

Once Absalom's rebellion had ended with Absalom's death, David's return to the throne was still not guaranteed or automatic. His grief over his son's death caused the people to question their loyalty to him and there was still opposition within Israel to David's return. However, the LORD enabled David to overcome the obstacles and return to the throne.

2 Samuel 19

1 And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. 2 And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son. 3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

“And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom” – Perhaps Cushai, the messenger sent by Joab to bring news of the victory and Absalom's death (2 Sam. 18:21-33), returned to Joab with the news of the king's grief for Absalom.

“And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son” – Normally a victory was a cause for celebration but upon hearing that the king was grieving for the death of his son, the people instead began to mourn also. Instead of being proud of their victory over the king's enemies, they became ashamed of it because it was causing the king to grieve.

“And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle” – Instead of marching triumphantly into the city in celebration of their victory, the people returned quietly in shame as if they had lost the battle and had had to flee from their enemies. David's mourning had totally changed the mood after the battle.

4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

David had mourned for three years when Amnon died (2 Sam. 13:37-39) and it seemed that he might mourn similarly over the loss of Absalom.

5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; 6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

It may be that Joab remembered how long David had mourned for Amnon and realized that if David did the same for Absalom then he would risk losing the loyalty of his people. He confronted David and stated that the people who risked their lives for David and his family had become ashamed for doing so because of David's behavior. Absalom had become David's enemy and yet he placed more value on Absalom than those who had risked their lives for David on the battlefield. Joab states pointedly that David was acting as if he would have preferred that Absalom had lived even at the cost of the lives of all those who had loyally fought for David.

7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

“Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably [to the heart] unto thy servants” – Joab advises David to speak to the people and show his appreciation for the fact that they had fought and risked their lives for him.

“for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night” – Joab's assessment of the situation was that David was at risk to lose the loyalty of the people who had fought for him. If these people believed that David valued Absalom more than them then they might not support the idea of David returning to the throne.

“and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now” – Ever since the day that he killed Goliath, David had always had the favor of the people. However, if the people turned against him now it would be the most dangerous thing that every happened to him in his life. Not only could David's personal safety be in question, but he also stood to lose everything he had gained as king throughout his life. Joab might have been merely stating the facts, but one commentator suggested that this could be a threat from Joab, who had already demonstrated that he was not afraid to disobey David when he killed Absalom.

8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

The king responded to Joab by going to the gate of the city where the people could see and meet with him. When the people heard that he was there, they came out of their tents where they were hiding in shame and went to hear what he had to say.

9 And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

It seems that David did not assume that he could return to Jerusalem as king, but waited for an invitation for him to return. It may have been dangerous for him to return if the people were not in favor of it. People still loyal to David were becoming frustrated by the fact that Israel had not restored him to the throne. They pointed out the fact that he had been a great warrior, giving Israel victories over their enemies, such as the Philistines. He had fled Jerusalem because of Absalom. Now that Absalom was dead, why had they not restored David to the throne (v. 10)? David sent a message to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, asking them to speak to the elders of Judah to see why they, who were of the same tribe as he, had not been leading the way to restore David to the throne. He also had these priests to speak to Amasa, his nephew, whom Absalom had appointed commander over the armies of Israel, and promise to give him Joab's job when David returned as king (vs. 11-13).

14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants. 15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

“And he bowed [to turn, incline, bend, or influence] **the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man”** – David’s appeal to the men of Judah based on the fact that he was their relative (v. 12) turned the hearts of the men of Judah toward him and they unanimously accepted his return as king.

“so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants” – The men of Judah sent the invitation for David to return and take the throne that he had previously occupied.

“So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan” – David is traveling from the eastern side of the Jordan and comes to the river to cross over on his way back to Jerusalem. Judah (most likely the elders of Judah) travels to Gilgal, which was about four miles west of the Jordan. From there they meet David at the Jordan to conduct him across the river and accompany him on his journey to Jerusalem.

33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. 34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

“And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem” – When David was fleeing from Absalom, Barzillai was among those who brought food and supplies to David and the people fleeing with him (2 Sam. 17:27-29). Now Barzillai has come to welcome the king’s return and David invites him to accompany him to Jerusalem so that he may show his gratitude by having Barzillai live with him.

“And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?” – Barzillai was 80 years old (v. 32) and apparently did not have many years left. He was exhibiting the diminished capacities that come with old age and thus stated that he would only be a burden to the king (v. 35).

37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

Barzillai preferred to live the remaining years of his life at home rather than be a burden to the king. He then asked that Chimham, who was likely Barzillai’s son, be allowed to go with David in his place to receive the benefits of the king’s gratitude. David agreed to this and promised to extend to Chimham whatever courtesy that Barzillai requested. (v. 38).

2 Samuel 20

1 And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel. 2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

A “man of Belial” (“worthlessness; wickedness”) was an expression describing someone with no redeeming qualities that was always up to no good. Sheba was from the tribe of Benjamin, the same tribe that Saul came from, and obviously did not like the idea of David returning to the throne. He apparently believed that David had wrongfully taken the throne from Saul’s descendants and did not deserve to be reinstated. He started a rebellion against David among the various tribes of Israel, with only David’s tribe of Judah choosing to remain loyal to David. David sent troops after Sheba, who found him hiding in the city of Abel. Joab had begun besieging the city and attempting to breach its wall (v. 15) when a woman called to him from atop the city wall to ask why he wanted to destroy a city of Israel (v. 19).

21 The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

Joab replied that he did not intend to destroy the city, but was only there to apprehend a rebel whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri. Joab stated that once Sheba had been captured, he would leave the city unharmed. The woman then promised that the head of Sheba would be tossed over the wall to Joab shortly.

22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

This woman apparently had some influence and respect within this city, for she was able to convince the people of the city that it was in their best interests to give Joab what he wanted. They did as she had promised Joab by beheading Sheba and throwing his head over the wall to Joab as proof that Sheba was dead. Once Joab was satisfied that Sheba was no longer a threat, he blew his trumpet to recall his men from their assault against the city and returned to Jerusalem.