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David’s Last Words

First Kings 2:1-12 and First Chronicles 29:26-30

David’s last words DIG: What kind of king does David want Solomon to be? What does this say about David? What divisions always plagued him (see Second Samuel 2:4, 10-17, 5:3-5, 15:13-14)? Why did Joab kill Abner (Second Samuel 17:24-26, 19:10-13)? Is David really against vengeance? Why did Shim’i curse David (Second Samuel 16:5-8)? How will David set aside his oath? How many years did David rule in Hebron over Judah? How many years did he rule all together? Who succeeded him? Was there an official ceremony? Why not? In what sense was David a man after God’s own heart?

REFLECT: When facing tough situations in your life, where do you turn? Do you find it hard to “forgive and forget?” Do you hold grudges? How does the desire for vengeance, even if justified, affect your life? If you’ve lived long enough, there are important people in your life that have passed away: I am sure David was looking forward to seeing his God, the son that he lost after his sin with Bathsheba, and his friend Y’honatan. Who do you look forward to seeing, and why? What are the most important things you have learned from your study of the Life of David? What will you do in response to what you’ve learned?

Observe the charge of ADONAI your God to go in His ways and keep His regulations, mitzvot, rulings and instructions in accordance with what is written in the Torah of Moshe.

The old king was on **his** deathbed. In fact, **he** had been in bed since the opening verse of **First Kings**, when, despite the best efforts of **his** servants, **he** simply could not stay warm. Although he had managed to rouse himself long enough to appoint Solomon as his successor, **David** was still **dying**. This was the end of an era. Scripture says that **David served God’s purpose in his own generation (Acts 13:36)**. By the grace of **God**, **he** established a capital **City** that would stand

at the center of history and started a dynasty that would save the world. But even **King David** had to go the way of all flesh, and as **he** lay dying there were some things **he** wanted to say before **he** could **die** in peace. Then **he** proceeded to give **his** last will and testament.

David was fortunate. Some people **die** so suddenly that they never get the chance to say their good-bye’s. But most people have some things they want to say before they **die**. What would you say if you had the chance? We all have to **die** sometime (unless **the Lord** comes back first, of course), and one good way to get ready to **die** is to think ahead to our **dying** words. What would you say if you knew that you were about to **die**? What testimony would you give your family and friends? What spiritual legacy would you want to leave for your children and grandchildren?⁴⁹

David’s last, private, instructions to **Solomon** came in two parts. The first had to do with **Solomon’s spiritual life** in **verses 2-4**, where **the king** summarized the message of **Deuteronomy** and reminded **his son** of **God’s** promise and exhortation: **When your days come to an end and you sleep with your ancestors, I will establish one of your descendants to succeed you, one of your own flesh and blood; and I will set up his rulership. He will build a house for My name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father for him, and he will be a son for Me. If he gets punished: nevertheless, my grace will not leave him, as I took it away from Sha’ul, whom I removed before you. (Second Samuel 7:12-16 CJB)**. The second gives instruction concerning the nature of **unfinished business** pertaining to **Joab**, to **Shim’i**, and to **the sons of Barzillai** in **verses 5-9**.⁵⁰

Solomon’s spiritual life (2:1-4): When the time drew near for **David** to die, he gave his last charge to **Solomon**, his son (**First Kings 2:1**). The TaNaKh records the last words of **Jacob (Genesis 49)**; **Moses (Deuteronomy 33)**; **Joshua (Joshua 23:1-24:27)** and **David**. The old king was on his deathbed, and he knew it, saying: **I am about to go the way of all the earth**. Then he proceeded to give **his** last will and testament. **Solomon** was a young man who had lived a sheltered life and **David** knew he needed this instruction, so he said: **Be strong, and act like a godly man. Observe the charge of ADONAI your God to go in His ways and keep His regulations, mitzvot, rulings and instructions in accordance with what is written in the Torah of Moshe (First Kings 2:2-3a CJB)**. In his famous last words, **David** used seven different terms to describe **the Word of God (charge, ways, regulations, mitzvot, rulings, instructions, and the Torah)**. Each of these terms comes from **the**

Word of God itself (**Deuteronomy 4:29, 6:1-2** and **5, 8:6** and **11, 9:5, 10:12** and **23, 11:1** and **22, 29:8**). Each term has a slightly different emphasis, but **David’s** main point in using all these different words is that **his son** should live by every word that comes from the mouth of **ADONAI**.

There was not one situation **Solomon** would face in **his** life as a man or the ruler of **his kingdom** that **the Bible** would not address in some practical way. The same is true for us. **God’s Word** teaches us how to think, how to speak, and how to live. **It** tells us what to love and what to hate. It shows us how to glorify **God** forever. When we use **the Bible** as our “owner’s manual,” it will help make us the godly men and godly women we were created to be.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Thank **You** that in **Your** great wisdom **You** gave me what I need to know how to live a joyful and content life. How helpful is your **Ruach Ha’Kodesh** living within me to guide and help me, tremendous!*

Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23). Your Word is living (Hebrews 4:12) and as I read and meditate on Your Word, the Spirit of God uses it to show me the right path to take and to bring comfort and encouragement. Where would I be without You. You are wonderful. I love You so much! In Yeshua’s Holy name I give you thanks. Amen

If **Solomon** kept **God’s charge, ways, regulations, mitzvot, rulings, instructions** and **Torah, God** promised that **he** would **succeed** spiritually **in all he did, wherever he went. David** knew what **he** was talking about. If we want to have **God’s** blessing, we must walk in **God’s** ways. This principle holds true for us, especially if we define success in biblical terms. This doesn’t mean that we won’t ever suffer, or that every difficulty we face in life is the direct result of our own personal sin. But it does mean that obedience has **God’s** blessing. We may experience this blessing in our relationships, as **the Word of God** teaches us how to love. We may experience this blessing in our homes as **the Word of God** teaches us how to take care of our family. We may experience **His** blessing in our daily lives, as **the Word of God** teaches us how to work hard and pursue excellence. But whether we have success in the workplace or not, we will certainly be successful spiritually. Obeying **the Word of God** will keep us close to **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**; it will help us bring more people to **Messiah**, and it will show us more of the glory of **God**.⁵¹

David also reminded **his son** of the special covenant **Ha’Shem** had made with **his** family (see the commentary on [the Life of David, to see link click Ct - The LORD’S Covenant with David](#)). **ADONAI** would fulfill what **He** promised to **David** when **He** said: **If your children pay attention to how they live** (wow did **David** ever learn that lesson the hard way), **conducting themselves before me honestly with all their heart and being, you will never lack a man on the throne of Isra’el (First Kings 2:3b-4 CJB)**. The covenant was unconditional with respect to its ultimate goal of bringing **the Messiah** from the line of **David**, but each individual **king** needed to live in obedience to **God’s Word** in order to experience the blessing of **ADONAI**.⁵² In other words, **the king** would be disciplined if **he** lived in disobedience to **the Torah**, but would always be loved. The subsequent history of the nation then seems to confirm the promise. By the end of **Kings** the monarchy is no more, and both **the** northern **kingdom** of **Isra’el** and **the** southern **kingdom** of **Judah** were in exile (as **Deuteronomy 4:25-28** had foretold), but they were still **God’s chosen people, the apple of his eye (Deut 32:10; Zech 2:8)**.

So, what kind of promise did **Ha’Shem** really give to **David**? Was it conditional or unconditional? Did the establishment of **David’s** throne depend on **Solomon’s** keeping the covenant or not? These questions are answered for us in the Gospel of **Yeshua Messiah**, who is the final **Son** (descendant) **of David**. The sad truth about **Solomon** is that like **his** father **David**, **he** did not obey **God’s Word**. **Solomon** started well, but he declined into idolatry, greed and immorality. And to one degree or another, the same was true of every last king in **Isra’el**. They all failed to walk in **God’s ways** and to keep **God’s Torah**.

Unfinished Business (2:5-8): David knew that there was danger lurking in the shadows of **the kingdom**, and **he** warned **Solomon** to act immediately and deal with two dangerous men. **Men like Joab and Shim’i would continue to be a menace to the young king and to the peace of the nation. Joab**, the commander of **David’s** army was the first to be named. **Now you yourself know what Joab did to me** (see the commentary on [the Life of David Dz - Joab Kills Absalom](#)), and what he did to the two commanders of **Isra’el’s** armies, **Abner** (see [the Life of David Ck - Joab Murders Abner](#)) and **Amasa** (see [the Life of David Ee - Sheba Rebels Against David: The Murder of Amasa](#)). **He** killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. **The murders were committed when peace reigned in the Land; or by**

treachery under the mask of friendship. And all that might have been forgiven, but when **Joab** supported **Adonijah** in **his** quest for the throne (see [Ak - King Me!](#)), that could not be forgiven. **David** knew that **Joab** would be a threat to **Solomon**. Therefore, **he** advised: **Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sh’ol in peace, or die a natural death (First Kings 2:5-6).**

The second dangerous man was **Shim’i**. **He** was a **Benjamite**, a relative of Sha’ul who wanted Sha’ul’s line restored to the throne. **And remember Shim’i who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim** (see [the Life of David Ds - Shim’i Curses David](#)). Later, when **David** returned to power, **Shim’i** humbled **himself** before **the king** and **David** forgave **him**. **When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, “I will not put you to death by the sword.”** The threat of **Shim’i** to **Solomon** was twofold. First, **David** doubtless made this promise in a moment of profound relief that **the kingdom** had been restored to **him**. But must have later realized that **Shim’i’s** “repentance” was not sincere and that **he** could be a potential threat to **the young king**. **But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him.** But more importantly, **Shim’i** embodied the continuing threat of **Benjamin** and the ten northern tribes of **Isra’el** that **David** was never quite sure where their loyalty lay. The point is that he was pro-Sha’ul and anti-**David**. Therefore, **David** counseled **his son**, **“Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood” (First Kings 2:8-9).**⁵³

David not only remembered dangerous men like **Joab** and **Shim’i**, but **he** also remembered faithful men like **Barzillai**. **He** was a wealthy landowner, who **stood by David when he fled from Absalom** (see [the Life of David Ed - David Returns to Yerushalayim: Barzillai the Gileadite](#)). **Solomon** felt obligated to continue to pay what the royal family owed this man who intervened on **David’s** behalf at a poignant and dangerous moment. **David** had wanted to reward **Barzillai** with a place at **his table**, something like a pension, but **the old man** preferred to die in **his** own hometown. Therefore, **Barzillai** asked **David** to give the honor to **his son Khimham**, so now **David** instructed **Solomon** to care for **Khimham’s sons**. **But show kindness to the grandchildren of Barzillai and let them be among those who eat at your table (First Kings 2:7).**



David’s death and summary of his reign (2:10-11): Then David, son of Jesse, who was king over all Isra’el, rested with his ancestors and was buried in Jerusalem, the City of David, named after him by right of conquest. The normal custom was to be buried outside the City, so it was a mark of high honor that the remains of the departed king were buried within Jerusalem (Acts 2:29). He had made extensive preparations for a successful reign for his son, particularly with regard to the plans and materials for the Temple. Now, having reigned forty years over Isra’el - seven years in Hebron over Judah alone - and thirty-three in Jerusalem, David died at a good old age, knowing that the kingdom was in good hands, having enjoyed a long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king. Just how long the coregency lasted cannot be stated with any certainty . Estimates range from two or three months to several years (First Kings 2:10-12; First Chronicles 29:26-28).⁵⁴ Shavu’ot is the traditional date on which King David died, a point to be remembered when reading Acts 2:25-32 (see the commentary on Acts An - Peter Speaks to the Shavu’ot Crowd).

Finally, the Chronicler noted several sources he used for the history of David beside the canonical book of Samuel. As for the events of King David’s reign, from beginning to end, they are written in the records of Samuel the seer (not to be confused with the canonical book of Samuel), plus the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer. These prophetic books no longer exist, but they contained many details of his reign and power, and the circumstances that surrounded him and Isra’el and the kingdoms of all the other lands he had conquered (First Chronicles 29:29-30).⁵⁵

The Bible paints a grand picture of David. He was an outstanding person, courageous, generous, warm-hearted, outgoing and appreciative of others. He was

a warrior, poet, musician, military genius, and administrator. **He** was, moreover, a man who inspired loyalty, and with the help of **his** supporters, accomplished much: the establishment of **Jerusalem** as **Isra’el’s** capital, and the uniting of the twelve tribes into a nation that could hold its own in the international scene. **Isra’el’s** cities had their defenses strengthened, and by the end of **David’s** reign preparations were in hand for the building of **the Temple** in **Tziyon**. All this accounts, in part, for **David’s** greatness.

In what sense, however, was he **a man after God’s own heart (First Samuel 13:14)**? **He** is depicted in the Bible as entirely human, hampered by weaknesses that were the counterpart of **his** strengths. **He** had a problem with lust (see [the Life of David Cp - Children Born to David in Yerushalayim](#)) and **he** was indulgent towards **his** sons, both of those issues caused **him** enormous problems. But unlike Sha’ul, when **David** received a rebuke, **he** humbly admitted **his** faults; when **Nathan** or **Gad** delivered a message of judgment, **the prophet’s** condemnation was accepted as the word of **God**. In other words, **ADONAI** was **King**; **David** was merely **His** proxy, exercising delegated power.

David’s successors, who for the most part failed to conform to this role, were pointed back to **him**, for whose sake the dynasty was permitted to continue until **the kingdom** was swept away by the Babylonians (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule](#)). Even then, hopes were kept alive by the promise of **Nathan** to **David**, “**Your house (dynasty) and your Kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever**” (**First Samuel 7:16**). The B’rit Chadashah takes up the theme when **Yeshua** is introduced as a descendant of **David**; indeed, the very first verse of **Mattityahu’s** Gospel makes the point: **This is the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham (Mattityahu 1:1 CJB)**.⁵⁶

The sad truth about **Solomon** is that, like his father **David**, **he** did not give full obedience to **the Word of God**. **Solomon** started well, but as we read **his** tragic account, we will trace **his** sad decline into idolatry, greed, and immorality. To one degree or another, the same is true of every last **king** in **Isra’el**; **they** all failed to walk in **God’s** ways and keep **His mitzvot**.

All except **Yeshua**, that is. **Yeshua of Nazareth** was the only **Son** (descendant) of **David** who was faithful to **God’s** covenant, keeping all 613 of **His charges, ways, regulations, mitzvot, rulings, instructions** and **Torah** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Dg - The Completion of the Torah](#)). This is why **God’s**

promises to **David** were both conditional and unconditional. They were conditional because **the king** was required to be obedient to **God’s Word**; but they were unconditional because **YHVH** knew that one day **a King** would come and fulfill **His rulings** perfectly. The dynasty would be established on the basis of the full and perfect obedience of **Yeshua**, and thus **God’s** absolute promise would not fail.

At the end of **His** perfect, promise-fulfilling life, **Yeshua** had some famous last words of **His** own – words that offered forgiveness to **His** enemies and promised paradise to anyone who trusted in **Him**. Then **Messiah** finished **His** saving work by dying on the cross, suffering the violence and death that we deserve for our sins. This was not the end, however, because **Yeshua** rose from the dead to take **His** eternal throne.⁵⁷