

Absalom Returns from Exile (c. 980 BC)

2 Samuel 14:1–27

Joab's Plan

1 Now Joab son of Zeruah realized that the king longed to see Absalom.

2 So Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman. He told her, "Pretend to be in mourning and put on garments for mourning. Don't anoint yourself with oil. Instead, act like a woman who has been mourning for the dead for some time.

3 Go to the king and speak to him in the following fashion." Then Joab told her what to say.

The Wise Woman's Story

4 So the Tekoan woman went to the king. She bowed down with her face to the ground in deference to him and said, "Please help me, O king!"

5 The king replied to her, "What do you want?" She answered, "I am a widow; my husband is dead.

6 Your servant has two sons. When the two of them got into a fight in the field, there was no one present who could intervene. One of them struck the other and killed him.

7 Now the entire family has risen up against your servant, saying, 'Turn over the one who struck down his brother, so that we can execute him and avenge the death of his brother whom he killed. In so doing we will also destroy the heir.' They want to extinguish my remaining coal, leaving no one on the face of the earth to carry on the name of my husband."

8 Then the king told the woman, "Go to your home. I will give instructions concerning your situation."

9 The Tekoan woman said to the king, "My lord the king, let any blame fall on me and on the house of my father. But let the king and his throne be innocent!"

10 The king said, "Bring to me whoever speaks to you, and he won't bother you again!"

11 She replied, "In that case, let the king invoke the name of the LORD your God so that the avenger of blood may not kill! Then they will not destroy my son!" He replied, "As surely as the LORD lives, not a single hair of your son's head will fall to the ground."

The Wise Woman Reveals Her True Intention

12 Then the woman said, "Please permit your servant to speak to my lord the king about another matter." He replied, "Tell me."

13 The woman said, "Why have you devised something like this against God's people? When the king speaks in this fashion, he makes himself guilty, for the king has not brought back the one he has banished.

14 Certainly we must die, and are like water spilled on the ground that cannot be gathered up again. But God does not take away life; instead he devises ways for the banished to be restored.

15 I have now come to speak with my lord the king about this matter, because the people have made me fearful. But your servant said, 'I will speak to the king! Perhaps the king will do what his female servant asks.

16 Yes! The king may listen and deliver his female servant from the hand of the man who seeks to remove both me and my son from the inheritance God has given us!'

17 So your servant said, 'May the word of my lord the king be my security, for my lord the king is like the angel of God when it comes to deciding between right and wrong! May the LORD your God be with you!'"

David Suspects Joab's Involvement

18 Then the king replied to the woman, "Don't hide any information from me when I question you." The woman said, "Let my lord the king speak!"

19 The king said, "Did Joab put you up to all of this?" The woman answered, "As surely as you live, my lord the king, there is no deviation to the right or to the left from all that my lord the king has said. For your servant Joab gave me instructions. He has put all these words in your servant's mouth.

20 Your servant Joab did this so as to change this situation. But my lord has wisdom like that of the angel of God, and knows everything that is happening in the land."

David Allows Absalom to Return to Jerusalem but Refuses to See Him

21 Then the king said to Joab, "All right! I will do this thing! Go and bring back the young man Absalom!"

22 Then Joab bowed down with his face toward the ground and thanked the king. Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord the king, because the king has granted the request of your servant!"

23 So Joab got up and went to Geshur and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem.

24 But the king said, "Let him go over to his own house. He may not see my face." So Absalom went over to his own house; he did not see the king's face.

Absalom's Appearance

25 Now in all Israel everyone acknowledged that there was no man as handsome as Absalom. From the sole of his feet to the top of his head he was perfect in appearance.

26 When he would shave his head—at the end of every year he used to shave his head, for it grew too long and he would shave it—

he used to weigh the hair of his head at three pounds according to the king's weight.

Absalom Names His Daughter after His Desolate and Humiliated Sister—Tamar

27 Absalom had three sons and one daughter, whose name was Tamar. She was a very attractive woman.

Absalom Reunited with David (c. 978 BC)

2 Samuel 14:28–33

28 Absalom lived in Jerusalem for two years without seeing the king's face.

29 Then Absalom sent a message to Joab asking him to send him to the king, but Joab was not willing to come to him. So he sent a second message to him, but he still was not willing to come.

30 So he said to his servants, "Look, Joab has a portion of field adjacent to mine and he has some barley there. Go and set it on fire." So Absalom's servants set Joab's portion of the field on fire.

31 Then Joab got up and came to Absalom's house. He said to him, "Why did your servants set my portion of field on fire?"

32 Absalom said to Joab, "Look, I sent a message to you saying, 'Come here so that I can send you to the king with this message: "Why have I come from Geshur? It would be better for me if I were still there."' Let me now see the face of the king. If I am at fault, let him put me to death!"

33 So Joab went to the king and informed him. The king summoned Absalom, and he came to the king. Absalom bowed down before the king with his face toward the ground and the king kissed him.

Absalom Begins to Steal the Hearts of Israel (c. 978 BC)

2 Samuel 15:1–6

1 Some time later Absalom managed to acquire a chariot and horses, as well as fifty men to serve as his royal guard.

2 Now Absalom used to get up early and stand beside the road that led to the city gate. Whenever anyone came by who had a complaint to bring to the king for arbitration, Absalom would call out to him, "What city are you from?" The person would answer, "I, your servant, am from one of the tribes of Israel."

3 Absalom would then say to him, "Look, your claims are legitimate and appropriate. But there is no representative of the king who will listen to you."

4 Absalom would then say, "If only they would make me a judge in the land! Then everyone who had a judicial complaint could come to me and I would make sure he receives a just settlement."

5 When someone approached to bow before him, Absalom would extend his hand and embrace him and kiss him.

6 Absalom acted this way toward everyone in Israel who came to the king for justice. In this way Absalom won the loyalty of the citizens of Israel.

Absalom Leads a Treasonous Revolt Against David (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 15:7–12

7 After four years Absalom said to the king, "Let me go and repay my vow that I made to the LORD while I was in Hebron.

8 For I made this vow when I was living in Geshur in Aram: 'If the LORD really does allow me to return to Jerusalem, I will serve the LORD.'"

9 The king replied to him, "Go in peace." So Absalom got up and went to Hebron.

10 Then Absalom sent spies through all the tribes of Israel who said, "When you hear the sound of the horn, you may assume that Absalom rules in Hebron."

11 Now two hundred men had gone with Absalom from Jerusalem. Since they were invited, they went naively and were unaware of what Absalom was planning.

12 While he was offering sacrifices, Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's adviser, to come from his city, Giloh. The conspiracy was gaining momentum, and the people were starting to side with Absalom.

David Flees Across the Jordan River (c. 974 BC)

2 Samuel 15:13–16:14

David Flees from Jerusalem

15:13 Then a messenger came to David and reported, "The men of Israel are loyal to Absalom!"

14 So David said to all his servants who were with him in Jerusalem, "Come on! Let's escape! Otherwise no one will be delivered from Absalom! Go immediately, or else he will quickly overtake us and bring disaster on us and kill the city's residents with the sword."

15 The king's servants replied to the king, "We will do whatever our lord the king decides."

16 So the king and all the members of his royal court set out on foot, though the king left behind ten concubines to attend to the palace.

17 The king and all the people set out on foot, pausing at a spot some distance away.

David Tests the Loyalty of the Philistines

18 All his servants were leaving with him, along with all the Kerethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites—some six hundred men who had come on foot from Gath. They were leaving with the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why should you come with us? Go back and stay with the new king, for you are a foreigner and an exile from your own country.

20 It seems like you arrived just yesterday. Today should I make you wander around by going with us? I go where I must go. But as for you, go back and take your men with you. May genuine loyal love protect you!"

21 But Ittai replied to the king, "As surely as the LORD lives and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king is, whether dead or alive, there I will be as well!"

22 So David said to Ittai, "Come along then." So Ittai the Gittite went along, accompanied by all his men and all the dependents who were with him.

23 All the land was weeping loudly as all these people were leaving. As the king was crossing over the Kidron Valley, all the people were leaving on the road that leads to the desert.

David Sends Zadok and the Ark Back to Jerusalem

24 Zadok and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. When they positioned the ark of God, Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city.

25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Take the ark of God back to the city. If I find favor in the LORD's sight he will bring me back and enable me to see both it and his dwelling place again.

26 However, if he should say, 'I do not take pleasure in you,' then he will deal with me in a way that he considers appropriate."

27 The king said to Zadok the priest, "Are you a seer? Go back to the city in peace! Your son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan may go with you and Abiathar.

28 Look, I will be waiting at the fords of the desert until word from you reaches me."

29 So Zadok and Abiathar took the ark of God back to Jerusalem and remained there.

David Commissions Hushai as a Spy

30 As David was going up the Mount of Olives, he was weeping as he went; his head was covered and his feet were bare. All the people who were with him also had their heads covered and were weeping as they went up.

31 Now David had been told, "Ahithophel has sided with the conspirators who are with Absalom. So David prayed, "Make the advice of Ahithophel foolish, O LORD!"

32 When David reached the summit, where he used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite met him with his clothes torn and dirt on his head.

33 David said to him, "If you leave with me you will be a burden to me.

34 But you will be able to counter the advice of Ahithophel if you go back to the city and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king! Previously I was your father's servant, and now I will be your servant.'

35 Zadok and Abiathar the priests will be there with you. Everything you hear in the king's palace you must tell Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

36 Furthermore, their two sons are there with them, Zadok's son Ahimaaz and Abiathar's son Jonathan. You must send them to me with any information you hear."

37 So David's friend Hushai arrived in the city, just as Absalom was entering Jerusalem.

Ziba Accuses Mephibosheth of Treason and David Makes a Snap Decision

16:1 When David had gone a short way beyond the summit, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth was there to meet him. He had a couple of donkeys that were saddled, and on them were two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred raisin cakes, a hundred baskets of summer fruit, and a container of wine.

2 The king asked Ziba, "Why did you bring these things?" Ziba replied, "The donkeys are for the king's family to ride on, the loaves of bread and the summer fruit are for the attendants to eat, and the wine is for those who get exhausted in the desert."

3 The king asked, "Where is your master's grandson?" Ziba replied to the king, "He remains in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will give back to me my grandfather's kingdom.'"

4 The king said to Ziba, "Everything that was Mephibosheth's now belongs to you." Ziba replied, "I bow before you. May I find favor in your sight, my lord the king."

Shimei the Benjamite, a Relative of Saul, Curses David

5 Then King David reached Bahurim. There a man from Saul's extended family named Shimei son of Gera came out, yelling curses as he approached.

6 He threw stones at David and all of King David's servants, as well as all the people and the soldiers who were on his right and on his left.

7 As he yelled curses, Shimei said, "Leave! Leave! You man of bloodshed, you wicked man!

8 The LORD has punished you for all the spilled blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you rule. Now the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. Disaster has overtaken you, for you are a man of bloodshed!"

9 Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head!" [[Exod 22:28](#)]

10 But the king said, "What do we have in common, you sons of Zeruiah? If he curses because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David!', who can say to him, 'Why have you done this?'"

11 Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, "My own son, my very own flesh and blood, is trying to take my life. So also now this Benjaminite! Leave him alone so that he can curse, for the LORD has spoken to him.

12 Perhaps the LORD will notice my affliction and this day grant me good in place of his curse."

13 So David and his men went on their way. But Shimei kept going along the side of the hill opposite him, yelling curses as he threw stones and dirt at them.

14 The king and all the people who were with him arrived exhausted at their destination, where David refreshed himself.

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