
1CHRONICLES 21: 1 Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.

David is tempted by Satan to take the numbers of the people of Israel and Judah, 1Chr 21:1, 1Chr 21:2. Joab remonstrates, but the king is determined, and Joab pleads in vain, 1Chr 21:3, 1Chr 21:4. He returns, and delivers in the number to the king, but reckons not Levi and Benjamin, 1Chr 21:5. The Lord is displeased, and sends Gad to offer David his choice of three great national calamities; famine, war, or pestilence, 1Chr 21:6-12. David submits himself to God, and a pestilence is sent, which destroys seventy thousand, 1Chr 21:13, 1Chr 21:14. At David's intercession the destroying angel is restrained at the threshing-floor of Ornan, 1Chr 21:15-17. He buys the piece of ground, builds an altar to the Lord and offers sacrifices, and the plague is stayed, 1Chr 21:18-30.

Verse 1

And Satan stood up against Israel - See the notes on the parallel place, 2Sam 24:1 (note), etc.

1CHRONICLES 21: 2 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 the sum of them."

1CHRONICLES 21: 3 Joab said, "May the LORD make his people a hundred times as many as they are. But, my lord the king, aren't they all my lord's servants? Why does my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of guilt to Israel?"

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

1CHRONICLES 21: 5 Joab gave up the sum of the numbering of the people to David. All those of Israel were one million one hundred thousand men who drew sword: and in Judah were four hundred seventy thousand men who drew sword.

Verse 5

All they of Israel were a thousand thousand - Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand - In the parallel place, 2Sam 24:9 (note), the men of Israel are reckoned eight hundred thousand, and the men of Judah five hundred thousand.

1CHRONICLES 21: 6 But he didn't count Levi and Benjamin among them; for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

Verse 6

Levi and Benjamin counted he not - The rabbins give the following reason for this: Joab, seeing that this would bring down destruction upon the people, purposed to save two tribes. Should David ask, Why have you not numbered the Levites? Joab purposed to say, Because the Levites are not reckoned among the children of Israel. Should he ask, Why have you not numbered Benjamin? he

would answer, Benjamin has been already sufficiently punished, on account of the treatment of the woman at Gibeah: if, therefore, this tribe were to be again punished, who would remain?

1CHRONICLES 21: 7 God was displeased with this thing; therefore he struck Israel.

1CHRONICLES 21: 8 David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, put away, I beg you, the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly."

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

1CHRONICLES 21: 10 "Go and speak to David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I offer you three things. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.'"

1CHRONICLES 21: 11 So Gad came to David, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Take your choice:

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

Verse 12

Three days - the pestilence in the land - In 2Sam 24:13 (note), seven years of famine are mentioned.

1CHRONICLES 21: 13 David said to Gad, "I am in distress. Let me fall, I pray, into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are very great. Let me not fall into the hand of man."

Verse 13

David said - I am in a great strait - The Targum reasons thus: "And David said to Gad, If I choose famine, the Israelites may say, The granaries of David are full of corn; neither doth he care should the people of Israel die with hunger. And if I choose war, and fly before an enemy, the Israelites may say, David is a strong and warlike man, and he cares not though the people of Israel should fall by the sword. I am brought into a great strait; I will deliver myself now into the Hand of the Word of the Lord, ביד מימרא דיי beyad meymera dayai, for his mercies are many; but into the hands of the children of men I will not deliver myself."

1CHRONICLES 21: 14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; and seventy thousand men of Israel fell.

1CHRONICLES 21: 15 God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was about to destroy, the LORD saw, and he relented of the disaster, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now stay your hand." the LORD's angel was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Verse 15

And God sent an angel - Thus the Targum: "And the Word of the Lord sent the angel of death against Jerusalem to destroy it; and he beheld the ashes of the binding of Isaac at the foot of the altar, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, which he made in the Mount of Worship; and the house of the upper sanctuary, where are the souls of the righteous, and the image of Jacob fixed on the throne of glory; and he turned in his Word from the evil which he designed to do unto them; and he said to the destroying angel, Cease; take Abishai their chief from among them, and cease from smiting the rest of the people. And the angel which was sent from the presence of the Lord stood at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

1CHRONICLES 21: 16 David lifted up his eyes, and saw the LORD's angel standing between earth and the sky, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.

Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

1CHRONICLES 21: 17 David said to God, "Isn't it I who commanded the people to be numbered? It is even I who have sinned and done very wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O LORD my God, be against me, and against my father's house; but not against your people, that they should be plagued."

1CHRONICLES 21: 18 Then the LORD's angel commanded Gad to tell David that David should go up, and raise an altar to the LORD in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

1CHRONICLES 21: 19 David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spoke in the LORD's name.

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

Verse 20

Ornan turned back, and saw the angel - The Septuagint say, And Orna turned, και ειδε τον βασιλεα, and saw the King. The Syriac and Arabic say, David saw the angel; and do not mention Ornan in this place. Houbigant translates the same reading המלך hammalech, the king, for המלעך hammalach, the angel, and vindicates his version from the parallel place, 2Sam 24:20, where it is said, he saw David: but there is no word of his seeing the angel. But the seeing David is mentioned in 1Chr 21:21; though Houbigant supposes that the 20th verse refers to his seeing the king while he was at a distance; the 21st, to his seeing him when he came into the threshing-floor. In the first instance he and his sons were afraid when they saw the king coming, and this caused them to hide themselves; but when he came into the threshing-floor, they were obliged to appear before him. One of Kennicott's MSS. has המלך the king, instead of המלאך the angel. Some learned men contend for the former reading.

1CHRONICLES 21: 21 As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

1CHRONICLES 21: 22 Then David said to Ornan, "Give me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar to the LORD on it. You shall sell it to me for the full price, that the plague may be stopped from afflicting the people."

1CHRONICLES 21: 23 Ornan said to David, "Take it for yourself, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes. Behold, I give the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meal offering. I give it all."

1CHRONICLES 21: 24 King David said to Ornan, "No; but I will most certainly buy it for the full price. For I will not take that which is yours for the LORD, nor offer a burnt offering without cost."

Verse 24

For the full price - That is, six hundred shekels full weight of pure gold.

1CHRONICLES 21: 25 So David gave to Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place.

1CHRONICLES 21: 26 David built an altar to the LORD there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the LORD; and he answered him from the sky by fire on the altar of burnt offering.

Verse 26

He answered him - by fire - In answer to David's prayers, God, to show that he had accepted him, and was now pacified towards him and the people, sent fire from heaven and consumed the offerings.

1CHRONICLES 21: 27 The LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into its sheath.

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

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

1CHRONICLES 21: 30 But David couldn't go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid because of the sword of the LORD's angel.

Verse 30

Because of the sword of the angel - This is given as a reason why David built an altar in the threshing-floor of Ornan: he was afraid to go to Gibeon, because of the sword of the destroying angel, or he was afraid of delaying the offerings so long as his going thither would require, lest the destroying angel should in the mean while exterminate the people; therefore he hastily built an altar in that place, and on it made the requisite offerings, and by the fire from heaven God showed that he had accepted his act and his devotion. Such interventions as these must necessarily maintain in the minds of the people a full persuasion of the truth and Divine origin of their religion.

For a more circumstantial account of these transactions, see the notes on 2Sam 24:1, Ac., in which several difficulties of the text are removed.

