

2 Samuel 16:1-23

David Flees Jerusalem

David's flight from the city of Jerusalem gives an opportunity to see who his real friends are. His weak position gives other enemies opportunity to direct their resentments at him. Old grievances come to the surface, and true loyalties are confirmed.

First, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth (see **2 Samuel 9**) meets David bringing supplies for his journey.

2 Samuel 16:1-2 - "And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink."

But where was Mephibosheth?

2 Samuel 16:3-4 - "And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king."

Ziba tells David that Mephibosheth has switched his allegiance to Absalom, hoping he can restore his position somehow in the lineage of Saul. How? Perhaps hoping that the people would turn against the House of David after all this and reinstall Saul's line. It seems like a far fetched idea, but David apparently takes it at face value from Ziba.

But this is where the betrayals and double crossing gets complicated. We find later in **2 Samuel 19:26** that Mephibosheth tells a different story - in fact he wanted to come, but Ziba betrayed him for his own purposes, and took the donkeys leaving the crippled grandson of Saul without a way to travel.

The rabbis argue over whether David really believed this slander, which would be a sin. They note that Ziba says, "May I find favor..." meaning in the future, implying that David's act of turning all Mephibosheth's lands over to Ziba was contingent on the truth being eventually borne out by the facts.

But for the present, David apparently believes Ziba.

The rabbis suggest that all this perhaps eventually led David to say, "All men are liars" in **Psalms 116:11**.

During Jesus' troubled night on this same Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane, He too was confronted with divided loyalties. His disciples, instead of remaining with him in prayer, fell asleep.

- **Matthew 26:40, 45** - "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" He then says, "behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

David Is Cursed

2 Samuel 16:5-6 - "And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left."

Bahurim was said to be in lands belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. (The boundary between Judah and Benjamin split the area of the future precincts of the Temple) Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin.

2 Samuel 16:7-8 - "And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man."

Now 30 years after David was anointed king by all the tribes, Shimei (and possibly others of the tribe of Benjamin) suspected David of engineering the deaths of Abner and Ish-Bosheth, as well as the affair of Bathsheba and Uriah. David might even be indirectly blamed for the deaths of the priests of Nob.

At his lowest point, David suddenly is cursed and reviled by a hold-out loyal to King Saul. Shimei is taunting him - "Come out" is really "Go out!" David could only agree with Shimei's assessment - he had killed Uriah, he deserved stoning for adultery with Bathsheba. And the rebellion of his son was prophesied by Nathan.

2 Samuel 16:9 - "Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head."

Abishai, the son of David's sister Zeruiah, was the only one who accompanied David when he went to the camp of Saul and took the spear and water bottle from Saul as he slept (**1 Samuel 26:5-12**). He encouraged David to kill Saul then, even as he encourages him here to kill Shimei.

Shimei according to the rabbis, was the head of the Sanhedrin, and a future teacher to Solomon. So his rebuke of David carried more weight than one coming from a single, random Benjamite.

We all love to get revenge. And at least David should have taken the opportunity to "set the record straight" for Shimei and whoever else might be listening to his tirade, right?

2 Samuel 16:10-12 - "And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? [or, what does it matter to me or to you?] so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day."

It was in fact a capital offense to curse the king, but in the face of everything else that was happening to David, **he says**, it was a small thing.

This was David's "cross to bear" so to speak. It was God's will and design that David be cursed, so he submits to it, even as Jesus at a similar low point said, "Not my will but thine be done."

In a demonstration of extreme humility, he offered no self-justification. Instead, as in the parable of Jesus, he "agreed with his adversary quickly" in the way (**Matthew 5:25**).

Recall Jesus' commandment: "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (**Matthew 5:39**).

I think this is a key scripture for when we are slandered or publicly attacked. David did not react. Like Gamaliel told the Sanhedrin, "for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (**Acts 5:38-39**)

[Later, Shimei begs for mercy when David returns to power (**2 Samuel 19:16-23**). David could ignore personal attacks. But Shimei's diatribe also repudiated God Himself, who had chosen David as king, as well as the prophecy of the House of David's eternal kingdom. For this crime, the rabbis explain, on his deathbed David instructed Solomon to find a legitimate pretext to execute Shimei (**1 Kings 2:9**). Yet the rabbis also said Solomon's execution of Shimei was his first descent into sin.]

Absalom Enters Jerusalem

2 Samuel 16:15-16 - "And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king."

Absalom's entry to Jerusalem is almost too easy. No fighting was required. Absalom is full of himself, and is ready to swallow Hushai's flattery: "God save the king, God save the king." (**verse 16**).

Absalom in the flush of his victory could easily believe that Hushai would flip and support him. He expected many others to do so too.

But some might fear that David and Absalom would reconcile. Then, Absalom's ardent supporters might be tracked down as traitors. Absalom needed something that would mark a complete break with his father to reassure them. Ahithophel provides it.

Ahithophel's Counsel

2 Samuel 16:22 - "And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel."

To take the king's concubines - besides being immoral - meant you were now in control and had become king yourself. As grandfather to Bathsheba, this was his revenge on David's sin. It pushed Absalom to cross a red line - no going back now.

And it was a fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy of judgment on David:

"I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun" (**2 Samuel 12:11-12**).

This was also David's fault in an additional way - he had left the concubines behind:

- **2 Samuel 15:16** - "And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house."

Ahithophel's advice was highly regarded, and he had been a valued advisor to David:

2 Samuel 16:23 - "And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom."

His advice had always been supported and confirmed by the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest (Sanhedrin 16:a-b). Because of this, his betrayal of David (like Judas' betrayal of Jesus) brought a great punishment. He later committed suicide, as Judas did, and according to the rabbis, lost his place in the world to come.

Summary

We read this story to see the incidents in David's life reflected in the life of the Messiah and His own betrayal. Here it seemed like David's kingdom had come to an end. He was betrayed, lied to and cursed. His close friends turn against him. During Jesus' night

in the Garden of Gethsemane and then with the kiss of betrayal by Judas and ultimately His death on the cross, it seemed like His kingdom also would fail. Even his disciples abandon him in the end.

But Jesus was victorious over death at His resurrection, and David's fortunes would soon turn, as we will see.