21
- that the plague: Nu 16:48 25:8

Map of Jerusalem in 1925,  
showing the location of Mount Moriah  
(Black octagonal = Dome of the Rock)

### DAVID INSISTS ON PURCHASING

## OF ARAUNAH'S FIELD & OXEN

Then David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of this threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; for the full price you shall give it to me, that the plague may be restrained from the people

1 Chronicles 21:23 Ornan said to David, "Take it for yourself; and let my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I will give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I will give it all."

- **Take it:** Ge 23:4-6 2Sa 24:22,23 Jer 32:8
- **the oxen:** 1Sa 6:14 1Ki 19:21 Isa 28:27,28

### ORNAN OFFERS IT ALL TO DAVID FREE OF CHARGE

Ornan said to David, "Take it for yourself; and let my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I will give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I will give it all

1 Chronicles 21:24 But King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing."

- **No:** Ge 14:23 23:13 De 16:16,17 Mal 1:12-14 Ro 12:17

### DAVID'S DESIRE IS TO PAY FULL PRICE

But King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing" - David wants to buy it so that it "cost" him something to offer sacrifices to God. Notice this implies he purchased the supplies (oxen, etc) from Araunah which he would use for the burnt offering. Remember the burnt offering was one that consumed everything in the offering.

Honor the LORD with your wealth  
and with the best part of everything your land produces.  
-- Pr 3:9NLT

**TSK note** - It is a maxim from heaven, "Honour the Lord with thy substance." He who has a religion that costs him nothing, has a religion that is worth nothing; nor will any man esteem the ordinances of God, if those ordinances cost him nothing. Had Araunah's noble offer been accepted, it would have been Araunah's sacrifice, not David's; nor would it have answered the end of turning away the displeasure of the Most High. It was David that sinned, not Araunah; therefore David must offer sacrifice.

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#### QUESTION - [What is the significance of Mount Moriah in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Mount Moriah in Old City Jerusalem is the site of numerous biblical acts of faith. It is also one of the most valuable pieces of real estate and one of the most hotly contested pieces of real estate on earth. This is a profoundly sacred area to Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Sitting atop Mount Moriah today is the Temple Mount, a 37-acre tract of land where the Jewish temple once stood. Several important Islamic holy sites are there now, including the Dome of the Rock – a Muslim shrine built thirteen hundred years ago – and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Mount Moriah's history begins in Genesis. In the twenty-second chapter, God commands Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you" (Genesis 22:2). The place God led Abraham was Mount Moriah. Abraham didn't fully understand what God was asking him to do in light of God's previous promise to establish an everlasting covenant with Isaac (Genesis 17:19); nonetheless, he trusted God and by faith offered Isaac as a sacrifice. Of course, God intervened and spared Isaac's life by providing a ram instead. Abraham thereafter called this place "The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided'" (Genesis 22:14). Because of Abraham's obedience on Mount Moriah, God told Abraham that his "descendants will take possession



of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me" (vv. 17, 18).

About a thousand years later at this very location, King David bought the threshing floor of [Araunah the Jebusite](#) and built an altar to the Lord so that a "plague may be held back from the people" (2 Samuel 24:18, 21). After David's death, his son King Solomon built a glorious temple on the same site. Solomon's temple lasted for over four hundred years until it was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar's armies in 587/586 B.C.

Seventy years later the temple was rebuilt on the same site by the Jews who returned to Jerusalem following their Babylon captivity. Around the first century, King Herod made a significant addition to this structure, which then became known as Herod's Temple. It was this temple that Jesus cleansed (John 2:15).

However, in A.D. 70, the Roman armies led by Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, once again destroyed the temple. All that remains of the Temple Mount of that era is a portion of a retaining wall known as the "Western Wall" or the "Wailing Wall." It has been a destination for pilgrims and a site of prayer for Jews for many centuries.

The God who first called Abraham to Mount Moriah still has plans for that place. The Bible indicates that a third temple will be built on or near the site of Solomon's temple (Daniel 9:27). This would seem to present a problem given the political obstacles that stand in the way: the religious activities on the Temple Mount are currently controlled by the Supreme Muslim Council (the Waqf). Yet nothing can put a wrinkle in God's sovereign plans. Thus, Muslim control of this area simply fulfills the prophecy of Luke 21:24 that "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

**1 Chronicles 21:25 So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site.**

- 2Sa 24:24,25



### THE PRICE PAID TO ORNAN

**So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site**- 600 shekels is about 15 pounds ~ \$350,000 in 2023. As noted in the parallel passage 2Sa 24:24 "**David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver**" So why is this price different? See [Archer's explanation](#) below. The NLT paraphrase is almost certainly incorrect for it says "600 pieces of gold in payment for the threshing floor." This larger number (600 shekels of gold versus 50 shekels of silver) almost certainly includes the land surrounding the relatively small threshing floor and thus is the entire Temple Mount area which would be the site of Solomon's Temple (See depiction above).

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**Gleason Archer - page 194 in [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - In 2 Samuel 24:24 it says that David "bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver." But in 1 Chronicles 21:25 it says David gave to Ornan for the place "600 shekels of gold by weight." How are these two statements to be reconciled?**



The record in 2 Samuel 24:24 refers to the immediate purchase price paid by King David to Araunah (or “Ornan,” as his name was alternatively spelled) for the two oxen and the wooden threshing cart being used by the Jebusite owner at the time David came up to see him. David’s exact words in v.21 are as follows: “To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD” (NASB). A threshing floor is generally an area of modest dimensions, not usually broader than thirty or forty feet. The market price for the two oxen and the cart would scarcely exceed the sum of fifty shekels of silver under the market values then prevailing.

In 1 Chronicles 21:25, however, we are told that David paid the much larger price of **six hundred shekels of gold**, which was possibly 180 times as much as fifty shekels of silver. But the Chronicles figure seems to include not merely the oxen and the threshing sledge but also the entire site. The Hebrew *wayyittén ... bammāqóm* (“**And he gave for the place**”) seems to be far more inclusive than the mere threshing floor. Neither in the fifth century B.C., nor in any other period in ancient history, would a threshing floor have cost anything like six hundred gold shekels. **Consequently we may safely conclude that Ornan possessed the entire area of Mount Moriah.**

About sixteen hundred feet long and on a commanding elevation, Mount Moriah was an extremely valuable piece of real estate, easily worth six hundred shekels of gold. The advisability of acquiring enough square footage for a temple site must have commended itself to King David, as he viewed the area of the threshing floor and realized how advantageous it would be to have the entire hilltop set apart for religious and governmental purposes. It was probably a somewhat later transaction with Ornan when David paid him the much larger price for the whole tract, and the Chronicler saw fit to record this entire transaction from the standpoint of its end result.

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**Norman Geisler - borrow [When critics ask : a popular handbook on Bible difficulties](#) - 2 SAMUEL 24:24—Why does this passage say that David paid Araunah 50 shekels of silver when elsewhere it says he paid 600 shekels of gold?**

**PROBLEM:** When David offered to buy the oxen and the threshing floor for a sacrifice and altar to the Lord, 2 Samuel states that he paid for them with 50 pieces of silver. However, according to 1 Chronicles 21:25, David gave Araunah 600 shekels of gold. Which is the correct record?

**SOLUTION:** Both accounts are correct. The passage in 2 Samuel 24 records David’s purchase of the oxen and the threshing floor. The passage in **1 Chronicles 21 states that David paid 600 shekels of gold “for the place”** (1Ch 21:25). The Hebrew phrase that is translated “the place” includes more than just the oxen and the threshing floor. Araunah must have possessed a large portion of land on Mount Moriah which would prove valuable to David in the future. (NOTE: "PLACE" OR "SITE" IN 1Ch 21:25 IN THE LXX = [topos](#) = place denoting a specific and defined area)

**1 Chronicles 21:26 Then David built an altar to the LORD there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called to the LORD and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.**

- **built:** Ex 20:24,25 24:4,5
- **and called:** 1Sa 7:8,9 Ps 51:15 91:15 99:9 Pr 15:8 Isa 65:24 Jer 33:3
- **by fire:** Lev 9:24 Jdg 6:21 Jdg 13:20 1Ki 18:24,38 2Ch 3:1 7:1

#### **Related Passages:**

Leviticus 9:24 Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Judges 6:21 Then the [Angel of the LORD](#) put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

Judges 13:20 For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the [Angel of the LORD](#) ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground.

Genesis 22:1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and **go to the land of Moriah**, (MEANS "seen of Jah") and offer him there as a burnt offering **on one of the mountains** of which I will tell you.”... 9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10

Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the [Angel of the LORD](#) called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." 13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place **The LORD Will Provide**, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided." **SEE STUDY OF [Jehovah Jireh: The LORD Will Provide](#)** 15 Then [Angel of the LORD](#) called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

2 Chronicles 3:2

## DAVID OFFERS SACRIFICES GOD'S FAVORABLE RESPONSE

**Then** - Marks progress in the narrative to the next event, the building of the altar.

**David built an altar to the LORD there** - David apparently wasted no time, for there was a sense of urgency in view of the plague looming over Jerusalem.

**and offered burnt offerings** (['olah](#); Lxx - [holokautoma](#)) **and peace offerings** ([selem/shelem](#)) - The **burnt offerings** were propitiatory sacrifices seeking forgiveness of his sin of numbering the people. The **peace offerings** for fellowship restored. The idea of peace is breaking down the walls of separation. Unconfessed (and unforgiven) sin breaks fellowship with God.

[GotQuestions.org](#) rightly says that "The ultimate fulfillment of the burnt offering is in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. His physical life was completely consumed, He ascended to God, and His covering (that is, His garment) was distributed to those who officiated over His sacrifice (Matthew 27:35). But most importantly, His sacrifice, once for all time, atoned for our sins and restored our relationship with God."

**And he called to the LORD and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering**- David cried to God and God answered from heaven with fire on the altar indicating the offering was acceptable to Yahweh.

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**Burnt offering** ([05930](#)) ['olah](#) from ['alah](#) = to ascend and thus the picture of *going up* in smoke) means to "ascend," literally to "go up in smoke" and refers to a whole burnt offering (one which *goes up* in smoke), which was voluntary, was understood as a sacrificial gift to God, resulting in a pleasing aroma acceptable to Jehovah (Lev 1:9). The presenter laid hands on the sacrifice which many feel signifies they saw the animal sacrifice as their substitute. The blood was sprinkled on the altar (Lev 1:6) When this offering was properly carried out (including a right heart attitude not just a "going through the motions," [which was not pleasing to God - Jer 6:20, Jer 7:21, 23, 24, see David - Ps 51:16-17+] not just an external "work," but an internal submission and obedience to Jehovah), they made atonement and were acceptable before Jehovah. The total burning indicated (or should have indicated) total consecration of the presenter's heart and soul and life to Jehovah.

As noted a key feature of ['olah](#) appears to be that among the Israelite sacrifices only ['olah](#) is **wholly burned**, rather than partially burned and eaten by the worshipers and/or the priest. Thus, the whole animal is brought up to the altar and the whole is offered as a gift (*minha*) in homage to Yahweh. Whole offering would be a better rendering in English to convey the theology. It is indeed burned, but the burning is essentially secondary to the giving of the whole creature to Yahweh.

**Burnt Offering** - ['olah](#) , "what ascends" in smoke to God, being wholly consumed to ashes. Part of every offering was burnt in the sacred fire, the symbol of God's presence; but this was wholly burnt, as a "whole burnt offering." ([Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#))

**Easton on Burnt Offering** - It was the most frequent form of sacrifice, and apparently the only one mentioned in the book of Genesis. Such were the sacrifices offered by Abel (Ge 4:3,4 , here called *Minhah*; i.e., "a gift"), Noah (Ge 8:20), Abraham (Ge 22:2,7,8,13 ), and by the Hebrews in Egypt (Ex 10:25). The law of Moses afterwards prescribed the occasions and the manner in which burnt sacrifices were to be offered. There were "the continual burnt offering" (Ex 29:38-42; Lev 6:9-13), "the burnt offering of every sabbath," which was double the daily one (Nu 28:9,10), "the burnt offering of every month" (Nu 28:11-15), the offerings at the

Passover (Nu 19:23), at Pentecost (Leviticus 23:16), the feast of Trumpets (Nu 23:23-25), and on the day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-34). ([Easton's Bible Dictionary](#))

**Burnt Offering** (Word Study on the Greek Word) ([3646](#))([holokautoma](#) from the verb [holokautóo](#) = to burn whole). This word is used only 3x in the NT (Mk 12:33, Heb 10:6-[note](#), Heb 10:8-[note](#)) **Holokautoma** refers to a wholly-consumed sacrifice, whole burnt offering, whole victim burned. **Holokautoma** gives us our English word "**holocaust**" (Webster says holocaust is derived from Gk holokauston, from neuter of holokaustos = burnt whole, from hol- = whole + kaustos = burnt). It is a whole burnt offering for the whole victim was burned. **BDAG** summary of **holokautoma** = (1) a cultic sacrifice in which the animal was entirely consumed by fire - whole burnt offering, literally **holocaust** (See [Jewish Holocaust](#)) (2) a person punished with death by fire because of personal conviction, whole burnt offering, holocaust figurative extension of (1) - used of [Polycarp \(who was martyred by burning at the stake\)](#)

**Peace offerings** ([08002](#)) [selem/shelem](#) is a noun which means fellowship offerings, thanksgiving offerings and all uses (except Amos 5:22) are in the plural form (**selamim**). The root Hebrew word conveys the idea of completion and fulfillment, of entering into a state of wholeness and unity, a restored relationship. The peace offerings were voluntary offerings (like burnt and grain offerings) given to God with thanks and praise.

**Carr** - Current understanding of the meaning of **šelem** follows three main lines of thought. First, **šelem** symbolizes the gift of **shalom**, i.e. the blessing of wholeness, prosperity, and the status of being at peace with God. This involves more than forgiveness of sin, in that fullness of life, prosperity, and peace with men is the expected result of **shalom** status. A second alternative is identified by de Vaux as "communion sacrifice," i.e. one in which there is a sharing of the sacrificial animal and the resultant fellowship around a meal. The **šēlāmīm**, then, were social occasions "**before**" (Hebrew = panim = face) the Lord never "**with**" the Lord (Dt 12:7, 18; 14:23, 26; 15:20). There is no sense of attaining mystical union with God through these sacrifices. Rather there is a sense of joyful sharing because of God's presence. Note too, that a quarter of the animal is shared with the priest (Lev 7:32). Thirdly, the fact that the **šelem** usually comes last in the lists of the offerings (though not in the description of Lev 1-5), has prompted some scholars to argue that this is a "concluding sacrifice." This derives **šelem** from the rare Piel meaning "to complete." If this sense is correct, the NT references to Christ our Peace (e.g. Eph 2:14) become more meaningful, as he is the final sacrifice for us (cf. Heb 9:27; Heb 10:12)." ([TWOT](#))

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#### QUESTION - [What is a burnt offering?](#)

**ANSWER** - The burnt offering is one of the oldest and most common offerings in history. It's entirely possible that Abel's offering in Genesis 4:4 was a burnt offering, although the first recorded instance is in Genesis 8:20 when Noah offers burnt offerings after the flood. God ordered Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, in a burnt offering in Genesis 22, and then provided a ram as a replacement. After suffering through nine of the ten plagues, Pharaoh decided to let the people go from bondage in Egypt, but his refusal to allow the Israelites to take their livestock with them in order to offer burnt offerings brought about the final plague that led to the Israelites' delivery (Exodus 10:24-29).

The Hebrew word for "burnt offering" actually means to "ascend," literally to "go up in smoke." The smoke from the sacrifice ascended to God, "a soothing aroma to the LORD" (Leviticus 1:9). Technically, any offering burned over an altar was a burnt offering, but in more specific terms, a burnt offering was the complete destruction of the animal (except for the hide) in an effort to renew the relationship between Holy God and sinful man. With the development of the law, God gave the Israelites specific instructions as to the types of burnt offerings and what they symbolized.

Leviticus 1 and Lev 6:8-13 describe the traditional burnt offering. The Israelites brought a bull, sheep, or goat, a male with no defect, and killed it at the entrance to the tabernacle. The animal's blood was drained, and the priest sprinkled blood around the altar. The animal was skinned and cut it into pieces, the intestines and legs washed, and the priest burned the pieces over the altar all night. The priest received the skin as a fee for his help. A turtledove or pigeon could also be sacrificed, although they weren't skinned.

A person could give a burnt offering at any time. It was a sacrifice of general atonement—an acknowledgement of the sin nature and a request for renewed relationship with God. God also set times for the priests to give a burnt offering for the benefit of the Israelites as a whole, although the animals required for each sacrifice varied:

- Every morning and evening (Exodus 29:38-42; Numbers 28:2)
- Each Sabbath (Numbers 28:9-10)
- The beginning of each month (Numbers 28:11)
- At Passover (Numbers 28:19)

- With the new grain/firstfruits offering at the Feast of Weeks (Numbers 28:27)
- At the Feast of Trumpets/Rosh Hashanah (Numbers 29:1)
- At the new moon (Numbers 29:6)

The ultimate fulfillment of the burnt offering is in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. His physical life was completely consumed, He ascended to God, and His covering (that is, His garment) was distributed to those who officiated over His sacrifice (Matthew 27:35). But most importantly, His sacrifice, once for all time, atoned for our sins and restored our relationship with God. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**1 Chronicles 21:27 The LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back in its sheath.**

- **the Lord:** 1Ch 21:15,16 2Sa 24:16 Ps 103:20 Heb 1:14
- **he put:** 1Ch 21:12,20 Jer 47:6 Eze 21:30 Mt 26:52 Joh 18:11

## EFFECT OF THE OFFERINGS SWORD IN SHEATH!

**The LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back in its sheath-** While it was too late to save the 70,000 who had lost their lives to the pestilence, it was not too late to spare the City of David and that is exactly what David's intercession and offering accomplished. As an aside is this God the Father speaking to God the Son, the Angel of God? I personally think it is in light of the other uses of angel in this section. But I would not be dogmatic.

**1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifice there.**

BGT 1 Chronicles 21:28 ν τ καρ κε ν ν τ δε ν τ ν Δαυιδ τι π κουσεν α τ κ ριος ν τ λ Ορνα το λεβουσα ου κα θυσ ασεν κε

LXE 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time when David saw that the Lord answered him in the threshing-floor of Orna the Jebusite, he also sacrificed there.

KJV 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.

NET 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD responded to him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.

CSB 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, David offered sacrifices there when he saw that the LORD answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

ESV 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.

NIV 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there.

NLT 1 Chronicles 21:28 When David saw that the LORD had answered his prayer, he offered sacrifices there at Araunah's threshing floor.

NRS 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made his sacrifices there.

NJB 1 Chronicles 21:28 Whereupon, seeing that Yahweh had answered him on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, David offered sacrifice there.

NAB 1 Chronicles 21:28 Once David saw that the LORD had heard him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he continued to offer sacrifices there.

YLT 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time when David seeth that Jehovah hath answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificeth there;

GWN 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifices there.

BBE 1 Chronicles 21:28 At that time, when David saw that the Lord had given him an answer on the grain-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made an offering there.

#### Related Passage:

1 Chronicles 16:39 He left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests **before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon,**

**At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifice there** - Heretofore David did not have an altar to offer sacrifices, but now he does.

**1 Chronicles 21:29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were in the high place at Gibeon at that time.**

- **the tabernacle:** Ex 40:1-38
- **Gibeon:** 1Ch 16:39 1Ki 3:4-15 2Ch 1:3,13

### EXPLANATION FOR WHY DAVID SACRIFICED AT THRESHING FLOOR

**For** - Term of explanation, explaining why David used the altar on the threshing floor to offer sacrifices in Jerusalem.

**the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering ([olah](#); Lxx - [holokautoma](#)) were in the high place ([bamah](#)) at Gibeon at that time** - The city of Gibeon (modern el-Jib) is six miles northwest of Jerusalem in the tribal territory of Benjamin. The phrase **which Moses had made** suggests this may have been the actual tabernacle that traveled through the wilderness. The formal altar for burnt offering was not in Jerusalem at the time but in nearby Gibeon. Presumably David still had the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. This high place was clearly a holy place that was sanctioned and sacred but sadly over time in the subsequent years after David died the Hebrews began to worship at non-sanctioned high places and committed spiritual adultery, sacrifices to gods who were not gods at all!

**High place ([01116](#)) [bamah](#)** Six activities seem to be related to high places -- burning of incense, sacrificing, eating of sacrificial meals, praying, prostitution, child sacrifice (cf. bama in the valley, Je7:31). The first use in Lev 26:30 is God's declaration to Israel "I will destroy your high places." In Dt 32:13 speaking of Jacob (Israel) He declared "He made him ride on the **high places** of the earth," so clearly some uses of bamah are not negative. In a similar use God says Israel "you will tread upon their (Israel's enemies') **high places**." Another positive use is Psalm 18:33 where David declared Jehovah "makes my feet like hinds' feet, And sets me upon my **high places**." (cp Hab 3:19 - [NET Note](#) = David "compares his agility in battle to the ability of a deer to negotiate rugged, high terrain without falling or being injured.", cp [Isa 58:14](#)) We see the effect of Israel's high places on Jehovah in Ps 78:58 = "For they provoked Him with their high places and aroused His jealousy with their graven images."

A sad phrase that is repeated again and again (speaking of Israel) is "the **high places** were not taken away" (1Ki 15:14, 2Chr 15:17 = King Asa but notice he did remove some of them - 2Chr 14:3, 5, 1Ki 22:43, 2Chr 20:33 = King Jehoshaphat, 2Ki 12:3 = King Jehoash, 2Ki 14:4 = King Amaziah, 2Ki 15:4 = King Azariah, 2Ki 15:35 = King Jotham son of Uzziah and look what his son did in 2Ki 16:1-4!, 2Chr 20:33). In many of these passages the context was of a king doing "spiritual house cleaning" so to speak and yet still failing to remove the high places. Isn't sin that way? We confess one or two sins but we have a little pet sin (better a "venomous viper") that we just don't have the heart to kill! God grant us spiritual eyes and hearts to learn from Israel's mistakes. Amen! Some kings like **Hezekiah** (1Ki 18:4, 2Chr 31:1, Isa 36:7) and **Josiah** (2Ki 23:4,8, 13, 15, 19-20, 2Chr 34:3 cp prophecy about **Josiah** 300 years earlier = [1Ki 13:2](#)) did destroy the high places, but in Hezekiah's case his own son **Manasseh** rebuilt them (2Ki 21:1-2, 3, 2Chr 33:3) and in Josiah's case the people rebuilt them!

We see the spiritual effect of high places on the people when King Jehoram (2Chr 21:5-10) "made **high places** in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot and led Judah astray." (2Chr 21:11)

One of the most incredible (and saddest) verses in the OT (in my opinion) is "Then Solomon built a **high place** for **Chemosh** the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon." (1Ki 11:7, cp 1Ki 3:3 = Solomon had "half a heart" for God!) This was too much for Jehovah and He declared that the 12 tribes would be



split as a result of Solomon's sin! Sin is costly. You may think you are getting away with it, but you are not! You may think you are the wisest man in the world (like Solomon) but you are really the most foolish (as Solomon was)! There was one high place that was not idolatrous (at least not at the outset) - "Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place which was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness." (2Chr 1:3, cp 1Chr 16:39-40, 21:29).

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**QUESTION - [What is the significance of high places in the Bible?](#)**

**ANSWER** - High places, very simply, were places of worship on elevated pieces of ground. High places were originally dedicated to idol worship (Numbers 33:52; Leviticus 26:30), especially among the Moabites (Isaiah 16:12). These shrines often included an altar and a sacred object such as a stone pillar or wooden pole in various shapes identified with the object of worship (animals, constellations, goddesses, and fertility deities). It seems that, at times, high places were set up in a spot that had been artificially elevated; 2 Kings 16:4 seems to differentiate the "high places" from the "hills."

The Israelites, forever turning away from God, practiced Molech worship and built high places for Baal (Jeremiah 32:35). Although Solomon built the temple of God in Jerusalem, he later established idolatrous high places for his foreign wives outside of Jerusalem and worshiped with them, causing him the loss of the kingdom (1 Kings 11:11). The people were still sacrificing at the pagan high places before the temple was built, and Solomon joined them. After the Lord appeared to him in a dream at Gibeon, the king returned to Jerusalem and sacrificed offerings; however, he continued to waver between the two places of worship.

Not all high places were dedicated to idol worship. They played a major role in Israelite worship, and the earliest biblical mention of a site of worship, later called a "high place," is found in Genesis 12:6–8 where Abram built altars to the Lord at Shechem and Hebron. Abraham built an altar in the region of Moriah and was willing to sacrifice his son there (Genesis 22:1–2). This site is traditionally believed to be the same high place where the temple of Jerusalem was built. Jacob set up a stone pillar to the Lord at Bethel (Genesis 28:18–19), and Moses met God on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1–3).

Joshua set up stone pillars after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 4:20) and considered this a high place of worship because the Israelites "came up from" the Jordan onto higher ground. The high places were visited regularly by the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 7:16). High places as sites of Canaanite idol worship (Judges 3:19) extended into the period of Elijah (1 Kings 18:16–40). God would name only one high place where sacrifice was authorized, and that was the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1). God commanded that all other high places be destroyed. King Josiah destroyed them in 2 Kings 22–23. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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**1 Chronicles 21:30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the angel of the LORD.**

BGT 1 Chronicles 21:30 κα ο κ δ νατο Δαυιδ το πορευθ ναι μπροσθεν ατο το ζητσαι τ ν θε ν τι κατ σπευσεν π προσ που τ ς ομφα ας γγ λου κυρ ου

LXE 1 Chronicles 21:30 And David could not go before it to enquire of God; for he hasted not because of the sword of the angel of the Lord.

KJV 1 Chronicles 21:30 But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

NET 1 Chronicles 21:30 But David could not go before it to seek God's will, for he was afraid of the sword of the LORD's messenger.

CSB 1 Chronicles 21:30 but David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was terrified of the sword of the LORD's angel.

ESV 1 Chronicles 21:30 but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

NIV 1 Chronicles 21:30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

NLT 1 Chronicles 21:30 But David was not able to go there to inquire of God, because he was terrified by the drawn sword of the angel of the LORD.

NRS 1 Chronicles 21:30 but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.



NJB 1 Chronicles 21:30 but David could not go there to consult God because he was terrified of the angel's sword.

NAB 1 Chronicles 21:30 But David could not go there to worship God, for he was fearful of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

YLT 1 Chronicles 21:30 and David is not able to go before it to seek God, for he hath been afraid because of the sword of the messenger of Jehovah.

GWN 1 Chronicles 21:30 However, David couldn't go there to consult God because he was frightened by the sword of the LORD's Messenger.

BBE 1 Chronicles 21:30 But David was not able to go before it to get directions from the Lord, so great was his fear of the sword of the angel of the Lord.

- **he was terrified by the sword** 1Ch 21:16 13:12 De 10:12 2Sa 6:9 Job 13:21 21:6 23:15 Ps 90:11 Ps 119:120 Jer 5:22 10:7 Heb 12:28,29 Rev 1:17 15:4

## **DAVID'S FEAR OF SWORD PRESENT SACRIFICES AT ALTAR**

**But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the [Angel of the LORD](#)** - The writer is referring to the Tabernacle at the high place at Gibeon which he did not worship before because he was fearful.