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David Battles Absalom
Second Samuel 17:24 to 19:8a



David's army and **Absalom's** army were about to engage in a battle that neither one would win, but both could lose. If **David** won, it meant the death of **his son Absalom** and **his** friend **Ahithophel**; if **Absalom** won, it would mean the death of **his father** and other members of **his** family. It was a no-win situation. No matter how it came out, **he** was going to be in pain.[435]

Just as in the earlier narrative an adversary of **David (Shim'i)** curses **him (Second Samuel 16:5-14)**, so also here an adversary of **David (Absalom)** opposed **him** in battle **(Second Samuel 18:6-8)**; just as in the earlier account **David** demands that **Shim'i** be spared **(Second Samuel 16:11)**, so here **David** demands that **Absalom** be spared **(Second Samuel 18:5** and **12)**; and just as in the earlier episode a **son** of **Zeruiah (Abishai)** is ready to kill **Shim'i (Second Samuel 16:9)**, so also here a **son** of **Zeruiah (Joab [verse 21])** is ready to kill **Absalom** – and indeed mortally wounds **him (Second Samuel 18:14-15)**.

By the end of this section **David** is a wreck because of **Absalom's** death. Incapable of governing, **Joab** had to step in and take charge or **David** might have even lost **his** authority to rule. I do not doubt that deep natural affection played its part. But there was an even deeper dimension to **David's** grief. As we must use **Second Samuel 17:14b** to control our overall view of **18:1** to **19:8**, we must also allow **12:10-12** to shed a light on **David's** sorrow. How **Nathan's** words must have echoed in **David's** conscience: **The sword will never depart from your house.**

It was **David's** guilt that inflamed **his** grief. **Nathan** had assured **David** that **he** would **not die** but that **his** infant **son** would **die (Second Samuel 12:14)**. And **his infant son** did **die**. Then **Amnon** was murdered **(2 Samuel 13)**, and now **Absalom** was gone.

David knew that his sin had set the sword in motion. **If only I had died instead of you!** Though David's sin brought consequences. . . yet **Absalom** suffered the consequences of **his own sinful heart.** There was that time when unlike **his** chesed-ways with **Mephibosheth (Second Samuel 9)** and **Hanun (Second Samuel 10), David** acted as **the king** without chesed or **pity (Second Samuel 12:6)** because he wanted sex with **Bathsheba** and didn't blink at having **Uriah** murdered. Perhaps **David** wished **he** had died instead of **Absalom** because **he** knew **he** deserved to **die**. Guilt had magnified **his** grief. So we end with a paradox: a safe Kingdom and a despondent **king**. Maybe there's a reason why, at the last, **ADONAI Himself** must **wipe away every tear from** our **eyes (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4)**.

First and **Second Samuel** clearly show us that as **the** anointed **king**, **David** was a suffering servant. Here, however, **he** sheds **tears** for **his** own griefs and over **his** own guilt. But **David** and we, will have to wait for **his Descendant, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah,** to return again (see the commentary on **Isaiah, to see link click Kg – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Bozrah**) and inaugurate **His** thousand year reign of peace from the Temple in Yerushalayim (see the commentary on **Revelation Fh – The Dispensation of the Messianic Kingdom**).