

The Return of the King

Last week our homework focused on the civil war that tore through the nation of Israel as Absalom attempted to drive David from the throne. David and his men ultimately bring the rebellion to an end. Absalom's death, while at the hands of Joab, fulfills the Lord's curse upon any who would rise up and turn against his father, in this case the anointed King of Israel.

As we will see in our first scripture passage this week, David is ready to resume his position as King of Israel. He has returned to lead his country, and make himself available to his people. In our discussion we talked about David taking his place at the gate. His court has somewhat reassembled it's self and is starting to focus on returning to Jerusalem. He is currently still in Mahanaim. There is strife throughout the nation and debate among the tribal elders as to whether or not David should return as king. Despite the fact that David's forces had defeated Absalom, Absalom's supporters weren't quite ready to embrace David as king again. The tribe of Judah had greatly supported Absalom, while the rest of Israel had supported David. David had to win back the hearts of his own tribe, reinstate his authority within Israel, and reestablish his reputation as a king to be feared in the eyes of the surrounding nations.

David Returns to Jerusalem



Read 2 Samuel 19:8-43 and answer the following questions.

To whom does David send Abiathar and Zadok with messages?

What is the content of each message?

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David wins over the hearts of all the men of Judah, and he makes his way back to Jerusalem. When he reaches the Jordan, whom does he encounter?

♥ What is Shimei's attitude towards David and what does he say?

♥ When Abishai advises David to have Shimei killed, what is David's response to Shimei's confession of verse 20?

- What was Shimei's crime that Abishai references in verse 21 (See Exodus 22:28)?
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- Shimei's confession: "For I your servant _____ that _____
_____..."
- David's answer (v23):
- What traits as "a man after God's own heart" is David revealing in this instance, as well as his dealings with Mephibosheth and Barzillai?
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♥ Read again David and Mephibosheth's reunion in verses 24-30.

- How does Mephibosheth present himself?
- Mephibosheth being lame in both feet had to make a tremendous physical effort to meet David. What do his action and his physical appearance tell you about his attitude towards David?
- How does Mephibosheth's appearance relate to Ziba's words in 16:1-4?
- Ziba met David with supplies at a time when David was in desperate need of support. Mephibosheth's appearance seems to put David in quite a quandary. What conflict do you think was going through David's mind?

When David gets back to Jerusalem it's not long before dissension between Judah and Israel arises yet again. Verses 41- 43 reveal yet another indication of mounting strife between the tribes of Israel.

Sheba Rebels against David

Despite the fact that David is back on his throne, there is still unrest in the country. Chapter 19 ended with quarrelling between Israel and Judah as to who had a "claim" on the king. Ironic in itself that Judah professed the strong claim by blood relation when it was Judah who had supported Absalom in wresting the throne from David. Tensions between the northern and southern tribes intensify as the Judahites escort David to Jerusalem. The northern tribes are loathe to enter into a treaty with the southern tribes who allied themselves with the usurper Absalom. The northern tribes again consider breaking allegiance with David feeling that David may give preferential treatment to Judah. Chapter 20 tells us the story of Sheba, a Benjaminite, (from the *northern* tribe of Benjamin) who incited a rebellion against David. Strife and hard feelings from those who had been allied with the house of Saul also may have played into this rebellion as Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin.



Read chapter 20 and answer the following questions.

"So all the men of _____ deserted David to follow Sheba son of Bicri. But the men of _____ stayed by their king all the way from the Jordan to Jerusalem." 2 Sam 20:2

Amasa is dispatched to assemble the men of Judah within 3 days in order to pursue Sheba. When Amasa is delayed upon his return, David decides to send Abishai after Sheba. Why doesn't David wait longer for Amasa to return?

♥ Verse 8 tells us that Amasa comes to join the detachment under Abishai. Joab's greeting of Amasa is betrayed by his actions.

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- What action does Joab take just before his thrusts the dagger into Amasa?
- Read 1 Chronicles 2: 16-17. What was the relationship between Joab and Amasa?
- Now turn to Matthew 26:48-49. What does Joab's action resemble?

The troops are ordered to march on in pursuit of Sheba. The Bible tells us that Sheba went through all the tribes of Israel and came to Abel Beth Maacah, a fortified city located 30 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. David's plan of an immediate attack prevented Bicri and the northern tribes from gathering an army and preparing to fight against David. David's forces have them cornered in the walled city. Joab and Abishai besieged the city. Fortunately for that city, known as a place of wisdom (see v18), there lived a woman filled with wisdom. Through her negotiations with Joab, the town complies with the King's forces and throws the head of Sheba over the wall.

What is the irony in Joab's words as he proclaims to the wise woman, "*Far be it from me to swallow up or destroy!*"(v.20)

What did this woman's wisdom and willingness to get involved prevent?

In what way is this incident similar to the events of 1 Sam 25:14–35?

The Gibeonites Avenged

Chapter 21 starts by telling us that "*During the reign of David, there was a famine....*" Notice that it says "*During the reign of David*". This tells us that the events of this chapter (according to the New American Commentary) and the events of the following three chapters do not necessarily chronologically follow upon each other, or the events of Chapter 20. It is believed that the events of these chapters do occur in the later years of David's reign, but the order of which is uncertain.

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Read 2 Samuel 21:1-14 and complete the following questions.

"During the reign of David, there was a famine for three successive years; so David sought the _____." 2 Sam 21:1 (NIV)

Upon seeking the Lord (likely through the High Priest and the use of the Urim and Thummim), what was the cause of the famine?

What is it that the Gibeonites ultimately request of David? (V 5-6)

- Who did David not hand over to the Gibeonites?
- What did David do when he heard of Saul's concubine Rizpah's devotion and mourning?

When all of this had transpired what did God do? *"After that, _____ in behalf of the land." 2 Sam 21:14 (NIV)*

This passage seems so unlike what we think of a loving and forgiving God who does not demand human sacrifice in exchange for rain. To come to a better understanding of this passage, let's look a little more closely at a couple of verses, and then glean a few additional details from the book of Joshua where we can trace the actual beginning of this issue between Saul and the Gibeonites. A bit of back ground information is in order.



Read Joshua Chapter 9 and let's glean a few details.

By what means did the Gibeonites persuade Israel to make a treaty?

According to verse 14 what did Joshua fail to do?

What did Joshua do? (See v15, 18)

Why did the Gibeonites resort to a ruse to protect themselves from the Israelites? (v 24)

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The Bible doesn't record the events of Saul's "zeal" against the Gibeonites beyond what is recorded in this chapter (verses 1-2). But evidently Saul shed the blood of Gibeonites breaking the treaty and oath sworn by Joshua. Notice that the Gibeonites refuse compensation in the form of money or land. They are seeking compensation "*in kind*" according to the manner prescribed by the Torah. In instances of unsanctioned killing, the Torah judgment calls for retribution-in-kind. Leviticus 24:21-22 reads, "*whoever kills a man must be put to death. You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born.*" While the Gibeonites do reside in the territory of Benjamin, they are not Israelites. Due to the treaty in the time of Joshua, they live peaceably within the territory under Israelite law. According to that law they have the right to seek justice against the house of Saul, in this case they request the death of seven of Saul's descendants. It is probable that the number seven in this instance is symbolic.¹ Saul had been responsible for far more than seven deaths among the Gibeonites, but they requested only seven be handed over in retribution. Leaving the seven corpses unburied before the Lord was probably in line with the events of Saul action against the Gibeonites.

Complete verse 9: "*He handed them over to the Gibeonites, who killed and exposed them on a hill before the _____.*"

It appears that the Gibeonites ritually "*killed and exposed*" Saul's relations, all in one day at the beginning of the barley harvest, which is the spring harvest in the month of Nissan, the beginning of the religious year. We are told that this happened "*before the Lord*" indicating that this death penalty was carried out in consideration of the Lord's will. I think we have come to know David well enough to know that he would not have gone along with this scheme without consulting the Lord first. Leaving the corpses exposed indicates that these men were considered objects of divine displeasure².

Rizpah, the mother of two of the condemned men grieves their death at the site of their execution. She refuses to depart, staying day and night to protect the bodies from scavenging animals and mourning their death. She draws the attention of King David who learns of her mournful watch. The Lord had ended the famine by bring rains, lifting his judgment against Israel. Moved by compassion David has their remains gathered up for a proper burial along with the remains of Saul and Jonathan creating a lasting memorial honoring Israel's first dynasty. The descendants of Saul are buried in Benjamin in the tomb of Saul's father as is proper and befitting of the family.

Next, let's look at the reason why David didn't hand over Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan. What does 2 Samuel 21:7 tell us?

¹ Seven is a number often associated with "completeness, fullness, and wholeness".

² See Psalm 53:5 and Ezekiel 6:5 regarding the exposure of those under the Lord's curse.

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What does Numbers 30:2 tell us about making an oath (or vow) to or before the Lord?

When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must _____.

According to the New American Commentary, “[t]he making of vows was strictly voluntary, but any person who made a vow to the Lord, or by oath entered into an obligatory relationship, must fulfill that commitment....Biblical vows were made only to deity, intensifying the solemnity of the pledge.”

The lesson of this passage has everything to do with honoring oaths and making reconciliation when an oath has been broken. David, as the Lord’s anointed King over Israel, was responsible for mediating between the Gibeonites and Saul’s braking of the oath sworn by Joshua before the Lord. Saul’s breaking of the oath had resulted in a judgment of famine against Israel until David reconciled the nation of Israel and the Gibeonites before the Lord.

♥ How does David reflect a man after God's own heart in this passage?

Wars against the Philistines

Israel's old nemesis rears up again. David goes out to battle with his men. As the Philistines surely recognize him on the battlefield, the heat of battle must have intensified around him. If the Philistines can eliminate him, they will go a long way in conquering the land.



Read 2 Samuel 21:15-22 and answer the following questions.

In the following verses list who is the hero and who the hero kills

	Hero	Enemy soldier
V 16-17	_____	_____
V 18	_____	_____
V 19	_____	_____
V 20	_____	_____

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Three of the Four Enemy soldiers are described as a descendant of who? _____

According to Strong's Greek & Hebrew Dictionary, Rapha means "giant". David fought another famous "giant", Goliath, at the beginning of his career. This very brief passage is important for two reasons. First it shows that David's success is deeply dependent upon the men he commands. If it weren't for his mighty men, placed in his service by the Lord, David would have perished long ago. Secondly, the scriptures report these details to give credit where credit is due. Unlike Saul, David very willingly credits those mighty men who have served him well. Skim through Chapter 23:8-39. The accomplishments of David's Mighty Men are recounted. David shares the glory of victory with those who fought alongside him, serving among the army of the Living God. The Lord placed David at the head of his nation. The Lord also put these mighty men alongside David.

Two last important verses to note:

David went down with his men to fight against the Philistines, and he became _____.
(v.15)

- What do you think contributes to the fact that David became exhausted?

Then David's men swore to him, saying, "Never again will you go out with us to battle, so that the _____ will not be extinguished." (v.17)

- Why do David's men want David not to go into battle with them any longer?

When David was recognized on the battle field by the Philistines, concentrated effort would have been focused on eliminating him. Battle would have intensified around him and would require David's men to focus on protecting him rather than on winning the battle. This put David's forces in a difficult position and undermined whatever battle strategy was set forth. Israel could not afford to lose their king. The New American Commentary explains the title of "lamp of Israel" as follows: "[it] suggests that David's leadership was as valuable to the nation as a steady light source would be on a dark night." This seems to have become David's rule of command for in the narratives extending from 2 Samuel 11-20 he always assigned the leadership of his troops to his generals.