

18. David Returns to Jerusalem

(2 Samuel 18-19)

6.7.5 David Organizes his army and Absalom is killed (2 Sam 18:1-18)

- The plan of attack insured that David would be safe and have the ability to carry on with support from the city even if half the men were killed.
- 18:6 - the **forest of Ephraim** - although the precise location is uncertain, this was most likely in Gilead, east of the Jordan River and near Mahanaim, where David had taken refuge. Even today, this area retains patches of woodland.
- 18:8 - “the forest devoured more...” - even nature is turned against Absalom’s forces.
- 18:10 - **Absalom hanging** - the word translated “hanging” calls to mind a use in the Torah: “...for a hanged man is cursed by God” (Deut 21:23). Remember: Absalom had already defied Torah in laying with David’s concubines and now he has dishonored his father completely which was also a “cursed” act (see Deut 27:16). Even though Absalom had an extreme advantage over David in terms of force, he could not escape the LORD’s judgment.
- 18:18 - Absalom’s Monument - Although Absalom had three sons and a daughter whom he named Tamar (see 2 Sam 14:27), here it is revealed that those three sons had most likely died.

6.7.6 David hears of Absalom’s death and mourns for him (2 Sam 18:19-19:8a)

- 18:19ff - Joab is seeking to spare Ahimaaz’ life because he knows how David has responded to bad news in the past (see 1:4–16; 4:8–12)!
- 19:1-8 - Joab’s stern rebuke of David, along with the defeat of Absalom, saves the Kingdom, but not before many in Israel are put at odds with David.

6.8 **David Returns to Jerusalem** (2 Sam 19:8b–43)

6.8.1 **Israel argues over David's return but Judah receives him** (2 Sam 19:8b-15)

- 19:9-10 - **fractures** - “The separate treatment of Israel’s and Judah’s response to David continues the sense developed elsewhere in Joshua-2 Kings (cf. Josh 11:21; 1 Sam 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam 2:10; 3:10; 5:5; 11:11; 12:8) that a deep traditional schism existed between Judah and the rest of Israel.” [Robert D. Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, 428]
- 19:11-15 - Apparently, Judah was more reluctant to restore David since they had been in support of Absalom.
- 19:12 - **Amasa** - replacing Joab with Amasa - another of David’s nephews who led Absalom’s army - served to build a bridge to Absalom’s forces and punish Joab for killing Absalom.

6.8.2 **David pardons Shimei** (2 Sam 19:16-23)

- 19:21- **Abishai** - Although the Torah forbids cursing rulers of the Nation (see Exodus 22:28), this offense did not carry the death penalty. Abishai had wanted to kill Saul earlier, but David had stopped him (see 1 Sam 26:8-9).
- 19:22 - the **Sons of Zeruiah** - David’s nephews - are presented as treacherous throughout the larger narrative and here David calls them “adversaries” = *satan* in Hebrew.

6.8.3 **David hears the truth about Mephibosheth** (2 Sam 19:4-30)

- 19:24 - Mephibosheth’s appearance indicates that he has been in extreme mourning over David’s exile as 19:30 makes clear.

6.8.4 **David blesses Barzillai** (2 Sam 19:31-40)

6.8.5 **The men of Israel take issue with Judah about the return of the King** (2 Sam 19:41-43)

- The people of Israel are once again offended in the way David and Judah had handled his return, again highlighting the fractures that were already present (see Josh 11:21; 1 Sam 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam 2:10; 3:10; 11:11; 12:8). Their argument was, 1) they had a greater share in David and the Kingdom, and 2) they had been the first to restore him as King.
- 19:43 - “10 shares” - the 10 Northern tribes against the 1 southern tribe - Judah. Benjamin also becomes closely associated with Judah after Saul’s reign.