



The Return of the King

2 Samuel 19

2 Samuel 19:1-4

1 Then it was told Joab, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourns for Absalom.” **2** The victory that day was turned to mourning for all the people, for the people heard it said that day, “The king is grieved for his son.” **3** So the people went by stealth into the city that day, as people who are humiliated steal away when they flee in battle. **4** The king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

Word Spreads of David's Grief

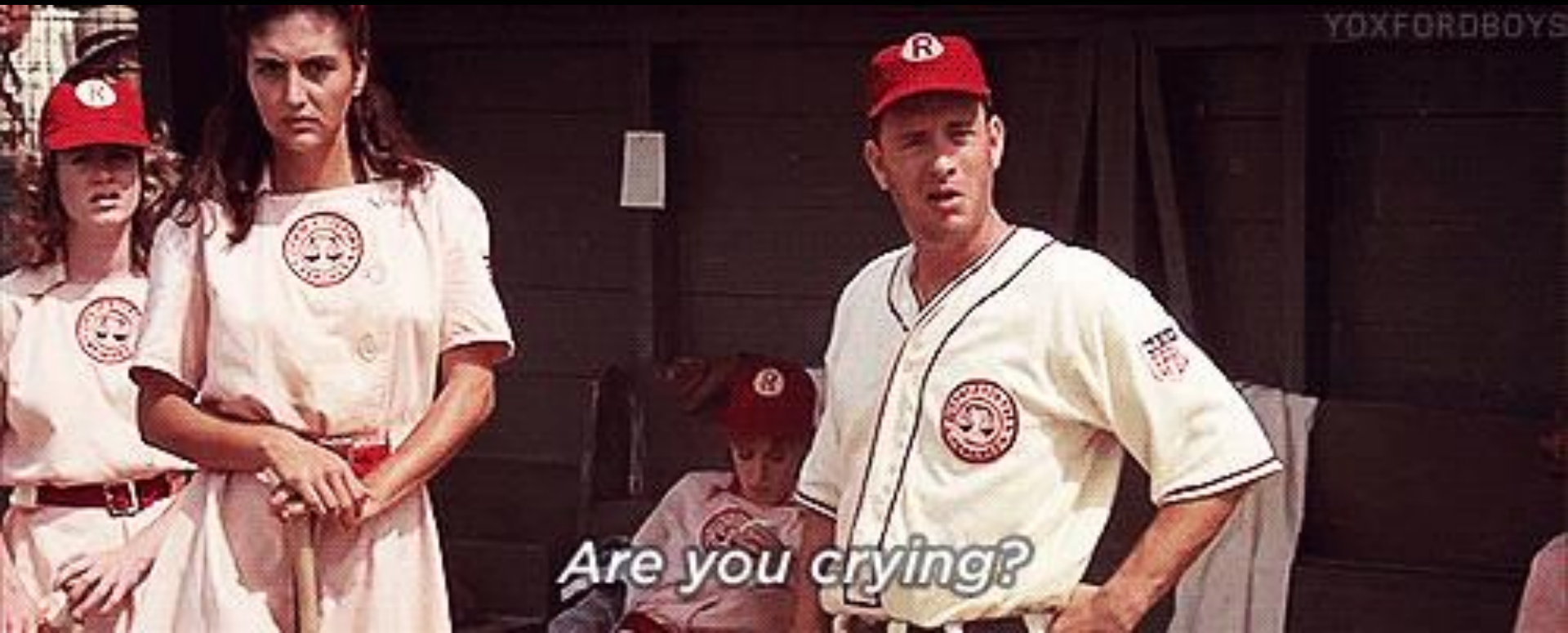
- “The victory that day was turned to mourning for all the people...”
- Rather than music and dancing, “the people went by stealth into the city that day, as people who are humiliated steal away when they flee in battle.”
- The grief was public: David “covered his face and cried out with a loud voice.”



2 Samuel 19:5-8

5 Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, “Today you have covered with shame the faces of all your servants, who today have saved your life 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 shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased. **7** Now therefore arise, go out and speak kindly to your servants, for I swear by the Lord, if you do not go out, surely not a man will pass the night with you, and this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now.” **8** So the king arose and sat in the gate. When they told all the people, saying, “Behold, the king is sitting in the gate,” then all the people came before the king. Now Israel had fled, each to his tent.

There's No Crying in Warfare!



David's Actions

- So incensed Joab that he immediately charges into the king's presence and begins to rebuke him.
- Laying aside all formalities, Joab informs David on the strongest of terms that through his unseemly behavior he had humiliated all the men who had just saved his life and the lives of his family.



Joab's Not Done!

- By yearning after a dead enemy, David is making it clear that “if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.”
- His actions conveyed to the troops that had risked their lives on his behalf contempt and ingratitude.
- And David needs their support.



Joab is Tough, but He's Right

- Not only was David's behavior wrong, it was also foolish.
- The king had deeply offended his troops, and if he did not act immediately to make amends, Joab says, "surely not a man will pass the night with you."



Joab Orders the King



APOLOGIZE!

And If He Doesn't...

“this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now.”

Joab's methods aren't pleasant, but it can be argued that his actions toward both Absalom and David save David's kingship.



David Listens to Joab

“So the king arose and sat in the gate”
and “all the people came before the
king.”

The king is in the gate where he is
supposed to be.

We have returned to normalcy.



A Necessary Confrontation

- Joab's execution of Absalom cost him his position, at least temporarily (v. 13).
- Nevertheless his rebuke of the king (vv. 5-7) was good as well as needed.
- A true friend—and Joab was a true friend to David here—will be willing to take personal risks to confront a friend in love.
- A wise person, such as David, will accept strong advice from a friend who really cares.

2 Samuel 19:9-10

9 All the people were quarreling throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “The king delivered us from the hand of our enemies and saved us from the hand 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?”

Fallout from Absalom's Rebellion

- After Absalom's troops returned to their clans with news of Absalom's defeat and death, debates began raging about Israel's future, especially about whether to realign themselves with David.
- They are reminded that previously David had fulfilled marvelously the nation's expectations for a king, and with Absalom dead, they had no realistic alternative but to bring the king back.



The Kingdom is Not Yet Divided

However, it is clear that there is a divide between Judah and the 10 northern tribes.

OT authors emphasize this throughout Judges, Samuel, and Kings.



David Has Some Work To Do

- Judah, David's kinsmen, had largely sided with Absalom.
- Benjamin, Saul's kinsmen, had rooted for David's downfall.
- The northern tribes feel like second class citizens.



2 Samuel 19:11-15

11 Then King David sent 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** Say to Amasa, ‘Are you not my bone and my flesh? May God do so to me, and more also, if you will not be commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.’” **14** Thus 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 Judah came to Gilgal in order to go to meet the king, to bring the king across the Jordan.

Now That Israel is Back on Board

- David turns his attention to Judah, which had apparently lent strong support to Absalom.
- David apparently had been alienated from key factions among the Judahites for most of his public career.
 - Calebites, especially Ziphites (1 Sam. 23)
 - Nabal (1 Sam. 25)



Step #1

- Send a message to Zadok and Abiathar asking them to lobby for his support with the elders of Judah.
 1. Inform the elders that the other tribes in Israel have already thrown their support to David
 2. Appeal to the leaders' sense of solidarity with one of their “brothers.”



Step #2

- Enlist the services of Amasa, a key member of Absalom's now defunct regime and offer him the position "commander of the army...in place of Joab."
- This accomplishes 2 things:
 1. Builds a bridge with those who had served under Amasa.
 2. Punishes Joab for his insubordination in the execution of Absalom.

The Strategy is Successful

“Thus 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.’”

David and his entourage begin the return journey to Jerusalem led back into the Promised Land by the tribe of Judah.



2 Samuel 19:16-20

16 Then Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjamite who was from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. **17** There were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, with 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 kept crossing the ford 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** So he said to the king, "Let not my lord consider me guilty, nor remember what your servant did wrong on the day when my lord the king came out from Jerusalem, so that the king would take it to heart. **20** For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore behold, I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king."

Anxiety for David's Enemies

- No one had been more vocal in his disdain for David than “Shimei, the son of Gera.”
- Having cursed David in Chapter 16, Shimei was now among the very first to welcome him back and to seek forgiveness and favor.
- He is accompanied by 1,000 Benjamites and “Ziba the servant of the house of Saul” with 15 sons and 20 servants.



Shimei Begs Forgiveness

- Shimei (probably soaking wet) –
“fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan”
- He begs for forgiveness and mercy –
“Let not my lord consider me guilty, nor remember what your servant did wrong”
- And confesses his transgression –
“your servant knows that I have sinned”



2 Samuel 19:21-23

21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah said, “Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord’s anointed?” **22** David then said, “What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be an adversary to me? Should any man be put to death in Israel today? For do I not know that I am king over Israel today?” **23** The king said to Shimei, “You shall not die.” Thus the king swore to him.

Abishai Hasn't Forgotten

“Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord’s anointed?”

- This is the same Abishai from 16:9 –

“Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head.”



David Refuses to Execute Shimei

- He says to Abishai –

“What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be an *adversary* to me?”

David decrees an oath that Shimei would not die for his crime as to not mar his return with the execution of a fellow Israelite.



2 Samuel 19:24-30

24 Then Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king; and he had neither cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace. **25** 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 answered, “O my lord, the king, my servant deceived me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ because your servant is lame. **27** Moreover, 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 nothing but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right do I have yet 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** Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has come safely to his own house.”

“Then Mephibosheth...”

- Like the others, he has traveled from Jerusalem to the Jordan to meet David, a journey that must have been brutal on a man lame in both feet.

- **And he looks terrible...**

“he had neither cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace.”



This Doesn't Fit Ziba's Description

- 16:3 – “Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.’”
- David was justifiably mystified; he had assumed Mephibosheth's betrayal, but now his physical appearance screams otherwise.



“Why did you not go with me?”

26 ...“O my lord, the king, my servant deceived me; for your servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ because your servant is lame. 27 Moreover, 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 nothing but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. What right do I have yet that I should complain anymore to the king?”

Mephibosheth Submits

- His fate to the hand of King David.
- In deference, he says that David has given him far more than he deserves as a son of Saul, and therefore, he asks David to do as he sees fit.
- David is now in a quandary...



On the One Hand

- Ziba had provided him with invaluable assistance during a time of great need and had given convincing testimony regarding Mephibosheth's "betrayal."
- On the other hand, Mephibosheth had provided direct physical evidence and credible testimony of his loyalty to David.



Previously...

- David had given Saul's estate to Ziba for two reasons:

1. To reward him for his support
2. To punish Mephibosheth's betrayal

Now that Mephibosheth has been exonerated, David decrees a compromise.



The Great Compromise

- Ziba would retain a reward for his service to David.
- And David would keep his word to Jonathan from years before to provide for his son.
- This is David's "divide the child" moment in wisdom.



2 Samuel 19:31-33

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** Now Barzillai was very old, being eighty years old; and he had sustained the king while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very great man. **33** The king said to Barzillai, “You cross over with me and I will sustain you in Jerusalem with me.”

“Barzillai the Gileadite”

- Recall that this aged patriarch had supplied David and his entourage with needed food and supplies at Mahanaim.
- He had traveled from Rogelim, some 50 miles from the fords of the Jordan to welcome David back to the throne.
- David shows his appreciation by inviting Barzillai to return with him to Jerusalem.



2 Samuel 19:34-40

34 But Barzillai said to the king, “How long have I yet 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 hear anymore the voice of singing men and women? 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. Why should the king compensate me with this reward? **37** Please let your servant return, 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** 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. **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.

Thanks, But No Thanks!

- Barzillai is old and has no interest in living in the royal court; he says he would be a burden to David.
- Barzillai would rather have a dignified death with his own family in his own city.
- However, Barzillai asks David to take Chimham, one of his relatives, and afford him all the blessings that he would have received.



Jeremiah 41:17

“And they went and stayed in **Geruth Chimham**, which is beside Bethlehem, in order to proceed into Egypt”

“the lodging place of **Chimham**”

David kept his word.



The Power of Forgiveness

- David had not really forgiven Absalom, and perhaps the consequences of his lack of forgiveness encouraged him to take a different approach with his subjects after Absalom's death.
 - We see in David's dealings with Amasa that forgiveness wins over former enemies.
 - We see in his dealings with Shimei that forgiveness gives time for people to change.
 - We see in his treatment of Mephibosheth and Ziba that forgiveness placates irreconcilable adversaries.
 - We see in his relations with Barzillai and Chimham that forgiveness causes blessing to overflow on others.

2 Samuel 19:41-43

41 And behold, all the men of Israel came to the king and said to the king, “Why had our brothers the men of Judah stolen you away, 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.

Israel vs. Judah (Again)

- Even before David can return to Jerusalem, the men of Israel demand an explanation of why he had permitted Judah to steal him away.
- Apparently by having all the Judahite soldiers, but only half the Israelite soldiers, participate in transporting the royal household across the Jordan, David had shown contempt to those who made a united monarchy possible.



The Men of Judah Respond

- Their status as next-of-kin entitled them to a position of privilege, but they had not abused it.
- They had not, for example, “eaten at all at the king’s expense.”
- Judah claims kinship, but Israel claims numbers, and since they were larger, they “have more claim on David than” Judah, and they wanted to bring him back first!



The Good News is...

**David is back on the throne and
ruling over all Israel, from Dan to
Beersheba.**

The Bad News is...

Disunity is alive and well in Israel.



From a Prophetic Perspective

- Nathan's prophetic sword of judgment:

“Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house...”

Has spread beyond his house and into David's nation.



Unfortunately,
More
Rebellion is
Coming in
Chapter 20



