

2 Samuel 21

August 18, 2021

This chapter ends with a stirring account of David's men fighting against a family of giants. First, David's nephew Abishai takes over from the weary David and slays a giant named Ishbi-Benob. Then Sibbecai, one of the mighty men, kills Saph. Elhanan's opponent is named Goliath here but we can surmise from 1 Chronicles 20:5 that he is actually Lahmi, Goliath's brother. Then Jonathan dispatches the unnamed monstrosity with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

Scripture mentions at least three races of giants. The **Nephilim** were born from unions between human women and the "sons of God" (probably fallen angels). See Genesis 6. Those of that generation perished in the flood but others appeared later in the race of **Anakim** – the giants who terrified the spies sent to Canaan in Numbers 13.

Another class of giants was the **Rephaim**. Their most famous representative was Og, king of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:11). His bed was nine cubits long, or

about thirteen feet. We also read of the valley of Rephaim southwest of Jerusalem, significantly the site of many battles with the Philistines.

The height of these giants is impressive but not outrageous. The famous Goliath, at six cubits or nine feet tall, was only an inch higher than the tallest known modern man. These are not comic book characters towering over houses with superhuman strength. Remember, Goliath challenged the Israelite soldiers to single combat. He didn't mow down whole armies with his sword. The Bible gives a sober account of a genetic anomaly, within a limited population group, that eventually dies out as bloodlines mix down through the generations. It has the ring of truth, not sensationalism.

Notes

21:1 There is no other account of Saul's attacks on the Gibeonites.

21:8, 19, 21 Names here can be confusing. There is more than one Mephibosheth, Barzillai, Goliath, and Jonathan.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. Read Joshua 9:3-27. Why were the Gibeonites protected in Israel?

2. The covenant Joshua made with the Gibeonites was based on deception. Does that make it less binding?

