

2 Samuel 19

Verses 1 - 7

Then it was reported to Joab, “Behold, the king is weeping and he mourns for Absalom.”² So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, because the people heard *it* said that day, “The king is in mourning over his son.”³ And the people entered the city surreptitiously that day, just as people who are humiliated surreptitiously flee in battle.⁴ And the king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, “My son Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son!”⁵ Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, “Today you have shamed all your servants, who have saved your life today and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines,⁶ by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have revealed today that commanders and servants are nothing to you; for I know today that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then it would be right as far as you are concerned.⁷ Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, no man will stay the night with you, and this will be worse for you than all the misfortune that has happened to you from your youth until now!”

Then it was reported to Joab, “Behold, the king is weeping and he mourns for Absalom.”² So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, because the people heard *it* said that day, “The king is in mourning over his son.”

When the soldiers returned to Mahanaim, instead of receiving a hero's welcome and a time of celebration they found David crying over his son Absalom.

⁵ Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, “Today you have shamed all your servants, who have saved your life today and the lives of your sons and daughters, the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines,⁶ by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you.”

It would be hard to hear about the death of your son but this was an insurrection. If Absalom had won, all of David's family would have been put to death. David normally had good instincts about these kinds of matters but his instincts had failed him in this situation. Fortunately, Joab was a strong man and told the king he was off course and explained the problem in a way that couldn't be missed.

For you have revealed today that commanders and servants are nothing to you; for I know today that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then it would be right as far as you are concerned.

If a company treats good people bad and bad people good (because of a misguided company culture) it will suffer diminished profits and its stock prices will remain low until they see the error of their way.

How leaders treat their followers is revealed in their daily actions not in some slogan dreamed up by a Human Resources Department.

⁷ Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, no man will stay the night with you, and this will be worse for you than all the misfortune that has happened to you from your youth until now!”

Joab loved David so he warned him of the consequences of his behavior. David recognized the wisdom of Joab's words and took his seat at the gate. This assured the troops that the king was pleased with their efforts.

Verses 8 - 10

⁸ So the king got up and sat at the gate. When they told all the people, saying, “Behold, the king is sitting at the gate,” then all the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled, each to his tent. ⁹ And all the people were quarreling throughout the tribes of Israel, saying, “The king rescued us from the hands of our enemies and saved us from the hands 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?”

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

When Absalom came to power Israel was divided between two factions, those that followed David and those that followed David's son. David had given the other side good reason to reject him because of his sins against God. His adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband was beyond the pale.

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

On the other hand David had been a good military leader and their new king had died at the hands of Joab and was buried under a pile of stones in the forest of Ephraim.

Another consideration was that the people had anointed Absalom not the Lord.

While there was some division among all the tribes the bigger problem that David faced was that the tribe of Judah as a whole did not want him back.

This was Ironic because at the beginning of David's reign he was made king by the tribe of Judah first and then the 10 northern tribes accepted David 7 years later. When it comes to politics things seldom remain the same for very long.

Verses 11 - 15

¹¹ Then King David sent *word* 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 And say to Amasa, 'Are you not my bone and my flesh? May God do so to me, and more so, if you will not be commander of the army for me continually, in place of Joab.'" ¹⁴ So 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." ¹⁵ The king then returned and came as far as the Jordan. And *the men of Judah* came to Gilgal in order to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan.

¹¹ Then King David sent *word* 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?"

There were two High Priests in Israel during David's reign as king. Zadok was at Gibeon and oversaw the sacrifices at the Tabernacle, while Abiathar was in Jerusalem and he supervised the priests in charge of the Ark.

See 1 Chronicles 16:39

³⁹ He left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the Lord in the high place which was at Gibeon,

Verses 16 – 23

¹⁶ Then Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite who was from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷ And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and 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 crossed the shallow places *repeatedly* 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 And he said to the king, "May my lord not consider me guilty, nor call to mind what your servant did wrong on the day when my lord the king went out from Jerusalem, so that the king would take *it* to heart. ²⁰ For your servant knows that I have sinned; so 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 responded, "Should Shimei not be put to death for this, the fact that he cursed the Lord's anointed?" ²² David then said, "What is there between you and me, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be an adversary to me today? Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? For do I not know that I am king over Israel today?" ²³ So the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." The king also swore to him.

¹⁶ Then Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite who was from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. ¹⁷ And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him and 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.

Shimei had cursed David as he was leaving town and He wanted to get David's forgiveness while it was still possible. The fact that Shimei was attended by a 1000 men of Benjamin confirms that he was a man of great influence.

Ziba knew that David would learn of his lie against Mephibosheth and he hoped to diminish the effects of that lie.

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

The hatred between Judah and Northern Israel existed long before their division following the death of Solomon. The rebellion of Absalom was probably fueled by this division but it was quailed for another 50 years.

²¹ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah responded, “Should Shimei not be put to death for this, the fact that he cursed the Lord’s anointed?”

Abishai was a military leader under King David. He was the eldest son of David's sister Zeruiah. Abishai made a valid point concerning the actions of Shimei and if it had been any other day other than this day of reconciliation David probably would have had him put to death.

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

As long as David lived, he kept his oath not to put Shimei to death but near the end of his reign he instructed Solomon to take vengeance on Shimei.

See 1 Kings 2:8 – 9

⁸ And behold, *you have with you* Shimei the son of Gera the Benjaminite, of Bahurim; now it was he who cursed me with a painful curse on the day I went to Mahanaim. But when he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the Lord, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’ ⁹ But now do not leave him unpunished, for you are a wise man; and you will know what to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood.”

Verses 24 - 30

²⁴ Then Mephibosheth the grandson of Saul came down to meet the king; but he had neither tended to his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes since the day the king departed until the day he came *home* in peace. ²⁵ And 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 said, “My lord the king, my servant betrayed me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle the donkey for myself so that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ since your servant cannot walk. ²⁷ Furthermore, 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 only people *worthy* of death to my lord the king; yet you placed your servant among those who ate at your own table. So what right do I still have, 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 And Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has come safely to his own house.”

²⁴ Then Mephibosheth the grandson of Saul came down to meet the king; but he had neither tended to his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes since the day the king departed until the day he came *home* in peace.

Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan and the grandson of Saul. His appearance indicated that he had been in mourning since David left Jerusalem.

²⁵ And 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 said, “My lord the king, my servant betrayed me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle the donkey for myself so that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ since your servant cannot walk.

Ziba slandered Mephibosheth when King David was fleeing Jerusalem. He said that Mephibosheth had disloyally stayed behind in Jerusalem in the hope of acquiring the kingship for himself. Because of this David gave all of Saul's property that he had given to Mephibosheth back to Ziba.

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.’”

David finally got to the right decision in this case. The land should have been split evenly between these two men from the very beginning because Mephibosheth was a direct descendant of Saul and Ziba was a loyal servant of Saul that had overseen the land for many years.

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

This kind of hyperbole was often used in the Middle East.

See Genesis 23:7-16

⁷ So Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

⁸ And he spoke with them, saying, “If you are willing to *let me* bury my dead out of my sight, listen to me, and plead with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, ⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.”

¹⁰ Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham so that the sons of Heth heard, that is, all who entered the gate of his city, saying, ¹¹ “No, my lord, listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.” ¹² And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. ¹³ But he spoke to Ephron so that the people of the land heard, saying, “If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept *it* from me so that I may bury my dead there.” ¹⁴ Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ¹⁵ “My lord, listen to me: a plot of land worth four hundred shekels of silver—what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.” ¹⁶ Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the presence of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver.

Verses 31 - 39

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 Barzillai was very old: eighty years old; and he had provided the king food while he stayed in Mahanaim, for he was a very great man. ³³ So the king said to Barzillai, “You cross over with me, and I will provide you food in Jerusalem with me.” ³⁴ But Barzillai said to the king, “How long do I still have 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 still hear the voice of men and women singing? 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. So why should the king compensate me *with* this reward? ³⁷ Please let your servant return, so 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 And 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.

³² Barzillai was very old: eighty years old; and he had provided the king food while he stayed in Mahanaim, for he was a very great man. ³³ So the king said to Barzillai, “You cross over with me, and I will provide you food in Jerusalem with me.”

The invitation for Barzillai to spend the rest of his life at David's court was well deserved because the support that David and his followers received from him made the conflict with Absalom somewhat less burdensome.

³⁴ But Barzillai said to the king, “How long do I still have 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 still hear the voice of men and women singing? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?”

In his old age Barzillai could no longer enjoy the physical pleasures, the special food, drink and entertainment, which would be available to someone that had access to the King's court.

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.

Josephus tells us that Chimham was Barzillai's son. Whether this is true or not is open to debate but it would make sense that Barzillai wanted his son to have what he could not enjoy.

Verses 40 - 43

⁴⁰ Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; 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 have our brothers, the men of Judah, abducted you 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.

⁴⁰ Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; and all the people of Judah and also half the people of Israel accompanied the king.

This is interesting because Judah, who had been slow to accept David back, is now 100% for him. The 10 Northern tribes, who had first sought to bring David back, are now 50/50.

⁴¹ And behold, all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, “Why have our brothers, the men of Judah, abducted you and brought the king and his household and all David’s men with him, over the Jordan?”

Here, all the men of Israel, means all of the 50%.

The northern tribes characterized this event as an abduction on the part of Judah. Absalom's rebellion revealed the long standing mistrust between the North and South and that mistrust was not eliminated by the war.

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?”

Judah responded to Israel by saying that David was from the tribe of Judah.

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.

The argument of the northern faction was that they had a greater stake in David because they outnumbered the south by a margin of 10 to 2.

The men of Judah got the better of the argument for the time being but this did not resolve the bigger issue between the tribes.