

## King David and his Evil Nature

Written by Administrator

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King David is said to have been after Yahweh's own heart. When King Saul was rejected, Yahweh chose David to be the king. This is what Samuel said to Saul:

"But now your kingdom shall not continue: Yahweh has sought him a man after his own heart, and Yahweh has appointed him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept that which Yahweh commanded you."

In Acts 13:22 Paul quotes Yahweh who said:

"I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will."

Then in 1 Kings 14:8 Yahweh states to King Jeroboam the following:

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"...you have not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which is right in my eyes."

In 1 Kings 15:1-5 we read:

"Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat began Abijam to reign over Judah. Three years reigned he in Jerusalem...and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as the heart of David his father...because David did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite."

And, finally, in Hebrews 11:32 King David is listed as a hero of faith who, among others, should be our great example. In 1 Kings 15:5 it is acknowledged that David did wrong concerning the matter of Uriah the Hittite. Briefly I want to explain to the reader just what did David do to Uriah. At the time when the kings went to fight wars, David stayed in his palace and from the terrace of his palace he saw a woman bathing. He enquired who she was and they told him that she was the wife of Uriah. David lusted after her and gave an order to bring her to him.

David slept with her and she became pregnant. We are not told whether the wife of Uriah was compelled or whether she willingly betrayed her husband. However, since she later mourned for

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her husband and David had to wait until she was comforted, it is likely that she did not willingly consent. When David discovered that she was pregnant he devised a scheme by which to hide his deed. He recalled Uriah from war and made him a dinner during which he made him drunk. He told him to go home to his wife. Uriah refused to and instead slept elsewhere. David was hoping that Uriah would go home and sleep with Bathsheba and that way Uriah would have thought that the child was his. When his scheme has failed, he wrote a letter to his commanding officer and sent it with Uriah.

Uriah did not realize that he was carrying his death sentence. David charged his commanding officer to place Uriah in the front lines so that he would be killed in a battle and so that he could marry Bathsheba and thus conceal his crime. The commanding officer did what David commanded him. The battle was fierce and the Israelites suffered heavy losses. Uriah was also killed. When the commanding officer sent a report to David by a messenger of the battle, anticipating David's anger for the loss, he told the messenger to right away add: your officer Uriah is also dead. David calmly replied:

"so it is in battle, you never know who gets killed."

When Bathsheba heard that her husband Uriah was dead she mourned for him. After the period of mourning David had her brought to his palace and she became his wife. The whole episode is narrated in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. David did not only commit adultery and murder but he also broke the command of the law which prohibited the king to multiply wives. David added Bathsheba to his already sizeable harem.

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The law commanded that if a man commits adultery or that if he sheds innocent blood he must be put to death. However, Yahweh ignored his law and sent the prophet Nathan to tell David that he will not die for his crimes but that instead the son born from the union with Bathsheba would die. No wonder Yahweh loved David and said that he is after his own heart since he himself committed great atrocities. [See article: The Evil Side of Yahweh].

But this was not the only crime of David, as the redactor of the book of Kings claims, for David's life was replete with crimes and atrocities. David was the son in law of King Saul for he married his younger daughter Michal. In course of time things did not go well between them for she was displeased when he danced naked in front of the Ark of the Covenant. Yahweh did not think that David acted wrongly but rather he punished Michal by causing her to be barren and unable to conceive. Later David and Michal split and she married another man. Years later, when Ishbaal accused Abner his commander of sleeping with his father's concubine, he got angry and sent a message to David that he will help him become king over all Israel. David gave him a condition. He had to bring back Michal with him. He also told Ishbaal that he must return Michal to him for which he killed 200 men. David already had many wives but he wanted Michal back. Ishbaal by force took Michal and all the way the husband of Michal was following and crying and begging not to take her away from him. David however took her back by force. The story is told in

2 Samuel 3.

King David by nature of his character was an evil person. In 2 Samuel 25 we read of Nabal who was a rich man but stingy. David sent some of his men to ask a provision from him for his men. Nabal refused to send anything. David burned with rage and swore that by the next morning he would kill everyone in his house - even the dog "who pisseth on the wall." David commanded his 400 men to take their swords and to come with him to kill everyone that belonged to Nabal.

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In the meantime the wife of Nabal, Abigail, secretly from her husband took a provision and was on her way to take it to David. When David met her he told her that if she had not come he would have surely killed everyone that belonged to Nabal - including the one "who pisseth on the wall. [KJV]. The Hebrew idiom simply means that everything Nabal had would have been destroyed, even his dog. Nabal died from a stroke several days later and David married his wife Abigail. This story clearly reveals the evil nature of David who was willing to murder even the servants, children and the wife of Nabal who had nothing to do with the refusal of Nabal to help David and his men.

Later as David was pursued by King Saul's men, he went to the land of the Philistines for protection. King Achish gave him a town called Ziklag to live in with his 600 warriors. He became a trusted man and King Achish was going to make him personal bodyguard. But all through the sixteen months that David enjoyed the hospitality of the Philistines he was raiding the towns in the region, lying to the king of Achish that the raids were on the southern part of Judah. I quote only the verses which depict his crimes and barbaric deeds:

"When David attacked a region, he would leave no man or woman alive; he would take flocks, herds, asses, camels, and clothing...David would leave no man or woman alive to be brought to Gath; for he thought, they might tell about us...Such was his practice as long as he stayed in the territory of the Philistines" [1 Samuel 27:9, 11].

That is how he repaid the hospitality of the king of Gath. The man after Yahweh's own heart who was to do only what was pleasing to Yahweh was a cold blooded murderer and a master butcher. There is another passage in the Bible which tells us just how far David was prepared to go with his crimes and evil nature. When the capital city of the Ammonites - the blood brothers of the Israelites - was defeated and captured, David horribly tortured and tormented the

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inhabitants thereof. And not only of the capital city, but also of other towns of the same people.

In 2 Samuel 12:31 we are told:

"And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln; and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon" [KJV].

In 1 Chronicles 20:3 this version is given of the same events:

"And he brought out the people that were in it, and cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon" [KJV].

Good News Bible, as some other modern versions, corrupt the text as follows:

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"and put its people to work with saws, iron hoes, and iron axes, and forced them to work at making bricks."

In a footnote however, it admits - as some other new versions which corrupted the text - that the Hebrew and the Septuagint read differently. That is, that he actually brutally and inhumanely dealt with them and even burned them alive in the brick ovens. The Hebrew idiom " pass through the fire" always meant to burn alive in the fire. It was prohibited for example to pass children through the fire to the god Moloch. It meant that it was prohibited for them to be burned as a sacrifice.

The Greek Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate and all English versions prior to 1952 correctly translate the text which clearly shows that David cut them brutally and burned them alive - a thing that even Nazis did not do. They first gassed their victims and then burned them. After conquering Rabbah he looted the city and took the treasured golden crown decorated with jewels which weighed about 40 kilos and placed it on his own head. The crown belonged to either the king of Rabbah or else the idol god of Molech - depends how we understand the text.

Lot was the ancestor of the Ammonites and the Moabites and therefore they were relatives of the Israelites. Before he cruelly tortured the inhabitants of Ammon, earlier when he defeated the Moabites he forced the prisoners to lay on the ground and he killed two out of every three and the rest became his subjects and paid tribute. When he defeated the Syrian state of Zobah he took 1700 horses for his chariots and the rest of horses he crippled [2 Samuel 8:2-4]. The people became his subjects and paid tribute.

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When King Saul died, the kingdom was split. David and Ishbaal, the son of Saul became rivals and fought a long and bitter war. Eventually David won:

"Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul became weaker and impoverished" [2 Samuel 3:1].

There were two men, Baana and Rechab, who killed Ishbaal, the king and son of Saul. They went to David and took the dead man's head to David and told him that his enemy is dead. David commanded that they be killed and that their feet and hands be cut off and that their bodies be hung on the hill in Hebron [Aramaic Peshitta]. According to the Masoretic Text they were hung near the pool in Hebron. This was not only the cruel deed of David but it also shows that he violated the command of Deuteronomy which states that any person after being killed and hung on a tree must be buried the same day. David did not care for the law as he also multiplied his riches, horses and harem, violating the commands of Deuteronomy 17:16-17.

King David had many concubines, besides his wives. When Absalom, the son of David, rebelled against his father and the revolution broke out, his councilor advised him to sleep with some of David's wives so that the people would know that he really means business and in fact to dethrone his wicked father. So Absalom slept with David's ten concubines. In David's eyes they were defiled so he never again slept with them nor did he allow them to marry someone else. He isolated them and confined them for life. They were forced to live as widows all their lives.

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That was the character of David. That he left ten concubines to take care of the palace is stated in 2 Samuel 15:16. That Absalom slept with them we are told in 2 Samuel 16:22. Finally, after Absalom was killed and the rebellion crushed, David returned to his palace in Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel 20:3 we read:

"David had left ten of his concubines in Jerusalem to care for the palace. But when he returned, he confined them in another house and appointed guards to guard them...he never slept with any of them again. They had to live there for the rest of their lives as widows."

David had a harem which consisted of many wives and concubines as we are told in the books of Samuel and Chronicles. Thus he continued to gratify his sexual desires but the innocent women he imprisoned for life. Why not allow them to marry another? Because of his jealous and evil nature.

There was a man named Shimei who was from the tribe of Benjamin. He was a relative of King Saul. He was upset at David because he had taken the kingdom from Saul's son Ishbaal and because he had killed many of King Saul's relatives. He cursed David calling him a bloodthirsty man. He was throwing stones and dust towards David and his bodyguards. One of David's officers wanted to cut his head off but David told him not to because David believed that it was Yahweh himself who commanded Shimei to curse him. He also said that if his own son Absalom wanted to kill him how much more a relative of King Saul [2 Samuel 16:5-13].

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Later when Absalom was killed and when the Jews defeated Israel, Shimei was the first to come to David and to apologize for what he had done. David under oath gave him his word that he would not be put to death for what he had done [2 Samuel 19:23]. But many years later - on his deathbed - David commanded his son Solomon to find a way to kill Shimei for cursing him many years earlier. Several years later Solomon did find a way and he killed Shimei [2 Kings 2:36-46]. This shows the vindictive and revengeful nature of David's character. Even though David said that it was Yahweh who commanded Shimei to curse him and even though Shimei later begged David for forgiveness, David could not forget it even though he gave his word under oath. He was indeed a bloodthirsty man - just as Shimei did say.

There is another way to show that David was a murderer and guilty of death. The law of which we read in the books of Moses sternly prohibited anyone to kill an animal and to offer a sacrifice anywhere but on the altar which stood in front of the Tabernacle. Of this we read in Leviticus 17:1-8 the following:

"Yahweh said to Moses to tell Aaron, his sons, and everyone else in Israel: Whenever you kill any of your cattle, sheep, or goats as sacrifices to me, you must do it at the entrance to the Tabernacle. If you don't, you will be guilty of bloodshed and you will be cut off from the community of Israel. And so, when you sacrifice an animal to ask my blessing, it must be done in front of the Tabernacle. Then a priest can splash its blood against the bronze altar and send its fat up in smoke with a smell that pleases me...Remember! No one in Israel, including foreigners, is to offer a sacrifice anywhere except at the entrance of the Tabernacle. If you do, you will be cut off from my people."

"Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place Yahweh will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you" [Deuteronomy 12:13-14].

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This law was so important to the early Israelites that they were prepared to fight a war with the Reubenites and the tribes of Gad and Manasseh over it. In Joshua 22:9-34 we read:

" So the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh left the Israelites at Shiloh in Canaan to return to Gilead, their own land, which they had acquired in accordance with the command of the Lord through Moses. When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side,

the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them.

So the Israelites sent Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, to the land of Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

With him they sent ten of the chief men, one from each of the tribes of Israel, each the head of a family division among the Israelite clans.

When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them:

"The whole assembly of the

Lord

says: 'How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the

Lord

and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now?

Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the

Lord

!

And are you now turning away from the

Lord

? "If you rebel against the

Lord

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today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel.

If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the

Lord

's land, where the

Lord

's tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the

Lord

or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the

Lord

our God.

When Achan son of Zerah was unfaithful in regard to the devoted things, did not wrath come on the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.”

Then Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh replied to the heads of the clans of Israel: “The

he Mighty One, God, the

Lord

! The Mighty One, God, the

Lord

! He knows! And let Israel know! If this has been in rebellion or disobedience to the

Lord

, do not spare us this day.

If we have built our own altar to turn away from the

Lord

and to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, or to sacrifice fellowship offerings on it, may the

Lord

himself call us to account.

“No! We did it for fear that someday your descendants might say to ours, ‘What do you have to

do with the

Lord

, the God of Israel?

The

Lord

has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you—you Reubenites and Gadites! You have

no share in the

Lord

.’ So your descendants might cause ours to stop fearing the

Lord

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“That is why we said, ‘Let us get ready and build an altar—but not for burnt offerings or sacrifices.’ On the contrary, it is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the Lord at his sanctuary with our burnt offerings, sacrifices and fellowship offerings. Then in the future your descendants will not be able to say to ours, ‘You have no share in the Lord.’ “And we said, ‘If they ever say this to us, or to our descendants, we will answer: Look at the replica of the Lord’s altar, which our ancestors built, not for burnt offerings and sacrifices, but as a witness between us and you.’

“Far be it from us to rebel against the Lord and turn away from him today by building an altar for burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices, other than the altar of the Lord our God that stands before his tabernacle.”

When Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the community—the heads of the clans of the Israelites—heard what Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had to say, they were pleased.

And Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, said to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, “Today we know that the Lord is with us, because you have not been unfaithful to the Lord in this matter. Now you have rescued the Israelites from the Lord’s hand.”

Then Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, and the leaders returned to Canaan from their meeting with the Reubenites and Gadites in Gilead and reported to the Israelites. They were glad to hear the report and praised God. And they talked no more about going to war against them to devastate the country where the Reubenites and the Gadites lived.

And the Reubenites and the Gadites gave the altar this name: A Witness Between Us—that the Lord is God.”

Clearly no sacrifices and burnt offerings were permitted anywhere but on the altar which stood in front of the Tabernacle Moses made in the wilderness. King David ignored this altar and the

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Tabernacle and he built his own altar in Jerusalem and subtly established Jerusalem as the chosen city. I have dealt with this fully in my article 'The Chosen City' so in here I will only demonstrate how David was guilty of bloodshed and how he broke the law given in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

From the days of Joshua until the day the temple was built in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the desert and its altar were always in the territory of Joseph - that is, either in Ephraim or Manasseh. It was in Shechem, then Shiloh, then Nob, and finally it was situated on a high place in Gibeon.

Here is how David accomplished his scheme and actually established Jerusalem as the chosen city and Mount Moriah as the only place where it was later legal to offer sacrifices. After fortifying Jerusalem and firmly establishing himself on the throne of Judah, he immediately significantly increased already his sizeable harem and constructed his luxurious palace. He also constructed a tent in which he purposed to place the Ark of the Covenant. 1 Chronicles 15:1-3 gives us the following information:

“And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the Ark of God, and pitched for it a tent...And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of Yahweh unto his place which he had prepared for it.”

Then in 1 Chronicles 16:1-3 we are told:

“So they brought the Ark of God. and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh. And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine.”

David tried to impress the Israelites and bribe them with his gift so that they would not rebel or oppose his wicked and illegal scheme. But more importantly, by placing the Ark of the Covenant in the tent at the place of his own choosing and by presenting sacrifices at that same place, David violated two most basic and fundamental commands of the Mosaic Law. According to the text of Exodus - Moses was shown a pattern of the sanctuary of Yahweh. He was instructed to

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erect the Tabernacle which was to consist of two apartments: The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. He was also told to make an altar of acacia wood and overlay it with bronze. On this altar all the sacrificial rites were to be performed. On the golden altar which he was also instructed to make, the incense was to be burned perpetually.

He was also to make a golden lampstand [The Menorah], as well as all sort of utensils required for the sacrificial cult. Moses also constructed the most holy object - Ark of the Covenant - which was overlaid with gold and whose lead was made of pure solid gold. This Ark was to rest between two cherubim which Moses was to make of pure gold. This Ark was called the throne of Yahweh and the mercy seat. It was believed that this was the very dwelling of Yahweh. The cherubim creatures were animals resembling bulls - with enormous outstretched wings and a human face.

On the Day of Atonement - 10th of the Jewish seventh month - the High Priest was to enter the Most Holy Place and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat in order to atone for the sin of his nation. Each day - morning and evening - the priests were to present a lamb as a perpetual sacrifice. This rite became known as *the daily sacrifice*. The Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month in the second year after exodus from Egypt [Exodus 40:2,17]. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Most Holy Place - and hid by the veil [Exodus 40:3,21]. The golden altar of incense, the shewbread table and the lampstand were placed in the Holy Place [Exodus 40:4-5]. The altar for burnt offerings and sacrifices was placed near the entrance of the Tabernacle [Exodus 40:6].

By placing the Ark of the Covenant in his own tent and at the place of his own choosing - and not the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the desert, David was guilty of a great sin. And by presenting sacrifices on his own altar in the place of his own choosing and not in front of the Tabernacle and the altar which Moses constructed, David was guilty of bloodshed, that is, murder.

David and his priestly conspirators knew that Jerusalem was not the chosen place. They knew that it would take some time before they can cause the people to abandon the Tabernacle and numerous other shrines and eventually worship exclusively and solely at Mount Moriah, in Jerusalem, the very place David himself chose and selected. That is exactly why he and his priests allowed the worship to continue in Gibeon at the Tent of Meeting while slowly and gradually they were establishing Jerusalem as the central shrine and the only place of worship. 1 Chronicles 21:25-29 explicitly states that while David was worshipping and sacrificing on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem - in the new place of his own choosing - the Tabernacle Moses constructed - was actually situated in Gibeon:

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“So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place. And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings...for the tabernacle of the LORD and the altar of the burnt offering, which Moses had made in the wilderness, were at time at the high place in Gibeon.”

After David transferred the Ark of the Covenant and placed it in the tent of his own making and choosing, and after he constructed his own altar for sacrifices and burnt offerings, in the place of his own choosing - Jerusalem - he could not ignore Gibeon and cause the people to ignore it and right away worship solely and exclusively in Jerusalem. 1 Chronicles 16:1,4,37,39-40 says that David did the following:

“So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of tabernacle that David erected for it. Then they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God...and he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel...So he left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark regularly, as every day's work required...and Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD at the high place that was in Gibeon, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and to do according to all that was written in the Law of the LORD which he commanded Israel.”

In effect David recognized two distinct places of worship and altars - although he himself never again worshipped in Gibeon but only on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. He did so in direct violation of Deuteronomy 12 and 14 and Leviticus 17. It was in fact at this very high place in Gibeon that Solomon himself worshipped and offered sacrifices. It was at this very place and not Jerusalem where Yahweh actually appeared to Solomon. Please note 2 Chronicles 1:3-7:

“And Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' houses. Then Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was in Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there, which Moses the servant of Yahweh had made in the wilderness. But David had brought up the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim to the place David had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. Now the bronze altar that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of Yahweh; Solomon and the congregation sought him there. And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before Yahweh, which was at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. On that night God

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appeared to Solomon, and said, ask! What shall I give you?"

The Tabernacle in Gibeon could not be ignored. It was too important a place to be ignored and suppressed overnight. Even though after David built his altar on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem and instructed the people that the new place was thenceforth the place of sacrifice and worship, the people still continued to worship at Gibeon. 1 Chronicles 22:1 clearly shows that after David finished his offerings and ceremonies on the new altar he built on Mount Moriah, he told the people that this new place was the "House of Yahweh" and Israel's new altar for burnt offerings:

"Then David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

Most people however ignored this new place of David's choosing and continued to worship at the various local shrines in Israel and observed their annual festivals at the central shrine in Israel. Even after Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah most Israelites still worshipped and sacrificed at their local shrines which were located on high places. So David violated the commands concerning the sacrifices and burnt offerings and he ignored the altar and the Tabernacle which Moses made in the wilderness which was at that time situated on the high place of Gibeon. Thus David was guilty of bloodshed and should have been cut off from the community of Israel.

But David was not only a murderer and a bloodthirsty man but he was also an idolater, violating the very basic and fundamental command of the law - namely not to have any graven image or likeness of any god.

King David had both teraphim and ephod - images which were prohibited by the law. Teraphim or the household gods could be seen in almost every home of a Jew or an Israelite throughout their recorded history. Laban is the first person mentioned in the Bible who possessed teraphim. These figurines of the gods were actually stolen by Rachel. In 2 Kings 23:24 we read that Josiah removed all the teraphim he could find in Judah and Jerusalem:

"Moreover, Josiah removed...the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem."

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This text indisputably proves that the Jews possessed “teraphim” or the household gods in their homes. Not only the Baal worshippers but also those who knew Yahweh and served Yahweh also had “teraphim” in their homes. Laban and his father Bethuel knew Yahweh and obviously held him in a high esteem. When the servant of Abraham arrived in Padan Aram in order to find a wife for Isaac, Laban met him at the spring. He greeted him and said: “Come in, blessed of Yahweh [Genesis 24:31].”

Laban spoke in the name of Yahweh before the servant ever mentioned it. When the servant told Laban and Bethuel of his mission they replied: “This is from Yahweh; it is not in our power to say yes or no to you. Rebekah is there before you. Take her and go; and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as Yahweh has decreed [Genesis 24:50-51].” When Laban made a covenant with Jacob he spoke in the name of Yahweh saying: “May Yahweh watch between you and me” [Genesis 31:49]. Laban and his father Bethuel knew Yahweh and they worshipped him. But at the same time Laban possessed “teraphim.” As Jacob was leaving Padan Aram, Rachel stole these “teraphim” from her father’s house. Genesis 31:19 says:

“Meanwhile Laban had gone to shear sheep, and Rachel stole her father’s household idols.”

Jacob was not aware of this [Genesis 31:31]. When Laban eventually caught up with Jacob he asked him why did he steal his gods. Genesis 31:30 says:

“Very well, you had to leave because you were longing for your father’s house; but why did you steal my Gods?”

These gods were “teraphim” and they could be found not only in the houses of the pagans but also of those who knew and served Yahweh. There was a man called Micah who lived in the territory of Ephraim. Both he and his mother were zealous worshippers of Yahweh. But at the same time they had “teraphim” and “ephod” in their home which was at the same time a shrine also. In Judges 17:1-13 we read:

“There was a man named Micah, who lived in the hill country of Ephraim. He told his mother, when someone stole those eleven hundred pieces of silver from you, you put a curse on that

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robber. I heard you do it. Look, I have the money. I am the one who took it. His mother said, May Yahweh bless you, my son! He gave the money back to his mother, and she said, to keep the curse from falling on my son, I myself am solemnly dedicating the silver to Yahweh. It will be used to make a wooden idol covered with silver. So now I will give the pieces of silver back to you. Then he gave them back to his mother. She took two hundred of the pieces of silver and gave them to a metalworker, who made an idol, carving it from wood and covering it with the silver. It was placed in Micah's house. This man Micah had his own place of worship. He made some idols [teraphim] and an ephod, and appointed one of his sons as his priest...At that same time there was a young Levite who had been living in the town of Bethlehem in Judah. He left Bethlehem to find another place to live. While he was travelling, he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. Micah asked him, where do you come from? He answered, I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I am looking for a place to live. Micah said, stay with me. Be my adviser and priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, some clothes, and your food. The young Levite agreed to stay with Micah and became like a son to him. Micah appointed him as his priest, and he lived in Micah's home. Micah said, now that I have a Levite as my priest, I know that Yahweh will make things go well for me."

Micah and his mother were worshippers of Yahweh. So was also this young Levite. But they also used "teraphim" in their worship and an "ephod" - that is, an image or figurine of Yahweh. Then in chapter 18 we are told how the tribe of Dan took these "teraphim" from Micah's house and how they also took the young priest with them. They set up these "teraphim" in the city of Laish. This young Levite was actually a grandson of Moses:

"The Danites set up the idol to be worshipped, and Jonathan, the son of Gershon and grandson of Moses, served as a priest for the Danites, and his descendants served as their priests until the people were taken away into exile. Micah's idol remained there as long as the Tent where God was worshipped remained at Shiloh" [Judges 18:30-31].

The "teraphim" or the household gods played a role in everyday worship of those who worshipped and served Yahweh. The "ephod" - the figurine or image of Yahweh also played a great role even in the life of David. There was such an image in the Sanctuary at Nob. Goliath's sword, wrapped in a cloth, was placed behind it. When King Saul butchered the priests at Nob, Abiathar managed to escape. He took this image of Yahweh with him and joined David and his men who were on the run from King Saul. Whenever David needed an advise he consulted the "ephod" - the figurine of Yahweh. 1 Samuel 23:9-13 says:

"When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, bring the ephod. David said, O Yahweh, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans

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to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come, as your servant has heard? O Yahweh, God of Israel, tell your servant. And Yahweh said, He will. Again David asked, will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul? And Yahweh said, they will. So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place.”

On another occasion David consulted this figurine of Yahweh. 1 Samuel 30:7-8 says:

“Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, bring me the ephod. Abiathar brought it to him, and David enquired of Yahweh, shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them? Pursue them, he answered. You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue.”

That these images and idols were actually consulted is plain from the text in Zechariah 10:2 which says:

“For the idols have spoken vanity” [KJV].

In the Centre Reference of the King James Bible we are told that the word “idols” is translated from the Hebrew word “teraphim.” The New American Bible reads:

“For the teraphim speak nonsense.”

The New American Standard Bible reads:

“For the teraphim speak iniquity.”

The Rotherham Emphasized Bible reads:

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“For the household gods have spoken vanity.”

In the footnote of The New American Bible, word “teraphim” we read:

“household idols, used for divination.”

Consulting “ephods” and “teraphim” was akin to a Chaldean practice. In Ezekiel 21:26 we read:

“For at the fork where two roads divide stands the king of Babylon, divining, he has shaken the arrows, inquired of the teraphim, inspected the liver.”

A similar “ephod” or an image of Yahweh that David used was also made by Gideon. Gideon was a stern worshipper of Yahweh. When the people proposed that either he or one of his sons rule as king over them he replied that only Yahweh would be their ruler. Then he took gold from the people and made an “ephod” - the image of Yahweh - and set it to be worshipped [Judges 8:24-27]. Ephods and teraphim were used in the worship of Yahweh across the land of Judah. Josiah removed them from the Jewish households after the forged Book of the Law was discovered in the temple.

But David did not only use an “ephod” in order to get his answers when needed. David also had “teraphim” - the household gods in his own home. Easton’s Bible Dictionary, art. Teraphim, says:

“givers of prosperity, idols in human shape, large or small, analogous to the images of ancestors which were revered by the Romans. In order to deceive the guards sent by Saul to seize David, Michal his wife prepared one of the household teraphim, putting on it the goat’s hair cap worn by sleepers and invalids, and laid it in bed, covering it with a mantle. She pointed it out to the soldiers, and alleged that David was confined to his bed by a sudden illness [1 Samuel 19:13-16]. Thus she gained time for David’s escape. It seems strange to read of the teraphim, images of ancestors, preserved for superstitious purposes, being in the house of

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David.”

David did not only have “teraphim” in his own house but in some way he was connected with the cult of Baal since his son was named after Baal: Baaliada, whose name the later scribes changed to Eliada. Please note this extensive quote from the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* so that you may see what it has to say concerning “teraphim” that is, the household Gods of the Jews and the Israelites:

“TEREPHIM - plural word of unknown derivation used in the Old Testament to denote the primitive Semitic house-gods whose cult had been handed down to historical times from the earlier period of nomadic wanderings. The translation of the term “teraphim” by the Greek versions, as well as its use in the Scriptures, gives an excellent idea of the nature of these symbols. Thus Aquila renders the word by “figures”; the Septuagint in Genesis by “images,” in Ezekiel by “carved images,” in Zechariah by “oracles,” and in Hosea by “manifest objects.” The Authorized Version often simply transcribes the word, as in Judges 17:5, 18:14, and Hosea 3:4, but frequently translates it “images,” as in Genesis 31:19. The rendering “images” occurs in 1 Samuel 19:13 also, “idols” in Zechariah 10:2, and “idolatry” in 1 Samuel 15:23...That teraphim were REALLY IMAGES OF HUMAN SHAPE and of considerable size is plainly seen from 1 Samuel 19:13, where Michal, the daughter of Saul, places one in David’s bed in order to conceal his escape from her enraged father. It is furthermore evident that they were not too large to be easily portable, inasmuch as Genesis 31:19 mentions that Rachel, without her husband’s knowledge, stole the teraphim which belonged to her father, Laban, and, when she wished to conceal them, placed them among the camel’s furniture and sat upon them [Gen. 30:34]. The nature of the teraphim cult and its gradual decay seem also perfectly clear. It may be noted that TERAPHIM WERE REGARDED IN EARLY TIMES AS REPRESENTATIVES OF REAL GODS ENDOWED WITH DIVINE ATTRIBUTES [comp. Gen 31:30, where Laban, rebuking Jacob for Rachel’s theft of the teraphim, asks, “wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?”], and that evidently the teraphim cult was PRACTICALLY ON THE PLANE WITH YHWH WORSHIP. In Judges 17:5 Micah has “an house of gods” with a duly appointed priest; he makes an ephod [see below] and teraphim, which were used together with a “graven image” and a “molten image” made from silver dedicated to Yhwh; THE FIGURES WERE EVIDENTLY YHWH IMAGES

The value of the teraphim to the family and the tribe is shown by the statements that Rachel stole them from her father [Gen. 31:19], and that the Danites, when they went to spy out the land of Laish, took away by force from the house of Micah not only the YHWH IMAGES JUST MENTIONED, but also the EPHOD, THE TERAPHIM, AND THE LEVITICAL PRIEST [see Judges 18].

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In the early times teraphim-worship WAS UNDOUBTEDLY TOLERATED BY THE YHWH RELIGION, as may be seen, for example, from 1 Samuel 19:13 [the story of Michal, the daughter of Saul], where it is tacitly implied THAT A TERAPHIM WAS A USUAL PIECE OF FURNITURE IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE LOYAL FOLLOWER OF YHWH. In Hosea 3:4 and in Genesis 31:19, also, teraphim are alluded to without comment...It is certain, however, that teraphim soon became an object of distinct condemnation in the Yhwh cult. In Genesis 35:2 Jacob orders that the "strange gods" by which teraphim images were probably meant, be put away by his household and buried. The spot which was thus defiled was made a holy place by Joshua [Joshua 14:20-26]. Furthermore, in 1 Samuel 15:23 Samuel in his rebuke to Saul is made to classify teraphim with iniquity and rebellion. Josiah, the reforming king, did away with the magicians and wizards as well as with the teraphim and idols, all of which are grouped together as "abominations" [2 Kings 13:24]. With these passages should also be compared Zechariah 10:2 [R.V. "for the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie; and they have told false dreams." It will appear from the above quotations that the most important function of the teraphim, at any rate after the spread of the Yhwh cult over Israel, WAS THAT OF DIVINATION. EVIDENTLY THE IMAGES WERE USED CHIEFLY FOR ORACULAR PURPOSES, although nothing is known of the method of their consultation...The mention of an EPHOD in connection with TERAPHIM [Judges 17:5, 18:20] is a peculiar use of that word, which in these passages represents merely "a portable object employed or manipulated by the priest in consultation with the oracle" [comp. Moore, "Judges," p. 379, and see Judges 8:27, which clearly describes an EPHOD AS AN OBJECT EMPLOYED IN DIVINATION]. The use of the word seems to be quite distinct from that in the so-called P document [Exodus 28:6], where a high-priestly garment of the same name is referred to [see Ephod]. Such oracles were probably consulted down to a quite late date [comp. Hosea 3:4, Hebr: "for the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without a pillar, and without an ephod, and without teraphim"]. The passage 2 Kings 23:24, cited above, makes it evident that TERAPHIM HAD SURVIVED IN LATER JUDAH. The mention of teraphim in Zechariah 10:2 may have been due to an archaizing tendency of the author of this section, and would not in itself be sufficient evidence to prove that teraphim cult had continued into the Greek period; if, however, this passage is taken in conjunction with the statement of JOSEPHUS ["Ant." 18:9-5] that the custom of carrying house-gods on journeys into strange countries prevailed in his time in the Mesopotamian regions, it appears highly likely that the use of teraphim continued into the first Christian century and possibly even later.

It would seem, then, as remarked above, that teraphim, like the Roman Lares and Penates, ORIGINALLY REPRESENTED HOUSE-GODS, WHICH WERE CARRIED ABOUT BY THE PRIMITIVE SEMITIC NOMADS AS FETISHES ALONG WITH THEIR FAMILY EFFECTS, AND THAT THESE DEITIES WERE IN ALL PROBABILITY WORSHIPPED AT FIRST AS THE MOST IMPORTANT DIVINE OBJECTS KNOWN TO THE FOLLOWERS OF THIS CULT. Although nothing whatever is known about the origin of the teraphim cult, it may have been a survival of primitive ancestor worship: ie., the images may have originally represented the deified ancestors of the family which revered them, and may have become later a sort of Manes

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oracle. They were probably not astral personifications. The cult could not have regarded as indigenous among the Israelites, because the deities are characterized as “gods of the stranger” [A.V. “strange gods”] in Genesis 34:4. In Ezekiel 21:26 [A.V. 21] it is recorded that the King of Babylon consulted teraphim, and “looked in the liver”; ie., he made use of magical incantations as well as of the astrological rites common in Babylonia. It is not at all unlikely that the Israelites obtained the teraphim cult from their Aramean kinsmen.”

The Jewish Targum of pseudo Jonathan actually explains that teraphim were in fact mummified heads of the first-born who were slain in sacrifice. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* says:

“According to Targum pseudo-Jonathan to Genesis 31:19, the teraphim were made of the head of a man, a first-born, which, after the man had been slain, was shaved and then salted and spiced. After a golden plate on which magic words were engraved had been placed under the tongue, the mummified head was mounted on the wall, and it spoke to the people.”

In the Book of Jasher, which is mentioned in the Bible but which was not preserved in it, in chapter 41 verses 40-46 we find corroboration that the teraphim were actually the heads of the slain firstborn sons:

□ “And Rachel stole her father's images, and she took them and she concealed them upon the camel upon which she sat, and she went on. And this is the manner of the images; in taking a man who is the first born and slaying him and taking the hair off his head, and taking salt and salting the head and anointing it in oil, then taking a small tablet of copper or a tablet of gold and writing the name upon it, and placing the tablet under his tongue, and taking the head with the tablet under the tongue and putting it in the house, and lighting up lights before it and bowing down to it.

And at the time when they bow down to it, it speaketh to them in all matters that they ask of it, through the power of the name which is written in it. And some make them in the figures of men, of gold and silver, and go to them in times known to them, and the figures receive the influence of the stars, and tell them future things, and in this manner were the images which Rachel stole from her father. And Rachel stole these images which were her father's, in order that Laban might not know through them where Jacob had gone.

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And Laban came home and he asked concerning Jacob and his household, and he was not to be found, and Laban sought his images to know where Jacob had gone, and could not find them, and he went to some other images, and he inquired of them and they told him that Jacob had fled from him to his father's, to the land of Canaan. And Laban then rose up and he took his brothers and all his servants, and he went forth and pursued Jacob, and he overtook him in mount Gilead."

Whatever the origin of the teraphim and whatever its shape was - one thing is absolutely certain: the Jewish Bible clearly depicts the ancient Israelites and Jews as those who possessed teraphim and ephod and who also worshipped and consulted them. David himself had them and often consulted an ephod - which he believed was actually an image or figurine of Yahweh. Micah who was a zealous worshipper of Yahweh and whose priest was from the tribe of Levi also used and worshipped teraphim and an ephod. All these images, idols and figurines of Yahweh and the gods played an important role in the lives and religious practices of ancient Israelites and David himself.

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