

The Journey Home (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 19:8b–40a

Israel and Judah Argue About What to Do

8b Now Israel had fled, each to his tent.

9 All the people were quarreling throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand of the Philistines, but now he has fled out of the land from Absalom.

10 However, Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. Now then, why are you silent about bringing the king back?”

David Reaches Out to Judah and Punishes Joab for His Insubordination

11 Then King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, “Speak to the elders of Judah, saying, ‘Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house, since the word of all Israel has come to the king, even to his house?’

12 You are my brothers; you are my bone and my flesh. Why then should you be the last to bring back the king?’

13 Say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my bone and my flesh? May God do so to me, and more also, if you will not be commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.’”

14 Thus he turned the hearts of all the men of Judah as one man, so that they sent *word* to the king, *saying*, “Return, you and all your servants.”

Shimei Meets David at the Jordan River and Begs Forgiveness

15 The king then returned and came as far as the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal in order to go to meet the king, to bring the king across the Jordan.

16 Then Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite who was from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David.

17 There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, with Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they rushed to the Jordan before the king.

18 Then they kept crossing the ford to bring over the king’s household, and to do what was good in his sight. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan.

19 So he said to the king, “Let not my lord consider me guilty, nor remember what your servant did wrong on the day when my lord the king came out from Jerusalem, so that the king would take *it* to heart.

20 For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore behold, I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.”

21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah said, “Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s anointed?”

22 David then said, “What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be an adversary to me? Should any man be put to death in Israel today? For do I not know that I am king over Israel today?”

23 The king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” Thus the king swore to him.

Mephibosheth Accuses Ziba of Slander

24 Then Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *home* in peace.

25 It was when he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?”

26 So he answered, “O my lord, the king, my servant deceived me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ because your servant is lame.

27 Moreover, he has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is like the angel of God, therefore do what is good in your sight.

28 For all my father's household was nothing but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right do I have yet that I should complain anymore to the king?"

29 So the king said to him, "Why do you still speak of your affairs? I have decided, 'You and Ziba shall divide the land.'"

30 Mephibosheth said to the king, "Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has come safely to his own house."

David Expresses His Gratitude to Barzillai

31 Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim; and he went on to the Jordan with the king to escort him over the Jordan.

32 Now Barzillai was very old, being eighty years old; and he had sustained the king while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very great man.

33 The king said to Barzillai, "You cross over with me and I will sustain you in Jerusalem with me."

34 But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I yet to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?"

35 I am now eighty years old. Can I distinguish between good and bad? Or can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Or can I hear anymore the voice of singing men and women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?"

36 Your servant would merely cross over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king compensate me *with* this reward?"

37 Please let your servant return, that I may die in my own city near the grave of my father and my mother. However, here is your servant Chimham, let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what is good in your sight."

38 The king answered, "Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what is good in your sight; and whatever you require of me, I will do for you."

39 All the people crossed over the Jordan and the king crossed too. The king then kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his place.

40a Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him;

David's Return to Jerusalem Is Marred by Sheba's Rebellion (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 19:40b–20:26

At Gilgal, Israel Accuses Judah of Insulting Them

19:40b and all the people of Judah and also half the people of Israel accompanied the king.

41 And behold, all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, "Why had our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, and brought the king and his household and all David's men with him over the Jordan?"

42 Then all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is a close relative to us. Why then are you angry about this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king's *expense*, or has anything been taken for us?"

43 But the men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said, "We have ten parts in the king, therefore we also have more *claim* on David than you. Why then did you treat us with contempt? Was it not our advice first to bring back our king?" Yet the words of the men of Judah were harsher than the words of the men of Israel.

Sheba, a Benjaminite, Takes Advantage of the Tension to Start Another Revolt

20:1 Now a worthless fellow happened to be there whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjaminite;

and he blew the trumpet and said, “We have no portion in David, Nor do we have inheritance in the son of Jesse; Every man to his tents, O Israel!”

2a So all the men of Israel withdrew from following David *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri;

David Returns to Jerusalem With the Men of Judah

2b but the men of Judah remained steadfast to their king, from the Jordan even to Jerusalem.

3 Then David came to his house at Jerusalem, and the king took the ten women, the concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and placed them under guard and provided them with sustenance, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as widows.

David Sends Amasa to Mobilize the Men of Judah

4 Then the king said to Amasa, “Call out the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself.”

5 So Amasa went to call out *the men of* Judah, but he delayed longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

David Sends Abishai to Deal With Sheba

6 And David said to Abishai, “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom; take your LORD’s servants and pursue him, so that he does not find for himself fortified cities and escape from our sight.”

7 So Joab’s men went out after him, along with the Cherethites and the Pelethites and all the mighty men; and they went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

Joab Kills Amasa and Takes Command

8 When they were at the large stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was dressed in his military attire, and over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened at his waist; and as he went forward, it fell out.

9 Joab said to Amasa, “Is it well with you, my brother?” And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

10 But Amasa was not on guard against the sword which was in Joab’s hand so he struck him in the belly with it and poured out his inward parts on the ground, and did not *strike* him again, and he died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

11 Now there stood by him one of Joab’s young men, and said, “Whoever favors Joab and whoever is for David, *let him* follow Joab.”

12 But Amasa lay wallowing in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa from the highway into the field and threw a garment over him when he saw that everyone who came by him stood still.

13 As soon as he was removed from the highway, all the men passed on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

Sheba Hides in Abel and Joab Besieges the City

14 Now he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, even Beth-maacah, and all the Berites; and they were gathered together and also went after him.

15 They came and besieged him in Abel Beth-maacah, and they cast up a siege ramp against the city, and it stood by the rampart; and all the people who were with Joab were wreaking destruction in order to topple the wall.

16 Then a wise woman called from the city, “Hear, hear! Please tell Joab, ‘Come here that I may speak with you.’”

17 So he approached her, and the woman said, “Are you Joab?” And he answered, “I am.” Then she said to him, “Listen to the words of your maidservant.” And he answered, “I am listening.”

18 Then she spoke, saying, “Formerly they used to say, ‘They will surely ask *advice* at Abel,’ and thus they ended *the dispute*.

19 I am of those who are peaceable *and* faithful in Israel. You are seeking to destroy a city, even a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?”

20 Joab replied, “Far be it, far be it from me that I should swallow up or destroy!

21 Such is not the case. But a man from the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand against King David. Only hand him over, and I will depart from the city.” And the woman said to Joab, “Behold, his head will be thrown to you over the wall.”

22 Then the woman wisely came to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri and threw it to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they were dispersed from the city, each to his tent. Joab also returned to the king at Jerusalem.

David’s Administration After the Rebellions of Absalom and Sheba

23 Now Joab was over the whole army of Israel, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites;

24 and Adoram was over the forced labor, and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;

25 and Sheva was scribe, and Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

26 and Ira the Jairite was also a priest to David.

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